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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I would like to welcome Mr. Egbert Walters and Adolph Crant to the Speaker's gallery today. Eg Walters, as most of you know him, is the General Manager of the Community Food Sharing Association. Even though this is Mr. Walters' occupation, it is obvious to all that know him that it is also his passion.

This passion combined with his skill set has grown the Community Food Sharing Association to the successful organization that it is today. Since joining the association in 1992, Mr. Walters has spearheaded the acquisition of millions of dollars in food donations and consumables, which is no small feat.

Mr. Walters and his team work far beyond 40 hours a week and this demonstration of commitment is not seen every day. It is for this very reason that I would like to recognize Mr. Eg Walters today for his unwavering dedication to his community and to his province.

Welcome to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Stephenville – Port au Port, Burin – Grand Bank, Terra Nova, Ferryland and Mount Pearl North.

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

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Stephenville High Spartans boys and girls track and field teams. On May 28, the boys' team captured their sixth straight provincial banner and the girls placed second.

Both teams included athletes and a coach who also recently took home further accolades at the

School Sport Newfoundland and Labrador annual award banquet. Stephenville High's Jesse Byrne was recently SSNL male athlete of the year, and Katara White was named runner-up as female athlete of the year.

School Sport NL also recognized coach Rosie Forsey with an honour award as well as a coaching service award for her 30 years of dedication in coaching some of our province's top athletes.

Under Rosie's leadership in coaching track and field, cross-country running and skiing, Stephenville High has captured over 40 provincial banners in the last 10 years alone. In addition to Stephenville High's recent success, the Stephenville Middle School girls' and boys' track and field teams, also coached by Rosie, took home first and second place respectively at the provincial level.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the amazing young athletes of Stephenville and their esteemed coach, Rosie Forsey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin – Grand Bank.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Lord's Cove Recreation Committee for winning the regional Community Physical Activity Challenge sponsored by Recreation Newfoundland and Labrador, despite being pitted against many larger towns in the area.

The residents of Lord's Cove were joined by those of Lamaline, Point au Gaul and Point May in completing an array of weekly physical activities, ranging from a poker walk, Nerf gun war, beach bonfire, to many other during the month of April when the competition was held.

The committee is especially appreciative of the work done by volunteer, Lisa Sheppard, who organized a fitness night for each week during April. As well, the local school, St. Joseph's

Academy, was a worthy partner in the venture, allowing the participants to use the school gymnasium, free of charge.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the residents of Lord's Cove and surrounding towns on winning their region's Community Physical Activity Challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House to acknowledge the accomplishments of athletes and volunteers in my district.

The Clarendville Area Recreation Association is responsible for the delivery of recreation programming to the residents of the community. The CARA Association, in partnership with the Clarendville Lions Club, held its annual award ceremony on May 31.

The following individuals and groups were recognized at this year's event: The Peter S. Cholock Senior Male and Female Athletes of the Year were awarded to Jacob Evans and Emma Hackett; Special Olympics Male and Female Athlete of the Year were awarded to Nick Chafe and Katelyn Butt; William T. Davis Team of the Year went to the Clarendville High Senior Boys Volleyball Team.

The Junior Male and Female Athlete of the Year went to Cole Mackey and Amber Fitzpatrick; Junior Team of the Year was awarded to Clarendville Middle grade eight Boys Volleyball Team; Leroy Miller Sports Builder of the Year was given to Robert Pond; Lions Senior Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Mary Felkar; the Lions Junior Volunteer of the Year went to Teeannah Jennex; and the President's Award was shared with former CARA member Keith Randell and current member Neil Greening.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in applauding the accomplishments of this fine group of community volunteers and outstanding athletes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a constituent of mine from my district. Amelda Boland lost her courageous battle with cancer at the young age of 49 on May 21, 2016. Amelda was married to Jerry for almost 26 years and had two wonderful daughters Shae-Lynn and Danielle.

Amelda was well known all over the province for her love of Girl Guiding. She has been involved in the guiding movement for the past 27 years. Amelda's nickname was "guideaholic." She received every award there was to be awarded within the Girl Guides. She received her last reward, The Dedicated Guider Award, the day before she passed away, at her home in Renews.

Amelda was a much respected leader, volunteer and loved by all guides and colleagues. Amelda lived her life with great determination and never took no for an answer in whatever ventures or causes she took on.

During Amelda's funeral many guides from all over the Avalon attended and she was acknowledged with a Girl Guide honour guard.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all my colleagues of this House of Assembly to join me in honouring the life of Amelda Boland and the contribution she made to our youth and to our province overall.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the 60 anniversary of the Mount Pearl Lions Club.

The Lions celebrated their 60 anniversary at Park Place in Mount Pearl on May 27.

The Lions Charter in Mount Pearl started in 1956 and consisted of 28 members. Their longest serving member is Mr. Fred Anderson who joined the club in its Charter year. Currently, the Charter has 32 members, including me, involved in our community. The Mount Pearl Lions Club undertakes many projects of a humanitarian nature, within the community, nationally and internationally.

Current projects the club is working on include collecting used eyeglasses to send to other countries, organizing the Mount Pearl Santa Claus Parade, working with schools to offer scholarships at junior high and senior high schools and holding peace poster contests in schools, plus numerous other activities. The club is very active with helping the youth and seniors in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the Mount Pearl Lions Club members as they celebrate their 60th anniversary, and for all the great work they do to contribute to our community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It has come to my attention that we have a delegation from Botwood and Peterview who are here for Question Period today. The Town of Botwood is represented by Mayor Scott Sceviour, Deputy Mayor Dennis Woolridge, town manager Stephen Jerrett and the Town of Peterview by Mayor Jim Samson.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER: For Honour 100 today, we have the Member for the District of Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

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

I will now read into the record the following 40 names of those who lost their lives in the First

World War in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve, the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine or the Newfoundland Forestry Corps. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: Wesley Watts, Norman Way, Leonard Webb, George Webber, Hubert Webber, Archibald Thomas Wells, Clarence Wells, Daniel Wells, Frederick Wells, Harry Augustus Wells, Hubert Wells, Joseph Warren Wells, Robert Wells, Edward West, Stanley West, Harry T. Westcott, Augustus Patrick Whalen, Simeon Whalen, Frederick Wheeler, James Joseph Wheeler, Reuben Wheeler, James Whelan, Thomas J. Whelan, Albert Clarence White, Alec J. White, Arthur E. White, Frederick White, Frederick J. White, Gordon A. White, Hollie White, John White, Michael White, Reginald Bayley White, Richard White, Thomas White, William White, William Arthur White, Willis White, Archibald Whitehorn, Edgar Charles Whitten.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the provincial government's participation in the 29th Annual Baie Verte Mining Conference from June 3 to 4.

Along with the hon. Premier, the Member of Parliament for Coast of Bays-Central-Notre Dame and the MHA for the District of Baie Verte – Green Bay, I had the honour of attending. At the conference, we had the pleasure of exchanging information and ideas about the province's business, mining and mineral exploration industries and the investment community.

The innovation and ingenuity, the excitement and interest that the conference attendees are contributing to the mining sector is remarkable. While mineral commodity prices are under

pressure in the current economy, the companies and people of the Baie Verte region are thriving.

I was pleased to tour Anaconda's Pine Cove gold mine and meet individuals from its vibrant, young workforce. The provincial government is supporting Anaconda Mining in its efforts to expand its operations through a \$400,000 repayable loan under the Business Investment Program and a \$100,000 investment through the Business Development Support Program.

I also toured Rambler Mines and Metals' copper-gold Ming mine. The company recently announced financing was in place for expansion plans that will extend the life of the mine to at least 2021 and perhaps beyond. Last month, Rambler received the John T. Ryan Safety Award – a first for a Newfoundland and Labrador underground mine.

Both companies continue to actively explore projects in the area to expand their resources and are significantly contributing to the industry and economy in the Baie Verte region, and ultimately the province.

Our government is supporting growth in the mineral industry through prospector training and mentoring, the mineral incentive program, public geoscience, the core storage program, promotions and efficient and transparent regulation. We are committed to working closely with the mining industry and with communities to attract investment and to develop the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. We, too, certainly congratulate those that attended the mining conference and its exchange of ideas as they move the industry forward. It's good to see the mining industry in the province is active and has certainly experienced growth, despite some downturns in some other commodity markets. I want to

congratulate Rambler Mines and Metals on the financing announced and look forward to hearing good news from the company in the future.

I know the prior administration as well were heavily involved in the mining sector, and certainly through Research & Development Corporation, the investment fund, also worked with the mining industry and continued to grow – very important to our economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Certainly, extended congratulations to Anaconda on their investment, and as we invested in local resource companies in the past I'm certainly glad to support this investment through the Business Investment Program.

Well done!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement, and good to hear of the mining developments on the Baie Verte Peninsula. We hope that our investment in Anaconda Mining is viable. It would be interesting what returns we can expect for our \$100,000 investment.

What we really need from government is a long-term economic plan for growth and a sustainable economy not so dependent on the whims on the global commodity prices. We heard plenty of promises about diversifying the economy from them during the last election but nothing since, and certainly not in this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to note that Roadcheck 2016 will be carried out in our province, and throughout North America from today, June 7, until Thursday, June 9.

Roadcheck 2016 is an initiative of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and represents a major undertaking by vehicle safety enforcement personnel across Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Mr. Speaker, over the next three days, provincial highway enforcement officers will conduct an inspection blitz of commercial vehicles, and remind owners and operators of safe operating practices. Officers will mainly conduct the North American Standard Level 1 Inspection, which is a 37-step procedure that checks both driver and vehicle safety. Supporting safe and sustainable communities is a priority for our government and our participation in Roadcheck 2016 speaks to this commitment.

Mr. Speaker, each year our dedicated staff check hundreds of vehicles throughout the province during the Roadcheck exercise. As we undertake Roadcheck 2016, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the great work of our enforcement staff, who perform their duties faithfully every day. Their work is greatly appreciated by our government, and is vital to the safety of motorists throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I also want to applaud the efforts of everyone in the commercial transport industry who promote road safety and follow best practices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Road safety is very important to us also in keeping motorists, passengers and pedestrians safe each and every day. We do recognize Roadcheck 2016 and recognize the work of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and the undertaking of this initiative.

I'd also like to extend and thank the enforcement staff that perform their duties every day to make sure our roads are safe for pedestrians. As we come on to summer months, I'd like to

encourage all drivers, no matter if it's commercial or whatever, to stay safe on the roads. We're having too many accidents. Road safety is the responsibility of everybody.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Safety on the province's highways is of paramount importance. These spot inspections are really the only way we have to protect the motoring public from commercial vehicles that may be in a poor state of repair.

Good luck to the staff and to those on the highways. We must remind people about our Move Over and other regulations when encountering people whose work puts them in harm's way on our province's highway. I thank the dedicated enforcement staff.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bravo!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Premier stated that he would release the Justice report. Yesterday, the Premier had his Minister of Justice tell the people that the report would not be released.

I'll ask the Premier: Why the change of position? Why not release the Justice report as you have committed?

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

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

Certainly what the Premier said was that he'd like to get the Justice opinion out as soon as possible, and that he would go back to our department, the Department of Justice and Public Safety, and see what options there were. Solicitors within our department made it quite clear that doing so would breach solicitor-client privilege. Not only that, it would prejudice the process.

Do we want a legal opinion out, that has been given to government, and that could possibly influence the testimony of individuals that may be called under subpoena to testify in front of the Auditor General? It's not something we thought was right, and could influence and have a negative effect on government matters.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition Leader.

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

My recollection is the Premier said in one day nine times that he would release the information.

I'll ask the Premier again: Knowing that, Premier, you've made a very clear commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, will you now release the secretive Justice report and documentation today?

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

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

Certainly, I think the Member opposite understands the concept of solicitor-client privilege, but perhaps he doesn't. Again, what the Premier has said all along was there would

be a Justice review done. That review was done by officials within my department and an opinion was provided that this matter should be referred to the Auditor General, something I think that the other side actually concurred with.

Again, it was advised by solicitors and lawyers within the Department of Justice that releasing this opinion at this time would prejudice the process. The important thing to remember here is that the Auditor General has absolutely all information that is necessary to conduct a full and thorough investigation into the severance payout to Mr. Martin. I think that is something that all of us here in this province want to know how this happened. The Auditor General has the information necessary to make this determination.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition Leader.

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

I say to the Premier that the report, who was doing the report, and the relationship between you and who was doing the report has not changed. It has not changed since you said – and I quote – that you would happily release the Justice report as long as the AG didn't have any objections – end of quote.

Well, the Auditor General has said he had no issue with government releasing the report.

So I ask the Premier again: Why are you hiding behind solicitor-client privilege when you can release this report? Why are you keeping it secret, Premier?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Again, I figure that the Member opposite, with his background in policing, would understand

the concept of solicitor-client privilege, but apparently not so.

What we've said all along here is that a Justice review would be done. Once that review was concluded, it was determined that the only way to get all of the information necessary to determine the Ed Martin severance payout would be to have the Auditor General do this.

Obviously, the Auditor General is not going to be influenced. The Auditor General has no issue with the release of this because it is not his opinion; it's not his solicitor-client privilege to waive. But I don't think it's a good suggestion here that individuals who may be called in to give testimony in front of the Auditor General should have the legal opinion provided to government before they do so. If the Member opposite can explain how that doesn't prejudice the process, I would love to understand that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition Leader.

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

I'll ask the Premier, just to be clear, if he has or has not provided the secret Justice report to the Auditor General? Have you or have you not provided it, Premier?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Absolutely, everything from government has been provided to the Auditor General so that they can do a full and thorough investigation of the Nalcor payment to Mr. Martin.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition Leader.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Premier: How can you release information to the Auditor General – he

said it's not going to create a bias from his perspective; it doesn't matter to the work that he's going to do. So how can you release the information to the Auditor General but not to the public? You said you would release the information to the public; why are you not doing that now? What's in this report that you're refusing to disclose?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, Mr. Speaker, the public is not the group that's conducting this investigation. The public wants to know what the investigation of the Auditor General is going to find out, and the Auditor General has access to all this information. Again, this is nothing new; this is the exact same thing that was done by the previous administration when they referred certain matters to the Auditor General.

We look forward to a full and thorough investigation of Mr. Martin's payout from the former Nalcor board, and we look forward to having that done; and if the Auditor General has more information that they need, we look forward to providing it as soon as requested.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: So the Premier once again is going against a commitment that he repeatedly made here in the House of Assembly, a commitment he made to the people of the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General, he's the Minister of Justice, has the ability and the discretion to go beyond what solicitor-client privilege he may decide, and he still has the right and ability and authority to release the report.

So I ask the Premier: Will you stick to your word on this one? On this one, will you stick to your word? Will you provide direction and make the report public, live up to the commitment that you made just days ago?

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

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

Again, the Leader of the Official Opposition, a former premier, is erring in his words. The fact is the Premier said he would like to get the opinion out, but he would have to go back to the Department of Justice and see what all the options are. In fact, that's what the Premier said on a number of occasions here.

The fact is I don't know why the Member opposite would want government to prejudice this process, prejudice their case. The Auditor General has all the information. The Auditor General is going to do a full and thorough investigation into the payment of Ed Martin's severance under the contract that was signed by the former Tory-appointed board. We look forward to that investigation being done as well. Again, any information the Auditor General requires, we will certainly be happy to provide that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: I'll try another question for the Premier, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has chosen to release bits and pieces of information about this matter already. He's made that decision; he's already directed ministers to release information. That appears to have been pieces that government felt were going to benefit them, and that's all they've released.

So I'll ask the Premier: Why not the release the full package, as you committed to do, and as you provided to the Auditor General?

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

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

I think I've stated twice already here today. The Auditor General has absolutely all the information necessary that the government has

in its possession in order to do a full and thorough investigation into the severance payout to Mr. Martin. The Auditor General has all that.

The Member opposite, I believe, actually wanted the Auditor General involved. The Department of Justice concluded that was the best way in order to get all the information out and allow the Auditor General to use the powers under that piece of legislation to do a full and thorough investigation including getting testimony through a subpoena of all the witnesses and all of the people in this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why was the simple deadline to inform the nurses' union and allied professionals about the intent to enter into negotiations missed?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the opportunity to discuss this issue in the House.

As I have said already, have said to Ms. Forward and certainly the Allied Health Professionals, as the Minister Responsible for the Human Resource Secretariat, I accept responsibility for the issue that we are faced with today. I intend to address the issue, and certainly as minister I accept accountability for it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: How can people have confidence, considering the importance of this

deadline in the department, when you can't meet a simple deadline related to labour negotiations?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, as the minister responsible it is unaccountable, and my intent to solve the problem, once I have a chance to assess whether what process broke down and implement the corrective action to ensure that situations like this do not happen.

I would remind the Member, and remind the Members of this hon. House, though, that does not change our intent and the unions knowledge of our intent and the current situation that we're faced with, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, not only has the Minister of Finance dropped the ball on this, but it is fair to question the value of \$500 an hour being paid to outside legal counsel hired by the Liberal government to assist with negotiations.

How did everyone, including yourself and your high-paid hired help, miss this vital deadline?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, Members opposite have the right to ask questions and I will continue to say, I accept accountability and responsibility for the error that was made. That doesn't take away from the fact that government has been clear from the beginning that we intend to bargain with all of our public sector unions in a fair and equitable way.

We are faced with an unprecedented situation in this province and we intend to honour the good faith bargaining. It is our intention to make sure that we treat all unions fairly, regardless of whether or not there is a bargaining delay, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recognizing that two significant unions, the deadline was missed by the minister, how will this miss impact public sector negotiations going forward?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, it is our intention that our approach does not change. The circumstances that happened in relation to the serving of the contracts has been unfortunate. I accept accountability for that, as the minister, and intend to solve the process problem once I get to the bottom of it.

However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that government has made it clear from the beginning that we intended to negotiate will all of the unions in a fair and equitable way. It will not change our approach to collective bargaining and having a good-faith dialogue with our very valuable public sector employees, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister indicates she wants to negotiate with all the unions, but how can she proceed with negotiations without all the unions at the table? You've missed the deadline. How can you negotiate with all the unions?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I have reached out personally to both unions and encouraged them to participate as part of the process that we have this year. We intend to set up a meeting with them to discuss it, but let me be clear, government was clear about our intention. Everybody in the province knew what

our intention was. The unions knew what our intention was. The delay won't change our approach.

Most importantly, we have to ensure equity and fairness amongst all of our unions and make sure that our public sector employees, at the end of the day, have a collective agreement that is fair and reflective of what this province can do for them and is respectful of the circumstances that they find themselves in as employees, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister indicated she wanted to be clear with the unions, but she didn't provide clarity in terms of notifying them. Unfortunately, that's the issue.

I ask the minister: What is the impact on the budget targets if the nurses' union and the Allied Health Professionals are not at the table this fiscal year?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, that question is baffling. We would never budget an assumption about collective bargaining when we haven't gotten to the table and negotiated in good faith.

As I have said in this House repeatedly, we intend to have those important dialogues with our valuable employees at the table with their union representatives, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the Opposition House Leader, I will remind all Members that the only person I wish to hear speaking is the individual recognized to speak.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the nurses' union celebrated news of the one-year extension granted to them by the Finance Minister's incompetent misstep.

I ask the Premier: Do you expect nurses to waive this provision?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, our government expects that the conversations we've been having on an ongoing basis with the unions – and I would suggest very clearly and transparently with the people of this province. Our intention from the beginning was to bargain with all of our unions.

The situation that happened with the serving of the letters, as I've said to the Member opposite, as the minister responsible for the department, I have accountability for that. I will get to the bottom of the issue that caused this problem. That does not take away from the fact that we have been very clear with the people of this province that we intend to bargain in good faith with all of our public sector unions, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Does she have the ability to force the unions to the table or is that your intent?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, it is my intent, as the Minister Responsible for the Human Resources Secretariat, and the intent of this government to bargain in good faith with all of our unions. We intend to have those conversations at the bargaining table where they need to happen.

A delay in a bargaining implementation date will not change our approach. We will continue to focus on good-faith bargaining with our valuable employees at the same time as ensuring that we put the interests of the people of the province at the forefront when it comes to providing a sustainable public service in our province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If public employees had been allowed to do their job, I don't think we'd have this problem.

I ask the minister: How much has been spent to date on the services of McInnes Cooper and outside communications counsel?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, it is my intention to solve the process issue that led to the circumstances of yesterday. For the information of the Member opposite, I don't have the information today. I'm happy to provide it to him tomorrow when I have the information from officials.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, it's good to see the Finance Minister accepting responsibility for a mistake, let's try the Minister of Transportation and Works. We were shocked yesterday when he admitted that the provincial government removed political posters in the middle of the night.

I ask the Premier again: Who in government ordered that the posters be removed?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Really, the answer today is no different than yesterday. I stated in this House yesterday that it was an operational decision that a management personnel made. We were not aware of that. However, since yesterday, I've spoken to the employee and I think the employee is well aware that, in the future, anything of a sensitive nature of that will come to the minister's level. But it was not yesterday reported to me because it was an operational measure they felt that they could care of, Mr. Speaker. It was simply no more than that.

He was just exercising what he thought was his right to do. He did that and there are no further implications as far as I'm concerned as minister. It is certainly not a responsibility that Premier or myself were aware of prior to the taking of the signs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So it's clear that an employee of Transportation and Works engaged a private contractor through some kind of Standing Order to do this work.

I ask the minister: Has this contractor that he refuses to name done any additional work since the initial \$200 job?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the Member opposite should know because it's the same contractor they've used on numerous occasions to do routine work around the building and for some of the issues they had. Yesterday, they asked that I would table a quote. Mr. Speaker, I have no problem in tabling the quote.

It's a contractor that the previous government had engaged on numerous occasions to do work around the Confederation Building, and within our property as well, Mr. Speaker. The actual total bill came in – HST included – at \$203.40, which I am pleased to table today for the House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Minister, what's the name of the company and have they done any additional work on behalf of Transportation and Works since the initial \$200 job?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a fairly open-ended question. This is a contract that we have, a standing contract – and I don't know; they might have been up last night fixing plumbing. I have no idea. These are contracts that we have on a routine basis and they have done work for the previous administration, for this administration, and I would assume if we have work today that needs to be done, then it would be done.

So for the Member opposite to ask me if they had done any additional work since yesterday, I don't know that. I know they haven't taken any signs down, Mr. Speaker, nor will they take any signs down. He should know that and that's an answer I have for him.

Mr. Speaker, I really didn't – not that I didn't want to name the contractor, I just wanted to protect the contractor but actually the contractor is Kelloway Construction.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: So there are no secrets over here, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, fixing plumbing may be routine but hauling down political posters in the middle of the night certainly is not routine.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: So 24-hour snow clearing was eliminated with the Liberal budget, long-term care beds were closed with the Liberal budget, 54 libraries were shut down with the Liberal budget, yet you have no trouble spending money to remove political posters in the middle of the night.

I ask the Premier: How can you possibly justify that expense?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know how many times I have to repeat myself with regard to the fact that this particular issue came to the attention of one of the managers that we have. The manager, in doing what he thought was right at the time – it's a practice that had been done in the past. So he made a judgement call with regard to taking those signs down. It is not something out of the ordinary that they would have done.

Mr. Speaker, again I am very clear – I think I've been very clear the last two days with regard to answering the question that, in fact, it was operational and as a matter of fact it was something that had been done previously. They were just following what they thought was regular and they just did that, Mr. Speaker. That is about as much as I can answer on that question.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, first they cut snacks and stickers at the Janeway through this budget. Today we hear –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind all hon. Members again – I know we've had a long night and Members are tired. I ask Members to respect the individual who has been

identified to speak. The only individual I have identified at this particular time is the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing Members accusing me of not telling the truth. That is certainly unparliamentary; I hope you will address that after Question Period.

First, this government over here allows Eastern Health to cut snacks and stickers at the Janeway and today we learn that this Liberal government has cut funding for the Teddy Bears' Picnic.

I ask the Premier: Is your administration completely out of control?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The issue of the snacks and stickers at the Janeway was a decision taken in September of 2015 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. HAGGIE: – with an implementation date this year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I challenge the minister to table documentation in this House to prove that statement, which is inaccurate, Mr. Speaker.

Back to the poster issue, the minister said there's no real policy and this feels like –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I say to the Member for Labrador West that you need not stand today. I've made it very clear in this House. You will not be recognized today.

The Member for the District of Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Excellent call, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said there's no real policy on poster removal. This feels like flags all over again.

I ask the Premier: If there's no policy, why were the posters removed?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as I've stated before and I will continue to state, it was an operational decision that was made. There is no policy in place. It was a practice – as you know, of course, at the Confederation Building we have Pippy Park and that's within our property.

However, Mr. Speaker, since yesterday we've been reaching out to the City of St. John's as well as to the utilities because it is our understanding that these poles are actually owned by the city and there are certain bylaws. That's an exercise that we will continue to do.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, one of the important things, to take subjectivity out of decision making, we need clear policies. That certainly will be my intent as we look further into what happened in this situation, that we will have a policy that we can adhere to so subjectivity is not an issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: Why were the resign posters taken down while other political signs, like the NL Rising posters that have been up for weeks in the same location, were not touched?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A very good question actually. It's a question I asked the employee this morning. I wanted an answer to that because yesterday I didn't have an answer to that.

Apparently, from my understanding, the director was in Montreal at the time. The manager had called him and specifically told him the type of sign it was, didn't get into any details of other signs, and it was a decision based on the information that he had.

It was not intended to be anything other than that, Mr. Speaker. That's the explanation I had from the employee and I believe that to be accurate and correct. That's why I'm stressing it's important for us to have a policy in place that we do not have subjective decisions made. We need to have a policy in place, we know exactly what we have to do, and we will have that.

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's plan A for the levy projected revenue of \$126 million annually. Her modified levy, plan B, will raise only \$61 million. The minister also said a federal loan payment due to the federal government has been deferred to 2022, and that was the reason for changing the levy.

I ask the minister: How can the \$27 million deferral of the debt payment offset the large shortfall in projected revenues from the levy?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as part of the redefined temporary deficit levy, the payments for the outstanding \$267 million equalization repayment floor loan, which was deferred by the federal government, the amount was deferring for a number of years.

What we did in the department was ascertain how we could make changes to the temporary deficit levy. As such, we were able to make those changes, which would mean that individuals with \$50,000 of taxable income would pay no levy and individuals between \$51,000 and \$100,000 would pay significantly less. Three in four Newfoundlanders won't be paying the deficit levy and, certainly, we were pleased with what the feds did.

Thank you.

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What is she planning to cut now that the amount to be collected by the levy will be reduced?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear the Member opposite's question.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: What is she planning to cut now that the amount to be collected by the levy will be reduced?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Nothing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: (Inaudible) the number of exempt taxpayers, reduce the amount that people

earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will have to pay and increase the burden on taxpayers with more than \$100,000 in taxable income.

I ask the minister: Is she now admitting that the initial plan for the levy, her plan A, was a political blunder which placed a disproportionate share of the burden on low- and middle-income earners?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, what I'm prepared to admit is that our budget made sure that we were able to borrow money at a cost that was significantly stable compared to what would have happened had we not made the changes in the budget, including the introduction of the temporary deficit levy which we have debated in this House, Mr. Speaker, since April 14, and which we've put legislation in and that we're debating now that would see this legislation be removed.

That's what I can say to this House. We made sure that we were able to borrow money to pay for critical services like education, like health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, people are willing to pay taxes that are fair, and they are willing to roll up their sleeves to be part of the solution to deal with our debt and deficit, but they also recognize government's budgetary measures that are not fair.

Yesterday, award-winning author Michael Crummey donated his \$1,500 cash award for his lovely book *Sweetland* to the Buchans library that is slated to close. The Premier has said that his government is listening to the people; however, while he stood by and allowed \$1.4 million, plus an additional \$5 million in severance pay to go to the outgoing Nalcor CEO, he told people that the government doesn't have \$1 million –

MR. SPEAKER: I ask the Member to get to her question, please.

MS. ROGERS: – to keep libraries open in 54 communities.

I ask the Premier: Will he listen to the people of Fogo Island –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – Change Islands –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time for her question has been expired.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we've said, I've said, repeatedly here in the House of Assembly, as result of the changes in the ways that people are accessing text in the 21st century, the provincial libraries board has decided to move towards a regional model. Regionalization is something that we heard time and again through the Government Renewal Initiative exercise that Members opposite have even suggested. I believe we got a missive from Brunei the other day, a former minister of Finance who sat on with that government, suggested regionalization.

So it's something the provincial libraries board did in good faith to try and improve their services so they would have a minimum of 30 hours of operation per week, that around 85 per cent of the population would be within 30 minutes commuting distance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of St. John's Centre, for a very short question.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker: Will the Premier listen to the plea of the Mayor of Lourdes,

supported by two of his own MHAs for the area, and reverse the decision to close their libraries?

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

MR. KIRBY: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work to be done in this area from here to when any changes are made. As we've said, we encourage local organizations to reach out to the school district to see if there is ways that public access to school libraries can be maintained in those libraries that are co-located in schools. We also encourage municipalities and local organizations to see if there are opportunities to take over the operation of all of those libraries – a good number of them – that are located in municipal buildings.

There's a lot more to be done here. I encourage Members to encourage local organizations, municipalities, local groups to reach out to the school district and to the libraries board to try and find ways to continue service.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* introduces over 50 new fees and increases over 300 fees; and

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* asks the people of this province to pay more for a decrease in government services; and

WHEREAS these fee increases negatively impact the financial well-being of seniors, youth, families, students and individuals;

WHEREUPON, the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately reverse fees and increases as introduced through *Budget 2016*.

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

Mr. Speaker, we just spent 24 hours, nearly, in this House. Last night around 8, we started a debate on the levy which allowed us to talk about all aspects of this devastating budget once again.

What the budget of 2016 – I've heard it referred to a lazy budget; I've heard it referred to as amateur hour. One thing that we are all certain of, apart from Members opposite I think, Mr. Speaker, is that this budget is going to hurt people in their pocketbooks. It is going to impede the ability of some people to be able to have basic necessities of life such as food and shelter. It's definitely going to take from the disposable income of families for enjoying activities with their children, for visiting other parts of Newfoundland, any type of disposable income whatsoever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're all devastated by the vast number of tax increases in this budget. To look at these fees – and they say, well, you know when we did our consultations, people told us to raise fees. They told us to raise taxes. They didn't tell you to do all of it all at the one time, Mr. Speaker. They certainly didn't expect to see the introduction of 50 new fees that never ever existed in this province before.

It's been a sad few weeks for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador as we all try and grapple with what this budget is going to mean. It's very unfortunate that government is unwilling to listen to the people of the province who prior to November 30, all they could talk about was how people matter. We see now they mattered for purposes of November 30, but beyond that they don't seem to matter much anymore, Mr. Speaker.

We want this Liberal government to really reverse its decisions. To restore health care, to restore education and to revisit *Budget 2016*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for the District of St. John's Centre.

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

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

WHEREAS the Deficit Reduction Levy is an extremely regressive surtax placing a higher tax burden on low- and middle-income taxpayers; and

WHEREAS surtaxes are typically levied on the highest income earners only, as currently demonstrated in other provinces, as well as Australia, Norway and other countries; and

WHEREAS government states in the 2016 provincial budget that the personal income tax schedule needs to be revised and promises to do so;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that the Deficit Reduction Levy be eliminated and any replacement measure be based on progressive taxation principles and that an independent review of the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial income tax system begin immediately to make it fairer to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have a few hundred signatures here alone. These petitions keep arriving. These ones arrived today in our office. There are still hundreds more that we haven't yet presented. Most of these signatures are from the Glovertown, Gambo area. These are people who know – Trinity – people who were very upset with the levy as it stood. Why? Because they knew it was unfair.

Again, Mr. Speaker, people are willing to pay taxes if they know they are fair. I mean that's the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador. We take care of one another. We ensure that our neighbours are safe. We ensure that no one is left behind.

I believe this levy was so counter to the culture that most of us grew up in here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We knew this was not a just and a fair way of taxation, this particular surcharge – even if it was temporary. People understand what the word temporary means. So they still saw this as a very unfair tax, and it doesn't fit in with the culture with which most of us have grown up in, whether we grew up here in Newfoundland and Labrador or we are new to the province. People know it's a tax that does not bring us forward.

So that's why people have been so committed to signing petitions, to sending them in, to make sure that their voice is heard here in the House. There have been thousands and thousands and thousands of signatures, because, Mr. Speaker, people are outraged by this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS a high quality of education is vital to a strong and successful society and should be a priority of the provincial government; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has announced funding reductions to the Department of Education which will result in an increase in the class size cap for students in grades four to level III, as delivered on April 15, 2016; and

WHEREAS these funding reductions will result in a reduction of teacher allocation units at École Mary Queen of Peace School, the introduction of combined classes and a reduction in the provision of Intensive Core French instruction at our children's school; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has decided to proceed with the costly implementation of full-day kindergarten in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to instruct the school board to delay the implementation of full-day kindergarten until such time as the province's financial circumstances improve and restore programs, teacher allocations, and class size caps to 2014 levels.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is probably going to be the last chance I'll get to present this petition, but I can just show you that there are over 500 names on this petition. The parents and school council have met with their representatives. I am not their representative. In my district before, I had part of Stavanger Drive, which a lot of students

come from, but the Minister of Finance and the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, those are the two representatives of this school. They've met, but it doesn't seem like – and they've also met with the Minister of Education and they're not getting anywhere. They're heartbroken really because they're after doing everything they could possibly do.

This is a school that – and I have to do a correction, too. I was saying, because my notes were saying, it was K to 12, but it's actually a K to six school. There are 700 students in this school. For the last number of years they've seen no major renovations or improvements to the school. The first time last year, in over 10 years they've seen an extension.

The parents are very concerned about what's going to happen because they're looking at combined classes for grades three and four, and grades five and six. They don't have a cafeteria. There are no computer labs in the school. They have to split the lunch time because of the students going out.

All I ask is for the minister to listen to the parents and listen to the school council and listen to their concerns. That's what they're asking for.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to present this petition.

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

WHEREAS the Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure; and

WHEREAS the continuation of the Hebron and Long Harbour projects and the commercial and

residential growth in our region has increased the volume of traffic on this highway;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to upgrade this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway.

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

Mr. Speaker, this piece of infrastructure from Route 10 to the Trans-Canada Highway, about 20-odd-plus kilometres, over the past number of years through investments we've upgraded I'd say about half with significant investment, probably in the range of \$2 million. It connects the Southern Shore with the Trans Canada.

With the number of commercial activities that are going on, significant projects, we have a lot of employment from along the Southern Shore that uses this highway to get to their place of employment. As well, we look at things like the fishing industry, the crab industry in particular, the amount of product that's used – this highway is used back and forth, the flow as well.

So it's very significant in terms of that and industry – those types of industries, as well from the tourism sector. We see a lot coming east on the Trans-Canada Highway. Certainly whether people come in by boat or just domestic travel coming east turning off and entering the Southern Shore, Route 10, through that means and then going further south along Route 10 to access the many tourism opportunities we have.

It's a very significant piece of infrastructure. I just was on it the other day. It needs some immediate patch work and that type of thing done. I've been in touch with the department and with the depot, both. Hopefully that will get done shortly. We've had some vehicles that had some damage done to them, so we need to get that fixed, certainly on a temporary basis, some of the challenges we have but, as well, long term to invest in a very significant piece of infrastructure that's needed.

I have spoken to the Minister of Transportation on it and continue to work towards enhancing the piece of infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would move Motion 4, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 7, 2016.

Further, I would move Motion 5, that pursuant to Standing Order 11, that the House not adjourn at 10 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 7.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved that the House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, June 7.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

It is further moved that the House not adjourn at 10 p.m. today, June 7.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 2, third reading of Bill 35.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that Bill 35, An Act To Amend The Smoke-Free Environment Act, 2005 And The Tobacco Control Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 35 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: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Smoke-Free Environment Act, 2005 And The Tobacco Control Act. (Bill 35)

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 Smoke-Free Environment Act, 2005 And The Tobacco Control Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 35)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 3, third reading of Bill 36.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that Bill 36, An Act To Amend The Victims Of Crime Services Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 36 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: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Victims Of Crime Services Act. (Bill 36)

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 Victims Of Crime Services Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 36)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 5, second reading of Bill 34.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader that Bill 34, An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In the Province, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 34 entitled, An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In the Province, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In the Province." (Bill 34)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start my remarks, I'd like to acknowledge the leadership and support of Jackie Janes and Gerald Crane from the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency and all the great work they've done to bring this bill to the House here today. This is truly a very amazing day.

As Minister Responsible for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency it is with great pleasure that I stand here before you today with Bill 34. Mr. Speaker, climate change is one of the greatest long-term challenges facing the world today that requires a global response, with a strong input from all countries and all governments. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or IPCC, established in 1988 by the world meteorological office and the United Nations Environment Programme, is the most authoritative source of information on climate change.

It reports that average global temperatures are now about 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial averages and that without policy action, globally, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, average global temperatures could be as much as 4.8 degrees Celsius above those pre-industrial averages by the end of this century.

Mr. Speaker, let me put this in perspective. At the time of the last ice age, about 20,000 years ago – and by the way, in Labrador, it only represents about 9,000 years ago – average global temperatures were only five to six degrees lower than what they are today. So now within less than 100 years, average temperatures could be four or more degrees higher than they are today.

The IPCC reports, with 95 per cent certainty, that this temperature growth is caused by human actions; namely, the release of greenhouse gas emission into the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels, the release of methane from agriculture and waste and deforestation activities.

The IPCC also reports that transformative changes will occur as a result of climate change; for example, it reports that sea levels are likely to rise by up to one metre by the end of this

century, that there will be more intense storm activity, increased desertification of agricultural areas and reduced availability of drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, countries from around the world recognize that climate change is an urgent problem and are taking steps to address this issue. In December 2015, the Paris Agreement on climate change was supported by every country of the world, including Canada. On Earth Day, April 22, just a few weeks ago in 2016, leaders from 175 countries, including Canada, signed this agreement demonstrating the continued commitment globally to addressing climate change.

This agreement will facilitate the shift globally to a local carbon economy. What does this mean? The IPCC reports that if global temperature rise is to be kept to a minimum of 2 degrees Celsius, then greenhouse gas emissions will need to be reduced by as much as 80 per cent by mid-century and further again by the end of this century. The climate change imperative will force countries and companies to adapt. It will increasingly focus energy investments on renewable electricity and more efficient production processes and modes of transportation.

Jurisdictions and companies that recognize these changes that promote technology advancements and investments to lower their carbon footprint will be better placed over the coming decades to prosper and thrive.

Turning to Canada, Mr. Speaker, and as part of the Paris Agreement, Canada agreed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. This target builds on a 2020 target in which Canada agreed to reduce its emissions by 17 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020, just three years away.

In actual numbers, this will mean that Canadian greenhouse gas emissions, by 2030, will need to be reduced to levels not seen in over 25 years. It will mean a one-third reduction in emissions by 2030, below business as usual levels. These are challenging targets. These are targets that the federal government can only achieve in partnership with provinces and territories. These targets will require coordinated action by the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

They will require action in areas of the economy including electricity generation, transportation, the oil and gas sector, large industrial sectors such as mining and manufacturing, as well as action by individuals, households, businesses and governments. These targets will also require technological advancement, investments in renewable and low-carbon energy and investments to improve production efficiencies and energy efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Trudeau, since being elected six months ago, has already held two First Ministers' meetings on climate change. One in November of last year before the Paris agreement was reached and a second meeting in March of this year. The message from the Prime Minister is clear. Canada has made commitments to act to reduce the impacts of climate change. The federal government recognizes the actions of provinces and territories to date, but more needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, other provinces are already acting. Alberta introduced regulations for its large industry in 2007 and is updating its regulations as I speak. British Columbia introduced its carbon tax in 2008, and legislation to regulate new natural gas development in 2014. Quebec joined an emissions trading system with California in 2014, and Ontario will be joining this system in 2018.

Together, these four provinces account for over 80 per cent of Canadian greenhouse gas emissions and over 80 per cent of the Canadian population. Other provinces are now starting to act as well. Manitoba is exploring how to join the Quebec and Ontario emissions trading system, and Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan are taking steps to decarbonize their electricity sector.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, more needs to be done within Canada. At the First Ministers' meeting in March of this year, the prime minister and premiers agreed to develop a pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change in 2016 that will be implemented just next year. Work is underway focusing on issues such as carbon pricing, clean technology and innovation, and other measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in sectors such as transportation, buildings and forestry, and agriculture. Work is

also underway through this process to identify new mechanisms to improve resilience to the impacts of climate change from global warming that we have already experienced.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognize the seriousness of climate change. We are already seeing the impacts of climate change. This is why we are an active participant in the First Ministers process for a new pan-Canadian framework on climate change. Average annual temperatures in the province are now more than 1 degree Celsius higher than historical averages. We expect that temperatures will continue to increase.

By mid-century we expect summer temperatures in the province to be over two degrees higher than historical average and winter temperatures to be at least three degrees higher. Winter temperatures in Northern Labrador are projected to be almost four degrees higher. These are massive changes that will have very serious implications. Climate change will result in more storms, more coastal erosion and more impacts from sea surge and sea level rise.

Since 1990, for example, we have been subjected to twice as many hurricanes and tropical storms per year than for the whole 90-year period prior to 1990. These storms are getting more intense. In St. John's, for example, a one-in-100-year storm is now expected to bring 135 millimetres of rain. By mid-century this is expected to grow by 22 per cent and by late century to 33 per cent, to almost 180 millimetres.

Mr. Speaker, we recognized this defining issue in our electoral platform and committed to act. We cannot put our head in the sand and pretend it is not happening.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador wishes to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. To this end, the province set out province-specific greenhouse gas reduction targets in 2007 to enable long-term planning and signal our policy intent to industry, businesses and citizens.

By 2020, the target is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent below 1990 levels. By 2050, the target is to reduce GHG emissions by

75 to 85 per cent below 2001 levels. However, the province is not on track to achieve the 2020 target, even with the Muskrat Falls development. I would note that the development of the Muskrat Falls Project will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 10 per cent when it starts up and when the Holyrood Generating Station closes.

Given this, in our electoral platform we committed to put in place measures to accelerate progress to meeting these greenhouse gas reduction targets. Mr. Speaker, today we are meeting our electoral platform commitment to establish a framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the industrial sector. Today we are taking a significant step to becoming the fifth province in Canada and the first province in Atlantic Canada to regulate large industrial greenhouse gas emissions.

Today I'm bringing forward for a second read a new bill to regulate greenhouse gas emissions in the province's large industrial sector. This bill will see the establishment of a flexible regulatory framework for large industry; conceptually similar to what is being implemented in Alberta, what British Columbia is implementing for its new natural gas developments and what Saskatchewan has passed in legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill accomplishes three things. First, it balances environmental progress with economic prosperity. The bill will regulate these facilities in a manner that accommodates the impacts of low and changing commodity prices and builds on the competitiveness in that it will facilitate new investment, new economic activity and expand production in the province. It will also allow for regulation to occur with negligible fiscal impacts.

Second, the bill is tailored to the unique industrial structure in this province. We have the only oil refinery without access to low-carbon natural gas as a fuel source. We have the larger of only two pelletizers in Canada, and this facility also has no access to natural gas. We have the only hydromet processing facility in North America, and that facility at Long Harbour is absolutely brand new.

Third, the bill will result in real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the province. Through this bill, business as usual emissions will no longer be allowed. We will be tasking companies to find ways to reduce their emissions at their facilities. Where the costs of this are prohibitive, we will be providing for alternative pathways for them to be in compliance with regulation. These alternative pathways will generate new economic opportunity and activity outside the large industrial sector. They will also result in reductions in greenhouse gas emissions throughout the economy.

Madam Speaker, at this time I need to differentiate between onshore and offshore industrial facilities. The bill before us today deals with onshore facilities that are within the province's jurisdiction to regulate. However, the bill will also facilitate discussions with the federal government that will enable future regulation from a greenhouse gas perspective of the offshore petroleum sector.

Offshore platforms are in federal jurisdiction and are managed jointly with the federal government through the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board. We will be engaging with the federal government to determine how offshore companies can contribute to greenhouse gas reduction targets, what the appropriate regulatory mechanism would be, and when that mechanism can be made operational.

Madam Speaker, I would like now to turn to a brief description of the key elements of the bill. There are six main elements in the bill.

First, the bill establishes that any industrial facility that emits 15,000 tons or more greenhouse gas emissions per year will have to report their emissions. At least two years of reporting data will be needed to set a baseline against a greenhouse gas target that can be established for each facility. Pending approval of this bill, Madam Speaker, we intend to start collecting data for the 2016 reporting year.

Second, any industrial facility that emits 25,000 tons or more of GHG emissions per year will also be required to reduce their emissions. This will include Iron Ore Company of Canada, the

North Atlantic Oil Refinery, the two facilities owned by Vale, and any other existing and new facility that meets this threshold. However, Madam Speaker, the Holyrood generating station is exempted, as it is scheduled to close in the near term and any costs incurred will be passed on to ratepayers in the form of higher electricity rates.

I would note also, Mr. Speaker – Madam Speaker, sorry – that preliminary estimates include that at the current time Corner Brook Pulp and Paper emits enough to be required to report their emissions, but they are less than the 25,000 ton threshold that would have to be crossed to be required to reduce their emissions. We will work to make a final determination of that facility.

Third, the bill requires that Cabinet set out in regulation a greenhouse gas limit for each facility. We intend to set this target once we have sufficient reporting data and after future consultations with companies. This will give companies a long advanced time frame of at least two years to plan for how they will take action to reduce their emissions.

Fourth, the bill provides for the establishment in regulations of alternative compliance mechanisms to allow companies flexibility to be in legislative compliance at least cost. The rationale for these mechanisms is simple. Because climate change is a global problem, it doesn't matter if greenhouse gas reductions occur at the facility or off site. So the objective is to allow companies to reduce their emissions at least cost.

These mechanisms will potentially include a carbon offset system which will allow for investment and job creation in sectors such as agriculture, forestry and energy efficiency, as well as the establishment of technology fund.

Fifth, the bill sets out governance structures for this technology fund. The fund, which is also an alternative compliance measure, will be 100 per cent industry funded and will be managed by the minister responsible for the implementation of the act and, right now, that's myself.

It will invest in projects that will reduce greenhouse gases in Newfoundland and

Labrador. Because it is 100 per cent industry funded, the bill proposes that an expert advisory committee comprised of approximately five to seven industry, academic and government Members will advise the minister on how to allocate monies from the fund.

Finally, the bill sets out the mechanisms and procedures to ensure proper compliance by the minister. These mechanisms and procedures are consistent with those already in place for the *Environmental Protection Act*.

Madam Speaker, we have undertaken extensive consultation and preparation before tabling this bill and we've incorporated feedback received into our approach. Large industrial companies have been consulted four times. These consultations have been invaluable to exchange views, test proposals and receive feedback. The most recent consultation occurred last year after commodity prices started to decline. The bill reflects the input and feedback put forward by the companies.

Technical studies with iron ore mining, oil refining and offshore petroleum industries have also been concluded. These studies, which were completed in partnership with the companies, identify potential investments that could be made that would result in both GHG reductions, while reducing operating costs and improving profitability. That is, Madam Speaker, the focus was on achieving environmental outcomes, while respecting the investment and business case for companies.

We have engaged with the federal government, other provinces, Aboriginal organizations and national, environmental and industry associations to understand policy innovations elsewhere in the country and to fully understand both the opportunities for companies and the competitiveness concerns for companies and stakeholders.

We have conducted economic and fiscal impacts of various greenhouse gas reduction targets using reasonable scenarios that Cabinet may consider in the future. While the range of impacts differ, the key findings are that the costs are not prohibitive to companies based on what the companies themselves have said – a very important point. Economic benefits will be

generated and fiscal targets are considered negligible.

Madam Speaker, I would like to emphasize the points I made on costs to the company and the potential competitiveness impacts. Consultations with companies have occurred for a number of years, over which time ideas have been exchanged and the potential range of regulatory costs discussed with companies.

In light of this, we have developed an approach that is not cost prohibitive to companies or to government, even during periods of low commodity prices. We are providing companies with a lead-in time, with at least two years before these GHG targets will be established, for their facilities to allow them time to plan to minimize any capital cost that they may incur.

Madam Speaker, while no company likes to be regulated, the companies themselves understand the greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced. They understand they need to play a part of this. They also appreciate that government is working to put in a framework that minimizes any negative competitive impacts and provides mechanisms such as a technology fund in seizing new opportunities. Madam Speaker, the companies supported the timeline that is being built in to allow them time to plan a best way forward to achieve these reductions.

I want to emphasize a final point on cost and competitiveness. There will be no cost to companies associated with the approval of this bill, other than costs associated with reporting their emissions. Other capital costs to improve facilities, invest in carbon offsets or contribute to a technology fund will only be incurred after regulations are approved by Cabinet. This is not expected for at least another two years. Industry will be consulted as regulations are developed.

Madam Speaker, before ending my remarks, I would like to recap the three main points I've made here today. First of all, climate change is a global problem and new actions are planned and being taken, including within Canada. Newfoundland and Labrador is not immune to this problem or its impacts and we cannot bury our heads in the sand any longer. Second, the approach we've outlined today balances environment and economic priorities. It is

tailored to the circumstances of this province and it will achieve real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Finally, we have consulted with the companies and undertaken studies in partnership with them to understand the opportunities and challenges to reducing greenhouse gas emissions at a facility level.

The bill we are discussing today incorporates this work and, at the same time, does not set out a cost prohibitive approach to either the companies or government.

With this, I will conclude my remarks and I will speak later in second reading and at the conclusion of the debate.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is a great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on Bill 34, An Act to Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities in the Province. This is an issue, I believe, that many of our citizens will be engaged on, and I encourage that.

Regarding the topic of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, I believe that we need to establish and achieve responsible greenhouse gas reduction targets. I also believe that we, as province, need to balance the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions with our economy.

Our economy and the viability of a large industry in the province is in a fragile state. We need to make sure that we take actions and the actions we take regarding greenhouse emissions will not end the competitiveness of our industries.

As our leader has said, we see value in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We just need to make sure that it's done in a manner which stimulates the economy. We suggest that the price of carbon and the timeline of implementation be

such that large industry has ample time to prepare and invest in green technology.

The legislation which has been presented to us has too many questions and a lack of information. I'll outline some of these questions in my time here this afternoon. What's in the bill? This bill is proposing emission reduction regulations with flexible compliance options. The first thing that this bill will require is for all onshore industrial producers who produce over 15,000 tons of greenhouse gases each year to report their annual emissions to the provincial office for climate change. This is something we are in support of. We are generally supportive in asking industry to report their emissions to us.

It is important to have accurate and precise information before making decisions, knowing the exact emissions will give us a better ability to estimate an impact of reduction targets. However, I ask the minister: Is two years reporting enough to get true and accurate data of the average emissions of a large onshore industry here in the province?

With only two years of data, there's no way to determine if one or even both of these years are outliers. If production at one of these facilities is down, then the greenhouse gas emissions from the facility would be decreased for that time frame.

We know commodity markets are experiencing a downturn right now. Would that affect emission measures in 2016 and 2017? Would three, four or more years of monitoring emissions give a more accurate level of greenhouse gas emissions for these large industrial emitters?

As I said, the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency currently do not have the exact emission numbers for large onshore emitters in the province, but they do have estimates. Requiring all facilities that emit more than 15,000 tons to report greenhouse gas emissions is a good step in turning these estimates into exact information. Is two years of data enough to make decisions? Reporting will start in 2017 with the 2016 data. Reporting is just the first part of the bill. This bill also sets up a framework for reduction of emissions and how facilities can achieve emissions.

Phase two, Madam Speaker, reducing of emissions. Facilities that produce more than 25,000 tons of greenhouse gas annually will be required to reduce their emissions by a target. These facilities include: IOC, Tata Steel when it's up and running, the Come By Chance refinery, Vale at Long Harbour and Vale at Voisey's Bay. We're not sure if Corner Brook Pulp and Paper will be required to reduce their emissions or not.

The Office of Climate Change estimates that the emissions of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper are somewhere in the vicinity of 24,000 to 25,000 tons. If emissions are over 25,000 tons, they will fall under regulation and will have to reduce their emissions. If they fall under the 25,000 tons, obviously, they will not have to reduce their emissions. This is one of the reasons we need them to report their emissions; however, this is one of many questions that have been left unanswered. It's unknown if Corner Brook Pulp and Paper will be required to reduce their emissions.

As we all know, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is a very important facility on the West Coast of our province. It generates economic activity and employs a large number of residents on the West Coast. We also all know that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper has gone through some challenging times. If they have to decrease their emissions, how much would that cost them? How does the minister propose Corner Brook Pulp and Paper reduce their emissions and thrive on the West Coast?

I would also assume the management of the facility would want to know if they are required to reduce emissions in future years as well, Madam Speaker; however, this is unknown. We are concerned that there is so much information which has not yet been determined or not yet known surrounding these regulations.

Speaking of emission reductions, this legislation will set up the greenhouse gas emissions reduction framework. We don't know when the reduction targets will be imposed and we don't know what the reduction targets will be. We have concerns with that.

The government is asking for us to support a framework without giving all the details.

Government is asking us to give blind support to Cabinet to come up with emission reduction targets and a timeline of reduction. We also have concerns about that.

What should happen is that after several years of monitoring emissions from our large onshore producers, the government and the minister should come back to this House, recommend an emissions reduction target and a timeline. We should have a debate about that. The House of Assembly should have a role. That would help balance the need to reduce our emissions with the need to encourage economic growth within our offshore industries.

To put it simply, Cabinet hasn't determined what the reduction targets are yet. Cabinet hasn't decided upon a timeline for reduction targets yet; but despite this, Cabinet is asking the House of Assembly to put blind faith in them to support whatever decision they will make.

Madam Speaker, while I have an opportunity, I would like to pose a couple of questions to the minister. Maybe he can address them when he gets up a little later in the debate. How will Cabinet decide what emission reduction targets will be? What evidence will they weigh in their decision-making process? How quickly will Cabinet ask these facilities to reduce their emissions?

These are questions which need to be answered. This legislation could have a considerable impact on our large facilities – facilities used to generate economic activity. So it would be wise to outline Cabinet's process.

A target which is too aggressive, a target which tries to decrease greenhouse emissions too quickly, may be cost prohibitive for these facilities. Many of the facilities covered in this legislation are already experiencing challenges. We are cautious about the impacts of this legislation on their ability to operate. We support emission reduction but we are cautious not to put these facilities in undue stress.

I have a couple of more questions for the minister. Maybe he can just jot down and get back to me with some more information.

IOC in Labrador; we know there are ongoing challenges with IOC in Labrador. Just last week we heard that the Phase III expansion has been deferred. IOC has operations in Labrador and also operations in Quebec.

Quebec has a framework which industry deems to be more favourable than ours. The company will decrease operations in this province and increase them in Quebec. That would result in job losses in Quebec. Will the minister take this into account when setting emission targets and timelines?

Then there's the Come By Chance Refinery. It's another important employer located on the eastern part of the province. How will they be impacted by reductions in emissions? How can they reduce their emissions while still being a viable operation?

That is the goal here, to reduce emissions, to be environmentally friendly while ensuring that our industrial facilities have the potential to thrive in our province. We are asking Cabinet to think about these facilities when determining timeline and reduction targets.

Madam Speaker, I've listed a number of questions so far, but I have a few more for the minister and for Cabinet. I would estimate that the general public, employees of these facilities, and environmental groups would also have questions about this framework.

First of all, we know the federal government is keen on greenhouse gas reduction. We know that recently the Prime Minister stated if the provinces didn't take action, the federal government would take action. Emissions reduction, carbon taxes, cap and trade systems, they're all examples of regimes which are now being implemented in various provinces across the country.

I wonder if there is a risk in implementing this system without alignment from the federal government. Is it possible the federal government may implement a framework which is different than ours? This is counter to what is contained in this legislation.

All of a sudden, Madam Speaker, I wonder, how this legislation impacts our future development.

Maybe the minister can speak about that when he gets up again as well. What if there are new industries established in our province? Will the legislation help or hinder the attraction of new facilities? What about future energy developments?

We know we have a large potential for hydropower in Gull Island. From developing Gull Island, we could export green energy all throughout Eastern North America. We could help other provinces, and we could help the Northeastern States reduce their carbon footprint.

Why are we looking at provincial emissions targets instead of regional targets? Greenhouse gases are not bound by geography, so we should be looking at regional strategies. With the development of Muskrat Falls and Gull Island we could lead the country in exporting green energy.

Madam Speaker, I have one more question for the minister. He has consulted with large onshore industry about his framework. What are they saying about it? And how will this framework impact the offshore oil industry?

I certainly hope the minister has noted those questions – I'm sure he has. Perhaps he can address them when he rises to speak again, Madam Speaker.

This bill, Bill 34, sets up various options from which a facility can choose to reduce their carbon footprint. These options are known as flexible compliance options. The framework set up in this bill gives facilities various options to choose from in order to reach their emissions targets.

The first option to achieve emission reduction targets is the reduction at the facility itself. Here companies would reduce the emissions produced at their facility. This would most likely mean the company would have to invest capital into the facility to make modifications and purchase new technology and equipment. Examples of this could be buying a new furnace, a new mining truck which would produce few emissions than the one currently on site. The benefit to this approach is that companies will be investing in their operations here in the province.

Many investments which are more energy efficient are also more productive. However, the downside to this is depending on the equipment and the age of the facility, where the facility is located and the operational practices, it may cost a lot more to reduce emissions.

Some of the companies may not be able to afford significantly high, one-time investment costs to reduce these emissions. For companies that cannot afford this option for those facilities in which the price of capital investment is too high, there are other options which they may choose from. The options which they can choose from are technology fund, offsets and banking.

I'm going to speak about each of these three, but I will start with banking first. With banking, Madam Speaker, a facility can carry forward the reductions for future years. For example, if a facility reduces its emissions by 20 per cent in the first year, but its target was only 5 per cent per year, it can use the 20 per cent reduction to meet its emission reduction targets for the next four years. This is something we are supportive of. It's only fair the company be able to bring forward their unused reductions into future years.

Related to banking is also a concept of company (inaudible). This means a company which has two or more facilities, say Vale, can choose to meet its emissions reduction target overall, instead of both facilities individually meeting their targets. In other words, if one of Vale's facilities exceed their reduction target and the other doesn't, Vale can use the excess reduction from one facility to offset the other. This is also something we are supportive of.

I want to speak now about the second flexible compliance option which is carbon offsets. We know the offsets are included in the framework set up in the legislation, but like much of this legislation, it's short on details with a lot of logistical information not yet available. Although the legislation mentions offsets, there is not enough detail about how this process would work.

If emission reduction targets are not achieved at the industrial facility, a company can purchase offsets in the forestry, agriculture, et cetera, but the legislation does not give a full list of which

offsets are available for purchase or the price per ton of carbon emissions.

Government is asking us to support a framework but one of their option offsets is just a concept at this point. We do not know what these offsets are. We also do not know how much these offsets would cost. The biggest problem here is the legislation does not outline the price per ton of carbon. Again, government is asking us to give blind authority to Cabinet for them to make the decisions related to offsets.

Minister, I would suggest this House should debate the price of carbon related to the purchase of carbon offsets. It is challenging to support legislation when we don't have the full details. We don't know how much the offsets will cost facilities. We also don't know exactly what these offsets will be. There simply isn't enough information available. We would like to be able to be cautiously supportive of offsets in principle, but we don't know enough about the price or the process in which these large onshore facilities will have to go through.

Let me speak about the final flexible compliance option, the technology fund. According to the briefing given by the Office of Climate Change, this is something the industry is generally supportive of. I would like to learn more about the industry's view on this. So when the minister gets up again in debate – I know he spoke about it when he just read – perhaps he can outline how consultation with industry progress and what industry feels would be an appropriate way to balance carbon reduction with economic activity.

Regarding the technology fund, the proposed legislation gives some detail about this fund, about how it will be set up, its details, and how an advisory committee will review applications and make recommendations for funding to the minister responsible.

Facilities whose emissions are higher than their targets can pay into a fund to offset their emissions. However, as I just mentioned, carbon offsets. About carbon offsets, we don't know the price per ton of emissions. Again, this government is asking us to endorse a program. We have not been given all of the details. We do

not know how much it will cost the industry to pay into the fund.

Setting the price for each ton of carbon is a discussion which should take place here in the House of Assembly. The price of carbon carries a lot of significance and importance. Industry should have input into it. Environmental groups should have input into it. The public should have input, and that decision should be carried out in public.

The technology fund will collect a certain dollar for each ton of carbon but no one knows what the dollar figure is yet. So people listening at home may be asking themselves, what will this fund do?

Once companies pay into the fund the government will hold the technology fund in trust. Companies can now apply to the technology fund to fund green technology. Even smaller industrial facilities will be able to apply to access funds. So large industrial facilities which would be paying into the fund, along with smaller industries, will be able to access this money.

We are generally supportive of establishing a technology fund; however, we are concerned that the price per ton of carbon emissions is not available to us or to industry. I don't understand it. Industry is supportive of the technology fund but I'm looking forward to hearing more from the minister about his conversation with leadership of various companies.

This province is unique, Madam Speaker. One of the reasons in which finding the balance between reduction of emissions and the stimulation of economic activity is so important is that our province is unique. The industries and facilities that will be impacted by this legislation are unique.

The five facilities which are impacted by this, as I said, are IOC, Vale, Long Harbour, Voisey's Bay, Come by Chance Refinery, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, and Tata Steel when up and running. Many of these facilities have unique properties and are in direct competition with others in Canada, so we need to ensure environmental regulations do not hamper their viability.

For example, we have one of two pelletizers in the country. The others operate on natural gas. The facility at IOC cannot operate on natural gas and because of its location it's at a competitive disadvantage. Additionally, Come By Chance Refinery does not have a source of natural gas. This causes the refinery to have a higher level of emissions than other similar facilities.

These two examples, IOC and Come By Chance, emit higher levels of greenhouse gases because we do not have access to natural gas in this province for industry. Any price on carbon would be higher for these facilities than their competitors elsewhere in the country.

These facilities employ many people in our province and these facilities are economic generators, obviously. So while we need to reduce emissions, while we need to protect our environment, we need to ensure we also protect the economy at the same time. We believe both can be done.

Madam Speaker, we don't have to choose between the environment and the economy. I believe it's possible to have both. We believe on this side of the House that investment into green technology, investment into the green industry can help stimulate economic growth. Muskrat Falls is one example of this, and there are others.

There is immense possibility in the area of green research in green technology and in green industry. I would recommend to the Minister of Environment and Conservation that his department look into green investment as a way to reduce our province's carbon footprint and to decrease our overall greenhouse gas reductions.

The federal government has talked much about investing in green technology. I hope the provincial government is able to lobby their friends in Ottawa to allocate some of that funding to our large offshore greenhouse gas producers in this province. These large producers could leverage that funding to invest in their facilities, lower their emissions and reduce their carbon footprint.

Madam Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the reduction in greenhouse gas which will occur from transitioning our power supply from Holyrood to Muskrat Falls. Holyrood is not

covered under this legislation because it's scheduled to be offline by the time the reduction in emissions will occur; however, there is a provision which will allow its inclusion if it's not offline.

Holyrood produces 1.2 million tons of greenhouse gas annually. By switching our industry source from Holyrood to Muskrat Falls we will be reducing our provincial emissions by 1.2 million tons. This is a step in the right direction; however, this will not meet our province's emissions reduction targets. We must all work together to reduce our emissions.

Madam Speaker, I noted earlier that the emissions are not contained within geographic boundaries. Our province has the exciting potential to work with other Eastern Canadian provinces and the Eastern States to devise a regional greenhouse gas reduction strategy.

We have a great resource here in our hydro power. We can develop Gull Island and help our neighbouring states and provinces convert their electricity and green hydro power. This would result in a reduction of greenhouse emissions for the entire region.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I just want to summarize a few things for the benefit of the minister and for those who will speak on this legislation. First of all, I believe we do need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in order to achieve our 2020 emissions targets. There are many ways it can be done and the government would be wise to progress and to look into some of these options like green technology and development of Gull Island.

Madam Speaker, some concerns we have: we do not know enough about a government price on carbon, we do not know what the emission reduction targets will be, and we do not know how aggressive the timeline to reduce emissions will be. So I hope the minister will give us some insight into that.

Madam Speaker, without this information, we are unable to fully assess the impact of this legislation on these industries. We do not know how they will reduce their targets and what their costs will be.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to rise and speak to Bill 34, An Act to Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Industrial Facilities in the Province. Madam Speaker, when the minister asked if I could speak to this bill, I just went and scribbled down some notes I think, more or less, on my own experiences over the course of my very short, young life.

When I listened to the minister talking about greenhouse gas emissions in history, I was a little surprised that his research kind of coincided with the notes that I scribbled down and I'm going to get to those very shortly. I'm just going to speak to the part of the bill that reflects on the area that I come from or the district that I represent. Madam Speaker, that's the area in the North.

We do have diesel-generating power stations in all the communities in my district. The only industrial complex or the industrial plant is the one that operates the Vale nickel mine at Voisey's Bay. Madam Speaker, I can remember going into Voisey's Bay as an observer back in the '90s when there were just three tents and a bunch of Archean Resources employees doing exploration.

Since then, it has evolved into a major open-pit mine. It is almost nearing completion in that respect, Madam Speaker, and now plans are being made to go into underground mining at the same site. Voisey's Bay permits less than 100,000 tons per year which is, at this time, less than 1 per cent of the provincial total of emissions. This will increase once the facility goes underground, but will still be less than 2 per cent of the provincial total.

This facility, like many of the communities on the North Coast, is an awkward facility; it also relies on diesel generation. It will take a

considerable investment between now and 2020 to allow the mine to gear up to go into underground.

I think it's one of the biggest employers, if not the biggest employer, in Northern Labrador, having created and I think consistent with approximately 500 jobs. Now, I'm glad to see that our province is buying into the greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2020 and 2050. It seems that it's a tall order and it's a strict deadline, but I think, Madam Speaker, it is something that needs to be done.

This legislation will require all industrial facilities in our province to be regulated. Madam Speaker, it's a small world that we occupy and the need for greenhouse gas reduction is more and more a priority. I don't think we can stand by and wait for greenhouse gas emissions to reduce themselves. If left unchecked, the impact of greenhouse gas emissions have the potential for irreparable damage.

Madam Speaker, evidence suggests that the North is the first place where indications of environmental impacts are felt. Industrial development has been front and centre in the North for the last 50 to 60 years, with new developments occurring on an ongoing basis.

Madam Speaker, there are areas of concern when it comes to the emission of greenhouse gases and the effect on climate change and global warming. I'd just like to point out a couple of examples that concern us in Northern Labrador. It's a species that's in decline that affects people in Labrador and Northern Quebec and that is the caribou herds, Madam Speaker. The herd that concerns us the most is the George River caribou herd.

Madam Speaker, I've been harvesting the George River caribou herd since the late '70s. I've seen the herd go from just over 100,000 animals up to nearly three quarters of a million in the early '90s, to a population today which is hovering around the 10,000 mark; all this in a span of less than 40 years, so there are concerns.

Not only that, Madam Speaker, there are other non-native species that over the last 20 years are starting to make an appearance in Northern Labrador. Some of these species may not seem

like they're something that's weird and tropical, these are species that are quite common in other areas in the province.

Madam Speaker, to see them up in Northern Labrador has gone from a rare occasion to larger and larger populations. Some of the examples include mallard ducks, gannets, black cormorants, porbeagle sharks; some of these species that were rare occasions not that long ago that are quite common now. It's causing some concern. Is it the impacts of global warming and climate change that comes from greenhouse gas emissions?

Another example is the ice formation and the thaw of the sea ice in the spring. Madam Speaker, when I was a young man and started in the commercial seal harvest of ringed seals and harp seals in the early '80s, we went out on the ice late into the spring. From that point in the early '80s to now, we've seen a huge difference in the ice formation and the thaw.

Back then in the early '80s, it wasn't uncommon to travel out on the sea ice seal hunting by snowmobile into the second and third week of June. It was not uncommon. Today, Madam Speaker, by contrast, it's now not uncommon to be out in boat by the third or fourth week in May.

Madam Speaker, the same applies to freeze-up in November, December. In my lifetime, we've gone through spring break a month early. In the spring, the ice breaks up a month earlier and the freeze-up comes a month later in the fall. Now, these are just some of the changes that we're seeing and it is causing concern.

Another area of concern that I scribbled down that I've noticed in the last 30, 35 years in the change in weather patterns. I believe that along the Eastern Seaboard, which includes Labrador, storms are becoming more and more severe and are occurring more and more often. We do question whether or not these are the impacts or the results of greenhouse gas emissions which, in turn, cause global warming and obvious climate change.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the potential for green energy and, certainly, we look forward to more exploration into the possibility of green energy. I

know in my hometown in Makkovik in the last few years there was a demonstration, a wind power generating station set up to monitor the potential to harvest wind energy. Certainly I've been waiting to sit down with the Minister of Natural Resources and explore the results of the survey. That alone, Mr. Speaker, would cut down on greenhouse gas emissions even within the communities.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I'm happy to support this bill. It is good to see that our province is joining our federal government to tackle greenhouse gas emissions regionally, provincially, nationally and, hopefully, very soon, internationally.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(Inaudible) Bill 34, An Act to Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities in the Province. No doubt, as my colleague suggested, this is a framework to start the process of putting in place – I guess it is the start of a framework but, as we go forward, in terms of monitoring emissions of five facilities on land in Newfoundland and Labrador of looking at a process, over the next two years and subsequent to that, of developing some kind of guidelines in terms of what those emissions are from those facilities, how they would rate in terms of what the legislation says in regard to thresholds, and then from there, pay towards an actual fund that would look at reducing greenhouse gas through a number of areas.

One of the things we talked about too is the detail that's provided in the legislation. So what it's looking at are five facilities that have been mentioned before: IOC; Vale, Long Harbour and Voisey's Bay collectively; the Come By Chance refinery; Corner Brook Pulp and Paper; and Tata Steel when, indeed, it is developed.

We know through resource development, industrial development in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it's certainly

extremely important to us, as is greenhouse gas emissions, the reductions and what's happening in protecting our environment. So both of those go hand in hand and we have to take a balanced approach, recognizing, as I said, the importance of these facilities and for economic development, economic growth and how we put in place a method to reduce greenhouse gases and emissions to help for the betterment of all and do our role, which is extremely important.

The other thing that stands out too when we look at the federal government and what role they played in – I mean they're the sovereign entity, Canada, when they sign on to international agreements in regard to greenhouse gas emissions, whether it's Kyoto or other provisions that we often adopt and use as guides as we move forward. It's unusual that the federal government has sort of stepped back and said for the provincial jurisdictions to take a leading role in this.

When you look at it broadly you kind of wonder, if each jurisdiction develops a regulatory framework, then at some point the federal government says, well, here's our regulatory framework and we have a bunch of patchwork across the country for various jurisdictions. I think that's a little problematic. Maybe the minister can speak to that at some time in debate here or maybe in actual Committee.

I guess you could debate whether the federal government should lead this because they're on the national scene in terms of Canada as a whole and what percentage of greenhouse gases we emit as a country. Then you further break it down by – I think it's a couple of per cent and I could be wrong. Most of that may be with the tar sands. Then you break that down even further to Newfoundland and Labrador. What role should the national government play in coming up and developing these standards? What role does each province play in that? At some point, will it come together? What's that going to look like? So we would like to have some discussion and some thought on where that would be.

Other issues, as we have gone through this piece of legislation, our caucus talking about it, the Member mentioned as well we had some discussion about the fact that we have five facilities mentioned here so what about we are

able to attract another facility to the province, which ultimately had certain emissions that would fall under the current regulatory framework of the legislation – does the legislation allow that? Obviously some entity coming to the province, there is often a negotiation in regard to coming. What information can we tell them upfront, if there was a new entity outside of those five that is mentioned in this piece of legislation? We certainly have question in regard to that.

There was some discussion in regard to the particular facilities that are mentioned in the legislation. Some have struggled in the past years due to commodity prices and those sorts of things. So what analysis has been done on a framework, an approximate cost in terms of emissions and what that cost would be to those industries that we have identified?

I certainly would like to hear from the minister too in the discussions that have been had from some of these operators in terms of their perspective and how they feel this would roll out and affect their operations. Recognizing again, as I said when I started, this is a partnership between doing your part in regard to the reduction of greenhouse gases and handling and trying to assist with the emissions of these particular industrial activities and facilities on land in Newfoundland and Labrador and ensuring that we work in partnership to continue to grow those industries as they mean so much to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, but as I said, in a partnership, to protect the environment, how we do it.

Going through the legislation and looking at various components of it, we also know there's a fund that is set up and that would be paid in to by emitters once they went over a certain threshold. What that would be per ton is going to be determined at some point after, my understanding, a couple of years of monitoring of emissions and then Cabinet would make that decision. I'm not sure on that one. I think we would like to see a more open and transparent process where we had maybe some monitoring of facilities of emissions. Then, at some point, with consultations with industry and with all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, something be brought to the House in a legislative content that identifies the emissions, the charges so it

can be laid out for everybody to see and there would be a fulsome discussion, if you will, on that whole set-up as it is, but recognizing – I mean it is a first start, this is a framework, so it's good that we have some basis to move ahead here on how we do this.

In regard to that fund, some questions on how it would be used. Do you have to be one of these five facilities to access that fund? Would those five facilities be the only ones required to use the fund? How would you monitor that? How would you identify their reductions? Based on that, would they have to entertain various avenues to reduce their emissions? It could be technology, different machinery they'd have to use, those types of things. So we understand it's a discussion about some of those items as well.

Obviously you look at things like Muskrat Falls, the investments in our province we made there and what that's going to do in regard to reduction in our greenhouse gases. Obviously that plays a huge role going forward. Holyrood, we understand, is not in the legislation or identified, but the expectation is that will be shut down by the time that this legislation will come into play.

I'm just wondering would monitoring be done of that facility currently, or has it been done? At some point if, for some sake, it wasn't shut down, I think there's provision in the legislation where it could be covered if it wasn't shut down. Would we do monitoring of emissions at that facility as an alternative just in case they were identified or the facility was identified as part of the legislation?

In some other jurisdictions what I've learned from reading there are some – whether it's cap and trade or whether it's just direct tax on carbon, in other jurisdictions there's been collective action taken with the province. I think Quebec and California are cap and trade, but that's not what we're talking about here. Obviously there's ability to work together with regions to collectively reduce emissions and greenhouse gases.

Is there a potential there to work with other Eastern Canadian provinces, other states in the US, in some kind of partnership, work collectively? Obviously with excess energy we

have from Muskrat, we have a line to the Eastern Seaboard. We can help reduce on a regional basis, whether it's coal burning or other types of pollutants for energy generation that hydro could offset that in Atlantic Canada or even in the Eastern Seaboard. Then further when we look at future development, something like Gull Island in Labrador, the potential again to transport that out of province and how we could work collectively with other jurisdictions to reduce emissions. So that's something too. I don't know if the legislation recognizes that or if it's something that could be discussed.

We, on this side, recognize the importance of a piece of legislation like this. We have some concerns in regard to there is not a lot of detail in what is going to happen. We're going to do some monitoring. Then there are five facilities here that have been identified on land in Newfoundland and Labrador, and then on a go-forward basis we are going to come up with emission targets that are going to be decided at some time in the future and, if not, coming back here to the Legislature.

What's the consultation process that is taking place, the date, in regard to those on-land facilities? What will happen in the future in terms of that overall consultative piece as we move forward to getting to the point of emission targets and based on tonnage of emissions, what would the cost be and what will your contribution be to the fund as identified in the legislation?

So those are areas that we'd like to see flushed out in some more detail in regard to what that will mean. Again, consultation with the industry and those particular operations, what do they foresee of the challenges in terms of operations required as they move forward?

Those are some of the issues that we have. Personally looking through it from caucus, my colleague who is the critic discussed – I know I listened to the minister as he went through and certainly gave his overview of the legislation and what the intent is, and what they're trying to accomplish here. I still think it's a good start, but there's a lot here that is missing in regard to the details on the particular piece of legislation.

The other one, as I said, that stands out is the role of the federal government in this whole process as they are the ones who sign on to international accords in regard to reduction in greenhouse gases and emissions. I think we adopted targets from 2010 and we've met those, but when you look out to 2020 there is some concern we may not meet targets.

So those are some of the issues we've certainly talked about. I look forward to the minister having further discussion in second reading and then, as we get into Committee, we may be asking some questions back and forth. We'll certainly be quite interested to what the minister has to say as we move through debate on this particular bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of Bill 34, which I believe will go down as one of the most important pieces of legislation in this session. In an age where there's still major climate change denialism in political circles around the world, despite overwhelming support of evidence, it's gratifying to be on the right side of history.

I take the comments from the Members opposite well this afternoon. I think they're certainly committed to the principle of addressing climate change and I thank them for that. I certainly thank the minister and his officials for their leadership on this file.

This piece of legislation treats global warming as a self-evident fact. It rushes past any diplomatic consideration of the climate change debate per se, Mr. Speaker, and instead simply proposes a solution to one of the most serious problems facing our society, or any society for that matter, facing the world. For my generation, there has never been doubt about climate change. The science is so clear, the cause and effect is so glaringly obvious that human-led activity is warming our planet, uncovering a Pandora's box of climatic and ecological consequences.

Of course, there is the obvious effect of rising sea levels which threaten our coastal communities across the globe. For a province with so many communities on the coast, that hits us right in our own backyard. Sea levels are rising, Mr. Speaker, and this process is accelerating with every additional ton of carbon we pump into the atmosphere. How many of our own communities will be impacted if the sea rises two metres?

In my own District of Placentia West – Bellevue, Mr. Speaker – which I've said many, many times and described it to Members of the Chamber and those listening at home how it's a rural district bordered by the sea. I have one community that's inland and that's Goobies. It's hard to imagine in my own district how the communities would manage to be untouched by such a steep increase in sea levels. It's truly not unthinkable. It's not a hypothetical future; it's a virtual certainty if action is not taken.

That's why I'm happy to support the move that the government is taking here to address the consequences of global warming because it has other unintended consequences that are terrible for the ecosystem and the world we live in. It means we will have a much more difficult time feeding everyone, which is not a reality we'll want to face as our species reaches record population numbers, Mr. Speaker.

It is also taking a terrible toll on ecology and biodiversity. Species across the globe are threatened with extinction due to habitat loss and changing living conditions. Whole coral reefs are transforming from underwater biodiversity hotspots to bleached subsea wastelands. By a growing consensus, we need to take action, immediate and decisive action to combat global warming. The principle of all this, Mr. Speaker, is that each of us must do our part. Whether you are small emitters or large emitters, it is time for all of us to do our part, all of us today.

There's an obvious need in the global economy today that we are largely fueled by fossil fuels. It is not only for shipping and electricity; we depend on it for much more than that, Mr. Speaker. We use it to make fertilizer which we need in order to feed the world. They are used to make tires, plastic, pharmaceuticals and even some foods.

Taking fossil fuels out of the global economic equation would require an immediate shift in the current paradigm so drastic that we would barely recognize the world we were living in. That is why we must take a measured approach which is what I am glad the minister is proposing. Eliminating our dependence on fossil fuels simply cannot happen overnight and we must work with our industries to make sure we do it in a sustainable and responsible way.

In our world today, we see many developing nations such as Brazil, India, China or South Africa wanting to even the score with those of us who are already developed, rapidly trying to expand their economies at the expense of the environment. Mr. Speaker, we only have one planet and we must all work to preserve it together. And for these reasons, I am pleased to speak in support of this act.

This piece of legislation encompasses the spirit of compromise that is essential to finding a way forward on climate change. It seeks to regulate carbon emissions at industrial operations in our province while recognizing that these operations are essential components of our economy right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a government, we recognize that industrial operations result in carbon emissions. This ties back into the whole fact that our world is dependent on fossil fuels, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm about to say, Mr. Speaker, from my perspective in the debate is key. We recognize that industrial operations are the key to economic prosperity here in the province. We do not want to do anything to jeopardize the economic prosperity of our province; in fact, we want to enhance it, and we will enhance it. That is why this bill strikes a balance between environmental progress and economic prosperity. Two positions we believe can and should and will coexist alongside each other.

Mr. Speaker, I'm making myself clear to those listening at home and my constituents in particular. This is not about inhibiting industry; it's about working with industry as we collectively tackle the global problem that is climate change.

I want to take a couple of moments to talk about how this impacts my district specifically.

Members would know and certainly those watching at home would know that I have two of the highest emitters. They are nearing the top of the list. That would be the North Atlantic Refinery in Come By Chance and that would be also the Vale, Long Harbour facility. These are very important economic generators in my district and in the province as a whole. In fact, I've said many times in this House that I liken my district to be the industrial heartland of the Island of Newfoundland, given the large industries encompassed within it.

North Atlantic Refining is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the province that will be regulated as a result of this act. It accounts for about 9 per cent of the total provincial emissions, but it employs about 500 workers which underscore the importance it plays in our economy and certainly in the region that I represent.

About 75 to 80 per cent of North Atlantic's greenhouse gas emissions in any given year are from stationary fuel combustion, that is heating the furnaces and boilers on site; 15 to 20 per cent of its emissions are fixed process emissions, that is chemical reactions that occur as crude oil is broken down and refined; and 5 per cent is from flaring and related emissions that would be from the flare stack, which many people would relate to, given that they would drive past on the Trans-Canada and see the flare stack flaring about.

This point, Mr. Speaker, that I'm about to make is also key, I believe, to my support of this legislation in that the companies were involved in the consultation process leading back as far as 2009, and they were a key part of the development of this legislation. For me, Come by Chance is a major employer and I would do nothing, I would say nothing, I would support nothing that saw that go into jeopardy. This is truly about finding a way forward together, and we'll do the same in Long Harbour. As Members would know, it's currently under construction. Once it's in operation they'll have about 500 workers, and it's a facility that will have some emissions carrying with it.

The facility has a purchase power agreement with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro; however, it is also expected to consume a large

volume of diesel fuel to heat the furnaces and boilers at the facility. Its emissions will largely be driven by diesel fuel consumption. And another key point here, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that they were also involved in the consultation process leading up to this.

I've been out, I've toured the Come By Chance Refinery, and I've got a great relationship with the staff and the workers there. I've also toured, with the Minister of Natural Resources, the Vale operation in Long Harbour. I have a great relationship with the workers there as well. So the points that I'm underscoring today is yes, on the one hand, we have to address climate change, and I'm 100 per cent behind that. I believe it is a problem for our time, a problem that we must collectively resolve to fix.

Whether we are just 1.8 per cent of the Canadian emissions or not, we have a part to play as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we must play that role, Mr. Speaker. But at the same time as we move to further generate economic wealth in our province, particularly for me as the MHA representing these two large industries, I'm saying to my constituents that I am firmly supporting their economic ambitions at the same time that we can work towards collectively addressing the environmental challenges of our times.

Mr. Speaker, I really have nothing more to say other than that. I'm supporting the minister's legislation. I thank him for involving me beforehand and asking me to speak to this. I can look at my constituents in the eye and the industries in my district and say that we will work with you moving forward and anything we can do to help address any issues, environmental or economic, we will be there as a government to help support industry.

With that, Mr. Speaker,, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm very happy to stand and to speak to this bill, Bill 34. This bill, its intention is to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from industrial facilities in the province. Mr. Speaker, I'm happily taking over this portfolio as critic for Environment and Conservation for our caucus. It's an entirely new area for me, so there's been a steep learning curve. It's been great to take a look at this particular piece of legislation and what it might mean for us.

I would like to thank the officials in the department who gave an excellent briefing. I would like to thank also all the activists throughout the province and all the climate and environmental activists globally who have been pushing us, pushing us, pushing us to do the right thing because they have been the leaders in this area. So often government is very slow to respond but once government is pushed hard enough, government will respond – oftentimes not as quickly nor as far or comprehensively as activists might like to see us do so.

The activists may be people from the science community, people from the environmental community, people from social justice communities in this whole area of climate change and the global environment. So I would like to thank them for their vision, for their persistence, for their passion and their compassion.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill 34 again is about the *Management of Greenhouse Gas Act* and, in 2014, the most recent year for which data is available, greenhouse gas emissions in Newfoundland and Labrador were 10 per cent increase from 2013 levels. Already global activists have been pushing for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, what has been happening in our province is that the emissions have been increasing.

In 2014, large industrial companies, including oil and gas, mining and oil refining, accounted for 36 per cent of provincial greenhouse gas emissions. So that's 36 per cent in the oil and gas, mining and oil refining industries. Transportation, which includes personal vehicles and heavy trucks, as well as marine vessels, accounted for 34 per cent.

Power generation, including that big, old monster, the Holyrood Generating Station – which has provided us more often than not reliably with our energy, but really is state of the ark now, no longer state of the art, and it's been under much discussion in the past few years. The power generation, including the Holyrood generation station, accounted for 11 per cent and waste accounted for 8 per cent.

The target for Newfoundland and Labrador – and again, we are part of a global community. It's very interesting because it's hard to talk about climate change. It's hard to talk about the issue of the environment in Newfoundland and Labrador because we are lulled into this false sense that we're okay. We have lots of fresh water. We have lots of open land. We're an island in the middle of the cold Atlantic Ocean. We don't have a traffic grid. We don't have a whole lot of smog.

People are lulled into a sense that we're safe; however, we are part of a global economy and we have a responsibility. We do have significant greenhouse gas emissions. We do have a moral, a legal and an economic responsibility to do something about that. We have been slow. We have been so painfully slow to get on with this.

We know the framework that the minister has proposed to us, some activists are very frustrated. They say it's going to be two years before we see any real action. I understand that frustration. I'm sure even the minister himself understands that frustration. I'm sure if the minister could wave a magic wand he would accelerate this process.

I'm going to encourage the minister to accelerate this process as much as possible. Particularly in the consultation that he plans to do this summer, but we also have to be careful about that consultation process. It's hard doing consultation, real, true consultation during summer months. People are off camping and thinking about other things, trout, jigging a cod and taking holidays. It's hard to get information out to groups who are interested about this or activists about this, so we have to look at how do we accelerate this process but also how do we do it responsibly, comprehensively, thoroughly to make sure that real, true consultation has happened.

So far we haven't seen real, true consultation with this government when we look at the kinds of consultation they did around the budget. It wasn't true consultation. I am hoping and trusting that this minister will be true to his word and really look at making sure that this consultation is thorough, that people are heard. We have to listen not only to industry. We have to listen to industry because they play a crucial role in the health of our province in terms of the economic life of our province, but we also have to listen to the people, we have to listen to the scientists and we have to listen to the activists.

Hopefully, through this consultation process we can come to consensus building around this issue because this issue is perhaps one of the biggest issues globally. We belong to that global village. We have a moral responsibility to act fairly and with a sense of social justice.

Our target for 2020 is 8.6 million tons, and we are only going to make it down to 9.6 million tons. In 2011, the previous government reneged on a promise to reduce greenhouse gases by 10 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020. Again, it hasn't been a burning issue. It's so easy to pretend. It's not a real burning issue for our province.

They said emissions were rising due to industrial growth and we needed to be competitive to attract more investment in mining and offshore oil. So how do we deal with those seemingly competing issues? There are ways, and we know if we look in other jurisdictions in the world, in some countries in Europe, when we look also at what might be happening in Alberta, those competing issues do not have to be mutually exclusive. We have to find a way to work together. We know industry knows that this is important.

They promised to explore energy efficiency incentives in the private sector, but there was no program to help small business. Then they cut the Residential Energy Efficiency Program. I get so jealous. I vacillate between jealousy and heartbreak when I visit other jurisdictions. When I look at the programs that are available in other cities in our country, in other provinces, when I go to Europe, when I'm travelling in other parts of the world when I see initiatives by government around the areas of energy

efficiency incentives, both in the private sector in small businesses and also in energy efficiency programs.

I remember when we had the filibuster around Muskrat Falls. One night, all through the night, whenever I got up to speak I looked at who our dancing partners were with Muskrat Falls. There was Manitoba Hydro, there was SNC-Lavalin, there was Ontario hydro and I looked at who they were dancing with since they had left Muskrat Falls. They were doing some incredibly progressive energy efficiency-type programs, projects in different parts of the world. Ones that we couldn't take part in because all our eggs were in one basket, in that basket of Muskrat Falls.

Mr. Speaker, it's time, but when we look at this particular budget if we look at the area of Residential Energy Efficiency Programs, our government in fact cut. When jurisdictions all over the world are helping small businesses, helping their people make their homes more efficient, their places of business more efficient – when they are pouring money into that because they know (a) green technology creates jobs and the amount of money needed to create jobs in that area is so little and the payoff is so great – what did our government do? They cut our Residential Energy Efficiency Program. It was \$3 million last year and they've cut it to \$1.7 million this year. It's exactly the opposite of what they should have been doing.

What we see is they've gone from providing assistance to a thousand households – and we know this program was always oversubscribed – to now only to 500 households. That flies in the face of everything that this bill is about. That flies in the face of everything that's happening globally around energy efficiency and dealing with greenhouse gas emissions. It's heartbreaking, and I'm jealous of the wonderful programs that are happening all over the world and I'm heartbroken about the fact that it's not happening here. What I see here is that we get stuck with state of the ark, instead of moving forward with state of the art.

So I'm glad to see that this government now, at least in this area, is making a renewed commitment to cutting our greenhouse gas emissions. It is the right thing to do. But they are

also saying we won't meet our 2020 targets because Hebron, White Rose and Long Harbour are coming on stream and will offset the effects of Muskrat Falls and the closure of Holyrood, and that's a problem.

I know that some of the activists have been speaking to me about their dismay about the issue that we have no jurisdiction over this issue in regard to the offshore oil industry, but they see what is happening in Alberta, with the tar sands and the oil industry in Alberta. One of the activists asked me – he wants to know – what legal opinion did the minister seek in regard to the jurisdiction over the offshore gas and oil? I would like very much for the minister to be able to speak to that issue.

I am pleased that there is now at least this flexible compliance framework for the large, land-based industrial facilities. That's an important approach for us, but it will be a long time before they have to either reduce emissions or pay offset penalties, at least 2019, a year before our next greenhouse gas emission reduction target.

So we're looking at two years of gathering data and information. I know that some of the activists feel that that data is already being collected by Environment Canada, but I also know that the data that is being required by this for our provincial purposes is a little more intensive, and is more specific.

I would like for the minister to be able to speak to that because a number of activists have this question: Why, when they feel that the data is already available and is collected by Environment Canada for some of our larger industrial facilities? So if the minister can speak to that, and again, the concern that this doesn't include the offshore major emitter because it requires working with the federal government as the co-regulator of the offshore. I know that people would like to hear from the minister about that.

Local environmental industries are pleased with this framework. I know that NEIA has put out a press release today saying that they pleased with this because, in fact, what it does is create work. Once we have a framework in hand that large industrial companies, even smaller companies

who need to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, that they will need help doing that and they will need the specific technology, this will create jobs in the green energy sector.

I can't mention Iron & Earth enough, and I don't know if the minister has had a chance yet to meet with that organization. Again Iron & Earth started here; the Atlantic chapter started here in St. John's about a month and a half ago and I went to their first meeting. Iron & Earth is comprised of men and women who work in the oil industry and in the mining industry, extraction industries and they are well trained, they are plumbers, electricians, pipe fitters, scaffolders and they have been displaced by the crash in the commodity prices, by the crash in the oil prices. But again, they are people who are well trained, who are hard workers and they want to turn their skills around and use their skills in this area, in the green technology area.

They have some really good ideas. Iron & Earth have chapters in Alberta and in BC. A lot of people in those chapters are also from Newfoundland and Labrador. A lot of them displaced workers from Northern Alberta and from Fort McMurray. So I really look forward to the minister meeting with them. They are educating themselves and they are ready to roll up their sleeves and jump in and be part of the solution, and I think that is great. Many of them have come back home and that's what they want to do. They want to work here; they want to be part of the solution.

There are opportunities now here for some of these funds to be invested in renewable energy and that's a good thing, although we see again that cut to the REEP program. But net metering has stalled – this is stalling us going forward and I am hoping that the minister is going to be looking at this issue. There are a number of green technology companies that are ready. They are ready to move forward. They are being held back by net metering. People because of legislation around Muskrat Falls, nobody is legally allowed to produce their own energy and then sell back to our grid, which is happening again all over the world. It's heartbreaking that it's not happening here.

Again, I'm jealous of the progressive measures that are being taken in other places in the world.

I am hoping that the minister is going to take a look at that in this whole package because that's part of it. It's absolutely part of it. I hope that there is an openness to take a look at that.

Now, the minister has promised that there will be public consultations this summer for a new climate change action plan. Thank goodness! We need one, but we need one with teeth and then we need an absolute commitment that we will move forward. It's not enough to have a plan and put it on a shelf. And we need resources committed to it.

I believe the minister seems to be a very optimistic kind of guy, and he seems to be very committed and passionate about this issue, and I believe that he is going to take some leadership and push us forward. But, just in case, Minister, I do hope that the activists and the industries are going to help push you to accelerate this – again, because sometimes that's what we need.

The teeter-totter between competing interests, I believe that all of us together can negotiate those specific issues. So we need to look at what is possible for more incentives to cut emissions in small business, in transportation and in other sectors. And we need not just to look, we need to be able to be committed to action, we need resources committed to this.

I would like the minister to also speak about what is his timeline for the consultations. As we know, there were public consultations on the residential tenancies board that was, I don't know, 3½ years ago, maybe almost four years now; we still haven't seen a new act. We still haven't seen that report. So we need to know from the minister exactly what his plan is. It's not enough just to raise dialogue. It's not enough just to consult. We need to know what are his plans for coming forth with the new plan and the new strategy, and when will it be public, when will that be available to the province. I'd also like him to speak a little bit to his plan for consultation, how he will ensure that it's true public consultation, that's it's true engagement.

I believe part of the reason that we are in so much trouble with Muskrat Falls is because there wasn't authentic engagement, there wasn't authentic consultation, and it was just rammed

through. It is my hope that the minister will take a different approach.

I would like to just take a brief look – again, there is a sense of urgency that we have to wait another two years before any real action takes place. I would like the minister to somehow speak to that. He cannot compress time nor can he accelerate time, but I would like him to speak to that sense that people are saying, oh no, here we go again. I believe, Minister, that you might be able to do that.

There is a concern that it doesn't –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

I'm very happy to speak to this. I hope that the minister will also speak to some of the shortfalls that people see in comparison to Alberta.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to take a few minutes to add my voice to support this bill and the changes that are being brought forward in this bill, Mr. Speaker. Greenhouse gases and global warming is an international issue; it's a global issue that we face. It's a very challenging issue because there's no overall – it's very difficult to get compliance in the international context.

It's very encouraging that – and the Member opposite mentioned the activist who sort of pushed forward the agenda on this in this province and around the world. I think it's very important to recognize the importance of their involvement in that as well.

Also, I want to – it's encouraging to see that this is a priority of the new federal government as well as the new provincial government, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see that both levels of government are willing to work towards putting in place mechanisms that will see Canada and

our province contribute to solving this problem as well.

That's in contrast to the previous administration, in many ways what's seen as a laggard in dealing with this issue and was seen as someone who contested the whole idea that global warming was taking place. So it's good to see that fresh new approach to Canada. The previous federal administration, I mean. Some of the Members opposite were looking at me.

The other provinces are already beginning to act. It's interesting that each province is sort of putting forward a method of reducing greenhouse gases that fits their own circumstances, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that one size doesn't fit all in this case. This province is moving forward with mechanisms which suit the circumstances here in this province.

Some would say we're a small part of the Canadian problem, Mr. Speaker. Newfoundland and Labrador's contribution to emissions are about 1.2 to 1.4 per cent of the Canadian total, but that's in proportion to our population. It's important to note as well that everyone has a part to play, Mr. Speaker. We all have a role to play.

Some considerations for our province as we move forward, and I guess any jurisdiction as well, is to look at the cost and the competitiveness issues that are involved for our jurisdiction. That's important as well. The timelines, how quickly you can implement these changes that you want to bring in. The other thing is the local circumstances and how our circumstances are different from other circumstances and how our program should deal with those things.

We've brought forward a program of flexible compliance mechanisms. We have a technology fund. We have offsets. The general principle with the offset is although you may not do something to deal with the issue you have, you may be able to find a way of offsetting the emissions you put out in another way that's more suitable for you. Also, the idea of being able to bank the credits you have due to the changes that you make.

We're breaking new ground here in what we're doing in dealing with this issue and developing a solution. Some of the main components of this bill – that's a few comments about the general sort of problem and context of global warming and greenhouse gas issues.

Now I want to look a little bit at the issues that are specific to this province and, more specifically, how this might all impact on the area that I represent here in the House of Assembly.

Some of the main elements of this bill are that industrial facilities that emit more than 15,000 tons will be required to report their greenhouse gas emissions. Report regulations will be released this year and reporting is expected to start in 2016. Some facilities are already reporting to the federal government to comply with their regulation. That's in terms of facilities that are below 15,000 tons.

Industrial facilities that emit more than 25,000 tons will be required to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions at a future date. Reporting data will inform the greenhouse gas targets for each facility, which will be set in regulations in due course. At least two years of reporting will be required before limits can be established.

That's a prudent way of dealing with this issue, is understanding the context of which the emissions are taking place in this province, gathering data, allowing people enough time to adjust to the situations and finding solutions that will result in the ultimate objective of reducing greenhouse emissions, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased with that approach and those things are in place.

Mr. Speaker, one of the facilities that may or may not be impacted by this is the – well, some of the facilities in this province, there are only a few large emitters in this province. Basically, it's the iron ore mining, oil refining, nickel mining and processing, and the newsprint industry. The iron ore mining basically involves a pellet plant. Pelletization of ore requires the use of energy and bunker C is used too in that process. Also, oil refining is another area that involves emissions and nickel mining also, especially as the facility goes underground.

The newsprint industry may or may not in this province meet the – it seems like it's between the 15,000 and 25,000 so it may not have to look at ways to mitigate the emissions that they make. They're sort of one of the majors, but not one of the largest emitters.

This whole idea of the competing values of environmental industries and resource industries and other industries has been around for a while, but it seems to be changing in recent years where people are more looking at the ways that – competitive industries are industries that are also environmentally aware, that take responsibility for the environmental issues that they have and show leadership in these areas. So that's an important part of this legislation, the way we've done it, and the way that it promotes companies being responsible in dealing with their emissions, Mr. Speaker.

Also, I think there are some possibilities in the future that may evolve in terms of the way greenhouse gases are being dealt with. For example, there some facilities in the area that I represent that produce biogas, so there may be some possibilities in those areas in the future. Also, the Bay St. George area is one of the areas in the province that is being proposed for a major wind energy development, so that may be another possibility there as well. It's interesting that, in the future, those industries may benefit, as well as the companies that make up the Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Industry Association.

These areas may benefit from this type of regulation, this type of flexible compliance. I want to commend the minister and the team within his department for bringing forward this piece of legislation, and the work that they're doing, playing their part, our part, as the province, in looking after greenhouse emission.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, if the hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

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

First of all, thank you to each of the speakers. I must say the thoughts and the questions were excellent, very comprehensive; you touched on a lot of the nuances and actually a lot of the action to come forward. I thank you very much for paying a lot of attention to what is in there.

What I'm going to try to do is lightly answer your questions as we go through. I would suggest that if it's insufficient, you perhaps let me know right here. I don't mind exploring with you in further detail, and/or I guess we could talk about it further in Committee. So I'll just throw that out there. I'm more than open and willing to talk.

First of all, to my colleague, the critic for Environment for Conception Bay South, he had a series of questions and I'll go through some of these. First of all, he asked about whether or not two years was sufficient to compile accurate data for decisions. It may not be. We have set two years as a target. We are anxious to see progress. As the Member for St. John's Centre indicated, it's important to move, so we've struck that compromise of two years.

I'll note why that two years may just work fine for us. Most of these facilities, certainly those that are emitting over 50,000 tons a year right now, are already reporting to the federal government. They're used to reporting. The challenge that we have in that data is that they're not reporting in a way that we need the information, it tends to be system wide. We need to have it more specific for the particular parameters we are looking for, things like carbon dioxide and things like methane and so on.

Another thing that we are doing in terms of how we handle the data that comes in is that we tend to normalize the data. I'll note that over the last couple of years, we've had highs and lows in each of these industrial facilities that we're talking about, so we've had to adjust for that and we will be adjusting for that as that occurs. This is all about the co-operation that we have working with industry to ensure the data that we're collecting accurately reflects a normal year.

The other aspect to this is, of course, you don't ever want to set it in stone because as my colleague for Torngat Mountains indicated, operations like Vale and their underground, they're going underground. Their energy demands are actually going to increase, so we need to accommodate that in future and so on. You don't want to set a limit on a facility that would preclude it from expanding from operating from pursuing other opportunities. At each iteration, if you like, of the lifecycle of a plant, we would be working closely with them to set. Two years is a target. We'll be watching that closely.

The emissions reduction at Corner Brook; what is their level? That's Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. I'm going to put an overarching thought out there for several of the speakers in terms of there's a suggestion that this bill before you was lacking in detail. In fact this is enabling legislation; there are no regulations in here. I would suggest there were a couple of times the word "regulation" was used but there are no regs in this. The regulations will be developed in full consultation, as the Member indicated.

We really wanted to narrow down on the approach. There are three carbon-pricing mechanisms active in Canada right now. We wanted to agree as to what's the most appropriate for this sector of our economy. We have done that; that's what we're looking at. Now in terms of how and what and where and so on and the price, all those different things, that will all be developed through a consultation process that I would suggest will be ongoing.

But certainly our plan is to have, as I said, two years of data, so we'll be developing the rates to support the decisions that will come to Cabinet at the end of 2018. So such that by the start of 2019, companies will receive their targets and they will have strategies before them as to how they are going to meet those targets.

In terms of identifying what the cost of the emissions reductions is for each of these, it is very difficult to say. I can give you a couple of examples of a rough ballpark. It really will depend on what target is set, what the price per ton – right now a ton of greenhouse gas emission varies in price around the world, anywhere from \$30 to \$50 a ton. So that may change, we'll see.

There may be a national standard that Canada will adapt and then, therefore, present to all of the jurisdictions or there could be some international agreement as to what's most appropriate.

A lot of parameters in there, a lot of moving parts, but I would suggest to the Member for – perhaps I will just refer to it in general but one of the speakers certainly talked about the need to be very transparent, and we'll do our best to certainly do that in terms of setting what the price will be. Bringing those targets back to the House of Assembly, I would need to confer, but I certainly take the point and we'll be discussing with my colleagues.

A lot of the target setting frankly is going on and in the end of January, I was in Ottawa and since that time I've certainly been working with environment ministers in other provinces and territories, going through their lessons learned, what's been working for them, what might work here. While we are late coming to the game, at least we have the benefit of learning how others have fared and what's worked for them, what didn't. So it's a lessons learned tour, if you like, that we are on.

I had a remark around IOC in Labrador. I guess it was just around the fragility of that operation. For IOC and for the refinery there have been – as I might have indicated, we started with very intensive consultations with industry back in 2011. We've had five years of working very closely with them. Processes, evaluations, as to what it will take for them to reduce their emissions and what investments they need, that kind of work has been ongoing. So the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency is able to avail of that. It's not like this is a sudden surprise to anyone.

In fact, I was very pleased to have the vice-president of the North Atlantic Refining Limited present with myself today when we launched this in a press conference. He's comfortable with the process that we've selected. It feels, from an industry perspective and in terms of the options that are out there, the carbon-pricing mechanisms, this is the one that Newfoundland and Labrador and the industries here can most and best work with.

In terms of alignment with Ottawa, it's very interesting. My background is in science, but as I've gotten into this portfolio it is so complex to really understand it well. Hat's off to the folks in the office. They're a small group, but there's a high quality and calibre of people that work there.

It's really interesting because Ottawa unfortunately has been almost absent from this whole strategy of addressing climate change for the last decade. Provinces and territories have moved on their own accord. That's why we have the patchwork that one of the Members referred to. We see different strategies across the country and each has had to move unilaterally as opposed to with their colleagues and in a national framework.

That is why right now the prime minister has called on a pan-Canadian framework to start to pull this all together. That does not necessarily mean we're all going to go to a cap-and-trade system or a carbon tax or this regulatory approach. What it does mean is that we're going to look and understand. A clear message I had to deliver in Ottawa late January, new to the job, was to ensure that our jurisdiction, we find a solution that works for us.

I was very pleased to see good reception around the room. Certainly the big players of Quebec and Ontario tend to dominate that discussion, as they do any FPT discussion. Nevertheless, with our Atlantic provincial colleagues and reaching out across the country, I feel we're in a good place in terms of letting this jurisdiction proceed.

How do future developments fit into this whole bill and this legislation? We've talked about it and it's actually going to roll into the environmental assessment process. As projects are registered and as that undertaking is reviewed, this will just be one of those triggers that would initiate a review of what kind of emissions are you going to have, what are your anticipated levels? Certainly, if they're anticipating to exceed 15,000, we're going to be advising that proponent that they're going to need to co-operate and move into our jurisdictional approach to carbon pricing. We see that as a very convenient way to capture all new developments.

In terms of export energy from Gull Island – and it's been interesting because I've had a variety of people speak to myself and I'm sure to the office on this point. Gull Island is a great opportunity in terms of producing non-GHG emitting energy. There are challenges around it of course besides building the project. There are environmental issues but in terms of releasing greenhouse gas emissions, hydro is a very effective way of doing that and creating a lot of energy.

In terms of us meeting our target, you must appreciate that it doesn't reduce our own footprint. You might have heard the statement that by the conclusion of Muskrat Falls Project and the demolishing, decommissioning of the Holyrood plant, we will be at 98 per cent of the electricity generated in this province will come from non GHG sources. Sounds great, sounds like we are way ahead of the scene.

Unfortunately, on a per capita basis we rank as one of the biggest troublemakers in the country. So for our half million people, we are no saints. I think we are in eighth position in the county in terms of – with tenth being the highest. So on a per capita basis, this half million people, we send a lot of stuff into the atmosphere. We do need to step up. On total, of course, it is a very small amount. It's only 1.2 to 1.4 per cent, as one of my colleagues said, but on a per capita we have a lot of work to do.

In terms of regional targets versus provincial. This target game is interesting. We have a provincial target for 2020, we also have a provincial target for 2050. We have a regional target for 2030, and this was developed in conjunction with the Atlantic provinces and New England governors. So it's not one specific for ourselves; that may come about in the future.

To be honest with you, in six months I have been preoccupied with just getting moving, getting this jurisdiction to pull up its socks and get forward. I would anticipate there will be a dialogue at some point in the future to decide whether or not we need to identify a provincial target for 2030. We are availing of both regional and provincial targets.

Offshore oil; as you saw on our pie chart offshore, industry represents some 16 per cent of

our total emissions. So onshore is what this approach is and that represents some 19 per cent. We realize that we need both in terms of co-operation, in terms of emission reduction. We started some time ago. We've sent a signal to Ottawa that we want to sit down with them and engage in a discussion because it's a federal-provincial jurisdictional dialogue that's going to be needed to open – we don't know if we have to open up the Atlantic Accord or not, but that's where it's going to sit is in that realm.

We've already started that communication. As I've said to some folks already today, I was just anxious for us to get started. We've got this one step; we've got a few more steps to go before we're going to meet our target for 2020 and beyond. I look forward to reporting back to the House on our progress with Ottawa.

It was a good discussion from my critic on the discussion of options and so on. One key point I'd like to make about offsets – and if you look at some of the other carbon-pricing mechanisms, things like cap and trade, you want to have a very different kind of economy than what Newfoundland and Labrador currently has right now.

Cap and trade means you now enter into a system – it's an international system. The rules are already set in place. We're talking large industrial economies and we're also talking about potentially the export or import of large amounts of capital. If you're not making your targets in a cap-and-trade system, you can invest somewhere else in the network of international opportunity.

It doesn't necessarily mean – so for example, NARL let's say, had an obligation. If they were under a cap-and-trade system, they may find a cheaper mechanism perhaps in Brazil that they could avail of. All the money to meet the targets that we'd want, they could invest in something in Brazil and it would have been a lost opportunity for us to grow our own economy to diversify what we're doing and so on. Again, another key reason why we selected this regulatory approach.

Yes, and I got the point about the price per ton that we debated. As I said, I have a sense, and it's just a sense, that you're going to see more of

a universal identification as to what the price is, what that commodity price will be for that carbon.

Oh, yes. How do we ensure reductions occur elsewhere through our technology fund. That will be my responsibility as the minister, but as I said, there will be an advisory council made up of academia, industry and government. We estimate some five to seven persons. I'm not sure right now at this time, I'll just transparently admit whether or not this would fit within our Independent Appointments Commission. Perhaps it will, I don't see any reason why not. As it's a new bill, it hasn't been captured in Bill 1. So I'll just put that out there for further deliberation.

The idea is that other industry will be able to propose. I'm aware of my colleague from Western Newfoundland and a couple of companies in particular that are showing tremendous advancements in technology. They may be able to apply to this fund, which is in receipt of cash from industry that is captured by this legislation, that weren't able to make their targets. Money will sit in the fund, we'll administer it, but other industrial players could apply and use that cash to in turn reduce their own emissions.

As I like to say, there's one atmosphere up there and this is one jurisdiction. So if Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, or some other large industrial player is emitting emissions in the sky, they can't find reductions on their own operation, on their own strategies and so on, their investment in the technology fund will allow others to reduce their emissions; thereby, we will still, collectively, total net at the end of the day, reduce our provincial jurisdictional footprint in terms of GHG emissions.

In terms of the green investment and the green economy, absolutely, there is plenty of opportunity. I must say, I've been very busy myself and the Minister of Natural Resources. I believe we probably have met with at least a half-dozen green energy companies already in the last few months.

The Member for Torngat Mountains talked about the operation at Vale. He talked about the tremendous change on the landscape. He's

seeing new species of plants and animals that are showing up and changes in ice cover.

It's interesting, the Nunatsiavut Government is doing a study right now looking at the effects of climate change on the mental health of Inuit. It's very traumatic, actually, when you think about Aboriginal traditional knowledge and you're no longer able to accurately inform younger generations as to where it's safe to walk or snowmobile, hunt or fish because things are changing so fast and so dramatically. The further North you get, the more obvious this is.

I talked about the patchwork of strategies, for the Member for Ferryland. What role does Canada play in directing? Well, right now what they're doing is encouraging all the jurisdictions to move. You probably have heard myself speak a little bit in the press about this. I felt we needed to move quickly.

It's been a busy six months since I came into office, but I wanted to see this province get involved in carbon pricing. There are still two other provinces that haven't moved yet and the federal government is trying to move everyone together. So who knows, maybe the feds might have imposed something. I don't know, but we said let's find something that works for us. So that's what we did.

They are showing great leadership. We have four committees right now. This province is heavily – and my comrades from the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency are involved in all four of these side tables that are reporting to the pan-Canadian framework.

I talked about how to accommodate new industry, how to change targets. Holyrood monitoring is ongoing now. We are going to watch – as you say, there is a clause in the bill that will allow us, if in the event Holyrood does have to continue, that it will be captured within this legislation. It's certainly not our plan right now.

In terms of partnering with other provinces and states to reduce their emissions; opportunities like Gull Island, if we were to develop it, it would benefit those jurisdictions. It won't necessarily benefit ours in terms of carbon credits or GHG emission reduction here but it

certainly will help others and it will make our export all the more attractive.

Need to take action, Placentia West, I talked about NARL and Vale – the role of activists and so on, I couldn't agree more. I have a pretty thick skin. I'm used to – even today watching the social media jump on the announcements and criticizing and challenging, and that's fine. It's also important to understand –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time for speaking has expired.

MR. TRIMPER: Okay, thank you.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the bill –

MR. SPEAKER: I'm sorry, my mistake. Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 34 be read a second time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The Province. (Bill 34)

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

When shall the said bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The Province," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 34)

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 34.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 34 and that I do now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 34, An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The Province.

A bill, "An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The province." (Bill 34)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Can the minister provide some additional information on how the carbon offsets will work? Why aren't the provisions in the bill for this? Unless it's all part of the one question, I guess. Why will they only be contained in regulations? When will the full list of offsets, which can be purchased, be released and how much will they cost? I know it's wordy, but it's all kind of tied together.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: I'm going to take a second. In terms of the opportunity of what offsets are available, I mean, offsets will appear. There are some now.

I just would like to describe to you a little example, if I could. Yes, here we go. For example, there's a company that operates in this province called Abydoz. It's a waste water treatment technology company. It can treat waste water in more environmentally benign, i.e. lower methane emissions. They have two projects in this province right now. One is in Appleton and the other is in Stephenville. They've just received a national award.

This is an example of the type of activity that could be expanded throughout the province in terms of offsets. I would anticipate that as a result of this bill being passed, you're going to see more entrepreneurs get involved. I'm pleased to say I've already met several, and I've been encouraging them to get ready.

If I could have one more further thought. The federal minister, this is where she is also very interested in supporting us and looking for this jurisdiction to get more involved. Central Canada is taking full advantage of this opportunity and there's a great role for our smaller medium-size sector to do this.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just a comment from the minister, I know you may have touched on it in your closing remarks in second reading. Alignment with the federal

government in regard to implementing your framework and working towards it, any thoughts on will that be counterproductive in terms of being offside with what the feds may come in at a later date, or will you be working collaboratively with the federal government as you put this framework in place? How do you think that's going to work?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: As I indicated, the meetings in January were actually quite intense because this was the key question. Here for the first time ever, the federal government, all the provincial government ministers for environment and territorial ministers, were together in one room talking about climate change. This was what was on everybody's mind because so much progress had been made by frankly most of the jurisdictions, not including ours, unfortunately, but here we go.

We went to that table over those days to ensure that we would not get swallowed over by what the big boys were doing. Frankly, we were able to achieve that. I'm very pleased to say we enjoy a great working relationship and people like Jackie Janes and Gerald Crane and their other staff. Almost on a daily basis I'm talking to the federal government as we move forward on these four working groups and around this pan-Canadian framework.

At the end of the day, we're all going to use a different way to get to the same point, which is reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emission reduction levels.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I ask the minister: How many of the five industrial emitters are reporting emissions?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: I'm looking up on high and I see the number four, and that's because they are emitting more than 50,000 tons of GHGs right

now. The federal government requires facilities in this country that are emitting more than 50,000 tons to report. As I said, the reporting structure that they are following now is not in the format that we wanted, but it's a great start. They don't need to necessarily hire additional staff, get involved in an honorary process that they don't know a thing about, so we're just going to do some tweaking with them on their reporting.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I will ask the Clerk to call –

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 31 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 31 inclusive carry?

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Just referring to the minister, there were a number of questions that I had raised and I know that he was on the verge of – I tell you 50,000 tons, that's what my head feels like right now. He was on the verge of possibly addressing some of those questions I raised and I wonder if maybe he could do that because he ran out of time.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: It would be my pleasure. Thank you for the opportunity.

First of all, yes, this is going to be a very busy office over the coming months. I'm going to go to the action plan, first of all. We have four community consultations we've identified across the province. They're going to be happening over the next month and a half, approximately, through June and July. We are also engaging all industry groups, identified stakeholder groups, so we'll be reaching out to those people. We have facilitated discussions. We have guides already prepared in terms of engaging thought-provoking questions. We'll be compiling all of that information.

We do have a bit of a deadline. We want to have the document approved by government and ready for action at the end of this year. So working backwards from that, it's a five-year plan. The current one expires this year, so we don't want to start 2017 without an action plan in place. To that end, we're moving backwards. We're anticipating approximately September to conclude our public consultation.

I take your point about the summer consultations and I have to say this has been something that has been raised in the office, so we're going to look for as much strategy and opportunity as possible to incorporate. We want to get our public meetings happening now and get the word out. We're also doing some marketing – Turn Back The Tide – and some other advertising to let people know this is happening.

That's on the action plan. In terms of working with this bill and the regulations that need to be developed, I'm very pleased to say that in the last couple of hours I've heard from a variety of industry associations, in addition to those that we've already been talking to. Because of the nature of the discussions and so on that have gone on, we've been high level with them in terms of what we were doing and how we went forward.

It was good to see the positive remarks from NEIA; it's an organization I know very well. I'm a past chair of that important board. I look forward to working with NEIA and others like it in a very collaborative way as we develop the regulations. As the Member for CBS identified at the start of this debate, that is the real meat on the bones as to how we're going to do this. I hope that helps.

One more thing: Your Iron & Earth group, we're actually meeting with them in two days' time, on Friday.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just a couple of quick points, when will emission reduction targets be released and how long after the targets are released will facilities have to comply and reduce their emissions?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: We're anticipating two years of data. That would start this summer. It will be in the summer of 2018, we'll be compiling information along that period. We'll be having a discussion with the industry associations, with the industry industrial facilities themselves, with others that are curious. We'll be identifying a target probably in the fall of 2018 such that at the start of 2019 – I'm looking for a head nod; yeah, I've got it.

Madam Chair, 2019, January 1, that's our plan, is that they will start having to respond to a target, each of these industrial facilities. Each one will be separate and individual for their situation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just wondering, section 5(4) references an exemption of an industrial facility. The Lieutenant Governor in Council and Cabinet would have the authority to provide the exemption. I just need clarity. Is that for a facility that was already emitting over 25,000 tons and then subsequent, did not so then it could apply to have a future exemption?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: Yes, and it also could apply to situations – for example, say there was an industrial fire on the site that limited their operation or there was something that might

interfere with their ability to respond, we want to work, as I said this morning in a press conference, very much hand in hand with industry. We don't want this to be onerous but we do want to get on with the challenge of addressing climate change.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

On the technology fund, Minister, we have a fund that's there where monies deposited in the fund remains in the fund for five years after it was deposited. My general question is: What happens to this money basically? If it hasn't been spent after five years what – I know it's administered by this advisory panel which reports to you. What happens, I guess, is the general question. If this money is invested into the fund, where does it go? What is the plan for this fund after that five-year period?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much.

We do anticipate that the fund will be a very attractive opportunity for the economy. We'll certainly be monitoring. If it builds up to a certain level there will be strategies employed.

I must confess, because I think I've been awake for about 40 hours, there is a nice little answer. If I could, I'd like to report back to you because I know the team have thought about that, what if the fund builds up to a level and it's not being used. I just can't come up with it right now, to be honest with you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I think you spoke of that in your comments, the question I have, just for clarity, on the fund. The five land-based industries that are identified in the legislation, are they required to access the fund to reduce their greenhouse emissions? I know you mentioned that people outside or industries outside of those five could access the fund, right, but is there a requirement

for those five entities to access that fund and reduce their emissions based on that fund or some technology or whatever case is they would adopt?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: Actually yes, a firm can both deposit their obligation in a given year and perhaps, in a subsequent year, could apply for some idea that may reduce emissions elsewhere on their site, on their facilities. So yes, it is very well a possibility.

I do have an answer – it has come in remarkably – to the previous question, in terms of the fund building up to a point. Government can invest it in greenhouse gas reductions outside of the industrial sector. What this does, the technology fund, it actually takes obligation somewhat in terms of the obligation of ensuring that we are actually reducing emissions, it takes it somewhat away from industry and puts it squarely on government.

So we are stepping up to the plate here. We have to make sure that the money in that fund is being in use, so there is great incentive to make sure that it does go out to its intended purpose. Government can do this, if money has been there for five years. It gives industry a time to bid in the fund, if they so desire. You hit that milestone quite accurately. So five years is the time frame that they said we won't touch it and we'll wait and see if industry can respond first before we step in.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to ask the minister – I'll read the clause because it kind of runs together but the question is pretty straight forward. Clause 7(1)(a)(ii)(B) reads "the reduction referred to in clause A will be in addition to any greenhouse gas reductions the industrial facility is required to make to achieve its annual greenhouse gas emission reduction target."

Does that mean if the facility receives funding from the technology fund, they cannot use this

funding to invest and achieve their reduction emission targets for that year?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: I do have an answer here to that question. This clause requires that project components demonstrate that verifiable GHG reductions can be achieved within a reasonable period of time. The verifiable reductions mean that greenhouse gas reductions achieved are measurable and incremental to what is required under the act. This is necessary to demonstrate that the technology fund monies were used for the desired purpose and that any reductions achieved are over and above those that are otherwise required by the act.

Does that address that point? I can certainly share this with you. It is a detailed line-by-line explanation of each clause of the act and I don't mind tabling that, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to be – I apologize, Minister. We talked about the fund and the gas reduction fund in those five facilities that are identified and if they remit to the fund, I guess my question is, just to be clear: Are they then required to access the fund to reduce their emissions based on some usage of that fund? Or can they just pay into that and – what is the correlation between the two?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: Actually not at all. They have several options. They could invest in offsets. One of the Members spoke about banking. There's a variety of mechanisms. The key thing to remember is that because of the target that they are obligated to meet, we want to be able to ensure that we can document at least somewhere around that facility or around the facility's involvement a reduction in GHG emissions. It's really up to them and it's the least-cost option.

There was a chart that I had on the press conference this morning. You might have seen, or the folks that were at the briefing, where we

talked about the flexibility, the certainty around this process. I was pleased to see, as I said, the vice-president of NARL present with myself this morning, very content in the way we're going – no one likes to be regulated, but he was able to live with what we're doing here.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I ask the minister: I guess to give credit for emission reductions, how is Office of Climate Change, the Department of Environment, going to distinguish between emissions that were achieved through other means outside of the technology fund? How do you differentiate to give them credits for emission reduction targets?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: The office right now quantifies everything from the number of vehicles in the province, their average size; for example, 4.8 tons per year of GHGs are emitted out of every vehicle in this province. They are calculating all matter of parameters and information that is coming in. As we do things like invest in electric vehicle infrastructure, that is a strategy we do; if we, through our marketing, incent people to buy smaller cars, different things like that. This is constantly being incorporated and quantified.

I hope that answers that question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you.

Minister, just give me some idea in regard to the advisory council, how would that operate, appointments those kinds of things, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: As I said, we anticipate it consisting of approximately five to seven folks. Full transparency, I believe that there is an opportunity for it to be incorporated under the IAC. So it would be very much based on a

merit-base. Obviously we anticipate representatives from industry, from academia and from government. So folks like perhaps the deputy minister, perhaps Jackie Janes or her equivalent, something like that. But these would have to be people who really understand the industry, understand this jargon. It is a complicated world, so it would not be for the faint of heart but it would be folks who are in the industry.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: (Inaudible.) Minister, what does non-identifying aggregate information mean? Does this mean that the total emissions from each facility will be made public?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: That is correct; yes is the answer.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I'll ask the Clerk to call.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 31 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 31 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 31 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The Province.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 34 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise, report Bill 34, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 34 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked me to report Bill 34 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 34 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. JOYCE: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, it is moved and seconded by the Minister of Education that we now do second reading of Bill 38.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise here and speak to second reading of Bill 38, An Act To Amend The –

CLERK: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: Oh, sorry. There's a first time for everything.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 38, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997 be now read the second time.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: Would you like to (inaudible)? May I continue?

MR. SPEAKER: It's no big deal. I've made mistakes today as well, I'm so tired.

It is moved and seconded that Bill 38, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997." (Bill 38)

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm speaking to second reading of Bill 38. This is An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997.

Just to provide some context, this all relates to how the trustees of the French school board, the conseil scolaire francophone provincial is elected, or the CSFP, or the conseil scolaire for short. The conseil was created in 1996 and this was in recognition of section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Now the charter – as everyone should be aware, if they are not – guarantees minority language educational rights to the French linguistic minority populations that reside outside of the Province of Quebec.

In the discussions we've been having here regarding the budget and decisions regarding Intensive Core French, I think sometimes Members are confused when they confuse minority French language education, which we provide in Newfoundland and Labrador through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, with French immersion, which is a program for people who are learning to speak French as their second language not as their first language, which would be the case with students who attend the schools that fall under the ambit of the conseil scolaire.

The conseil is established under section 94 of the *Schools Act, 1997*. The conseil has a mandate to organize and administer primary, elementary and secondary French first language education in our province. So like the English district which is responsible for organizing and administering primary, elementary and secondary English language education, the conseil has that responsibility for those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians whose first language is French.

The current process for electing the trustees to the conseil is an indirect process and that's based on sections 95 and 96 of the *Schools Act, 1997*. As per that process, during the school board election period a school council for each of the schools under the conseil is voted upon by the parents of the students at each of those schools, and there are five. After those school councils are elected, each of those school councils has 30 days from the end of the election period for the school council to elect two individuals who sit on the conseil scolaire as trustees.

The conseil is responsible for five schools, as I said. There's the French school in Labrador City; there's one in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; there are two on the Port au Port Peninsula, École Sainte-Anne and École Notre-Dame-du-Cap; and here in St. John's, École des Grands-Vents. The roles and duties of the conseil are similar, as I've indicated. The roles and duties of the trustees in the conseil scolaire are similar to that of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School board and are indicated in sections 97 and 98 of the *Schools Act, 1997*.

The conseil is governed by an elected board of trustees that includes presently 10 trustees. That's based on regional representation. There are two trustees presently for Labrador West, two trustees presently for Happy Valley-Goose Bay, four trustees presently for Port au Port Peninsula in recognition that there are two schools there, and two trustees representing the school in St. John's.

For the English school board, the voting method for electing trustees is a direct process, like a general election basically. The process for that is outlined in section 53 of the *Schools Act, 1997* and the *School Board Election Regulations*,

1998. It basically says that the English trustees are to be directly elected by residents of the province regardless of whether they have children in school or not. So you can vote, as per a general election, even in the event that you do not have children who are attending school.

Direct elections provide for all eligible voters to vote directly for trustees rather than voting through elected representatives, which is the case for the conseil scolaire president.

As it stands, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only jurisdiction, the only province or territory in our country that currently uses an indirect electoral system for minority language school board trustees. In September of last year, the Francophone Federation of Newfoundland and Labrador, the FFTNL, brought it to the attention of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that the existing electoral process for the conseil scolaire is not in accordance, in their opinion, with section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

They indicated that the indirect nature of the elections restricts the full democratic participation of minority language right holders in the province, and the voter eligibility criteria indeed exclude francophones who don't have a child enrolled in a conseil scolaire school, including those who live outside communities with French-language schools.

So unlike the English system where everyone can participate in the election of trustees, the French system currently doesn't allow for that. This was brought to the attention of the department. The department advised the FFTNL, the Francophone Federation of Newfoundland and Labrador, to meet with the representatives of the conseil scolaire to have a conversation about that.

Upon my appointment to Cabinet last year in December, I became aware of this matter through briefings and it seemed to me as well that there could be a better system put in place that would provide people with eligibility to vote as per the English trustee system. So we engaged stakeholders in conversations about this.

After a number of meetings, and some conversations back and forth, on March 16 of

this year the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development received a motion from the conseil scolaire with a request to amend the *Schools Act, 1997* so as to allow for a direct voting process for the conseil scolaire by all section 23 right holders.

All of those minority French-language right holders would include all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with right-holder privileges who have children or don't have children in the French-first-language school system in the province. It also includes obviously parents who do have children who go to school in one of the French-first-language schools in the province.

This is important because section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees minority language educational rights to the French linguistic minority populations who reside outside of the province of Quebec. This is another mechanism of ensuring that those Charter rights are upheld by legislation and regulations here in our province, and ensure that they enjoy the same rights and privileges that French minority language right holders enjoy in other provinces of Canada, outside of Quebec.

Basically, we're talking about section 60(2)(c) will be repealed and substituted to require the conseil scolaire to set two or more electoral zones to ensure provincial trustee representation. Section 95(1) is repealed and substituted in order to allow for direct voting, and to set the timing of the elections to be held as per section 53 of the act or at a time the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development directs on the recommendation of the conseil scolaire.

Section 95(3) of the *Schools Act, 1997* is repealed and substituted to allow for direct voting. That removes the whole process of an election following school councils. It more or less removes that whole process from the election process. It allows the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development to set the number of trustees and that number of trustees would not exceed 12. That decision by the minister would be made on recommendation of the conseil scolaire.

Section 95(5) is repealed with no substitution, as this is a consequential amendment resulting from the move to direct voting. It removes the

school council's previous requirement of electing trustees within the 30-day period of electing school council.

Section 95(1) is added to require that the conseil establish at least two representative zones. That is similar to the English School District. Section 95(2) is added and that is again in parallel with the English trustee process. There is a requirement to notify the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development in the event there is a trustee vacancy.

Section 96 is repealed and substituted in parallel again to the English district's section on the replacement of trustees. It replaces a previous requirement for the conseil to replace trustees through school councils as a result of the existing indirect voting process for the conseil trustees.

Section 98(2) is repealed and substituted in order to remove the previous ability of the conseil to establish procedures and conduct elections for the school board, as the school board elections for the conseil will now be addressed in section 95(1).

Section 102(10) is repealed and substituted in order to align the conseil school council elections with the new timelines established under section 95(1). Section 118(1)(c) is repealed and substituted in order to clarify, for greater certainty, the Lieutenant Governor in Council authority to make regulations concerning voter and candidate eligibility.

The amendments will come into force on the day to be proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, as is customary for legislative amendments here in the House of Assembly. These regulations will be developed in consultation with the conseil scolaire. We have been in communication with them about this. I think myself and/or officials in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development have met with representatives of conseil twice in the last five working days. All of this is to allow for regulations addressing the conseil scolaire voter and candidate eligibility and the election process to be finalized with the commencement of the act and the regulations to come in force and to coincide with that happening.

I won't go into great detail on the amendments, though I could. I think that's probably a sufficient amount of explanation. Just to recap, in case anyone is unclear of what the purpose of these legislative amendments are, it's primarily to remove the indirect voting process that currently exists and to address concerns that have been raised by the French minority right-holder community.

There are three different organizations that we have consulted on this in addition to the federation of francophones in the province: there's the conseil itself, the trustees and then also the federation of francophone parents. All of these are sort of a web of relationships that we have consulted. I have spoken to all three of those groups on one or more occasions since January regarding this matter.

Regulations will be then enacted to address the voter candidate ineligibility and the election process. All of this has been discussed now with the conseil, their representatives. They will divide the province, the conseil will, as the English trustees have already done – divide the province of Newfoundland and Labrador into zones, not unlike the division of Newfoundland and Labrador into 40 electoral districts for the purposes of election of Members of the House of Assembly.

They'll divide the province into electoral zones for the purposes of electing conseil scolaire trustees through an amendment to their constitution. I will, or whoever the minister of Education of the day is, will approve that division of zones of the province for the purposes of electing trustees.

With that, I'll take my seat and we will proceed with the debate.

Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to stand and speak to Bill 38, and let it be known directly that I will speak for a few minutes and we wholeheartedly will support the Minister of Education in this endeavour. We

see it as a positive move forward. We realize and thank the minister for living up to his commitment to get the school board elections moving forward. I do realize there are some administrative things that need to be done in advance of that.

This is one of the pieces of work that have to be done. The changing of the bill, particularly around the amendment to the *Schools Act* and particularly here as it relates to the removal of the requirement to indirectly elect the trustees of the conseil scolaire and requires the elections to the conseil scolaire to proceed in a manner of the board, align the process of replacing trustees of the conseil scolaire and requirements for the zones with the process and requirements of a school board – that is to bring them in line and to go back through the existing process that is being used to assess exactly how they then would fit in accordance with the *Schools Act*, particularly around elections for a school district and a school board itself.

So this is a great step forward. It is part of the administrative process of ensuring that we get a point where we have a democratically elected school board, be it the English School District and the francophone school district.

Going through the amendments that are being made, the minister has already, in very much detail, gone through exactly what they are all about. But just as a quick overview again, for people who may be watching and listening here, the intent here is to bring the school board elections in line or the legislation in line, particularly around the francophone process here now, so it would be in line with the English School District so that elections could take place in the near future and it could be done simultaneously together.

So the francophone school board Newfoundland and Labrador have been in consultation with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to have changes made to the way they elect and appoint members to their school board.

The purpose of the legislation is to have the government amend the *Schools Act* to reflect the procedures that take place with the English school council. As I mentioned earlier, this is about bringing it in line with an existing one so

simultaneously we can have school board elections – obviously the candidates then, it can be noted who is out there to represent their respective regions and districts, but also at the end of the day, from a financial point of view, it is much easier for the department to be able to provide provincial-wide elections when there is two boards being done the one time.

It's a good move forward. I wholeheartedly support it and I'm glad it's progressing. No doubt, with the passing of this legislation over the summer, the minister and his staff can start putting the process in place.

The francophone school board Newfoundland and Labrador uses an indirect election method – just so people know the difference here, why it has to be changed. Indirect elections is a process in which voters in an election do not choose between candidates for an office, but rather elect persons who will then make the choice. It's a bit different than the standard process that's been used in the English school board's election. We want to bring that in line.

This is what's been lobbied for by the francophone school board and is no doubt being endorsed by the minister. It makes sense to fit in the same mindset and the same operational procedures as the English School District. This is due in part because the francophone community in Newfoundland and Labrador operates as a separate entity and uses legislation that's not being amended to become more modernized.

Because they've been operating separately for the last number of years, now is an opportunity because we're putting the education system – be it English school system or the francophone school system – all under one umbrella when it comes to an election process here, to have a democratic process put in place. This is, indeed, a step forward and we'll move exactly where we want to go.

“Direct election is a term describing a system of choosing political officeholders in which the voters directly cast ballots for the person, persons, or political party that they desire to see elected.” Once somebody puts their name forward as a candidate or representing a particular party – in this area it will be done as in

districts and it will be individuals put their names forward – you'll get to go in and vote for that individual or a group of individuals depending on how the process is put in play. Then that will be done in the same manner from the francophone board as it will be for the English board.

The English board in Newfoundland and Labrador uses the direct method now of voting. Members of the school board council and Bill 38 will enable the francophone board of Newfoundland Labrador to directly elect the conseil scolaire. What we're doing now is bringing it in line so the minister can move forward and get the elections in play. So then we would have a democratically elected school board that would oversee, as part of the legislation that they have in play – that would oversee exactly how the school districts in this province move forward, both the French and English School District.

It's a progressive move forward. It's something that's been in the works for the last number of years. I'm glad to see that the minister has moved forward on it. It was one of the commitments that the Premier gave him in his initial letter of responsibilities and he's taking the lead on this. I'm glad I can stand here and talk a little bit about exactly what this is about. Particularly how this is one of the steps that will be a better way of enhancing our education system, or particularly a better way of engaging people to have discussion around what are the challenges to our education system and particularly those who will be engaged and help guide the decision making.

The school districts have more power than I think people understand. Their boards are responsible for actually directing the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The department has a different philosophy and a different responsibility. They work in partnership, but the independence and particularly the democratically elected process here will obviously dictate that you're going to get people there who are committed to what needs to be done and will understand their roles and responsibilities. We, in the Opposition, see this as a very positive move. I've gone through this. The amendments fall well in line with exactly what exists now in the original English

school districts constitutional act around elections.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that being said, I will take my seat by saying we wholeheartedly support this and we look forward to a call for public elections for both the francophone school district and the English School District.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to take the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 38, An Act to Amend the Schools Act. Thank you to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and his staff for the work around kind of tweaking of this bill, if you will. It's a little more than housekeeping in the sense that we're changing the way the election process occurs, specifically with respect to the French school board, better known as the conseil scolaire.

So it's important to bring this in line, specifically in line with what we do with the English school board right now. Of course, our school boards and the elections of such have seen extensive changes over the years. Historically, back to the nominational system, the church officials would appoint individuals to the school board. Of course, that was changed with the referendum in '95 and a subsequent referendum in '97, and then there was an election process.

Since that time the electoral process has continued, but it is a bit different with the conseil scolaire. Currently during the school board election period, a school council for each of the schools – school councils being voted upon by the parents. Under the conseil scolaire, the school councils then have 30 days at the end of their election to elect two individuals to sit on the conseil scolaire, so being a lot different than, of course, the general election that's held with the English School District. So we're really just looking to streamline this. This was a direct result, as a request, from the francophone

parents association – correct me if I’m wrong – to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

AN HON. MEMBER: Close enough.

MR. FINN: Yes. So certainly a request put forward by them and something the staff took the opportunity to review.

Noteworthy as well, and being the Member that represents Stephenville – Port au Port, and the minister alluded to the four areas in the province in which there are French schools. Two, of course, being on the Port au Port Peninsula, École Sainte-Anne and École Notre-Dame-du-Cap. I had the great opportunity of attending a graduation at École Sainte-Anne just a few weeks ago, and actually had a great conversation with the chair of the conseil scolaire, trying to hear out some of their ideas and some of the things they’re looking at doing as they move forward.

So it’s important that we bring them in line and keep these regulations in line with the English School District because right now we’re the only province that uses an indirect, if you will, or an indirect electoral system for a minority language school board.

Again, I think this is a very good piece of legislation. It’s great to see the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island speak to it in support of this legislation. I don’t believe we’ll have much opposition to it. It certainly seems pretty straightforward, keeping us all in line with respect to the electoral process, and more specifically, this stems particularly from section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

That’s where they kind of founded their concerns around this, and section 23 guaranteeing minority language, educational rights to French linguistic minority populations outside of Quebec. That’s where all this stemmed from, and in doing so and in honouring that, and also in honouring a fair election process, I certainly have no trouble supporting the bill.

I’d like to thank the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for introducing it,

thank his staff, and again, as well as the Member opposite.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, if the Minister of Education speaks now he shall close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks to my colleague, the Member for Port au Port, and the Education critic, the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island for contributing to the debate.

I won’t go back into things, but I just want to say it’s interesting coming from an area of the province – St. Pierre and Miquelon is just right across the way from where I grew up. We look around the province and we see so many places that have French names. We often forget our French heritage as a people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think we ought to remember that not only do we have a French history that should be celebrated, but we ought to always remember that it is important for us to respect the rights of those amongst us whose language is French.

I just want to end with a bit of a joke because I always thought it was interesting how we sort of modified French names. Down on the Burin Peninsula we have places like Point au Gaul that we more or less pronounce properly, but then we have Jacques Fontaine that the locals call Jack’s Fountain. Then we have Bay L’Argent which we call Bay L’Argent. I think the best one of all in the whole province is Bay d’Espoir, you know, bay of hope which we call Bay d’Espoir. It’s very Newfoundland of us in any case, but I thought I’d share that moment of levity with the Members.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 38 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997. (Bill 38)

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

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 38)

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that the House now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 38.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 38 and that I now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 38, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997." (Bill 38)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 8 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 8 inclusive carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 8 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 38 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Acting Government House Leader.

MR. JOYCE: I move that the Committee rise and report that bill is carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion that the Committee rise and report Bill 38 carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked me to report Bill 38 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and has directed her to report Bill 38 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. JOYCE: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. JOYCE: I call, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, Bill 37.

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

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

I'm very delighted to stand and present An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BYRNE: Oh, that's right; you're correct.

I would move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that Bill 37, An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act be now read a second time.

Merci beaucoup.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded –

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, this is what I would call extravagant –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BYRNE: It is extravagant co-operation.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It is moved and seconded that Bill 37, entitled An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act.” (Bill 37)

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

MR. BYRNE: I’m just overwhelmed, Mr. Speaker, with the level of co-operation. I feel as though I’m strengthened by the support of my colleagues in this House. I feel like I’ve been raised up. I’ve been lifted. Mr. Speaker, maybe we’ll be able to lift this bill into a quick passage.

I would like to speak briefly on an amendment to a bill to amend the *Student Financial Assistance Act* and the *Income and Employment Support Act*. Basically, the essence of this particular amendment for this bill would be to allow officials within the Department of Advanced Education and Skills – they are involved in two separate activities at the moment; one, involved in the administration of the *Student Financial Assistance Act*, the student loan portfolio; the other, a group of officials that would be involved in the income and employment support section of the department.

We have two sets of officials that are involved in roughly the same activity, which is to administer some programs for which monies have been paid out and monies would have to be recollected. It’s a normal transaction. What this particular bill would do, it would simply allow the two sets of officials to be able to work co-operatively together, to be able to share a certain amount of information about files and on files, so that we can maximize efficiency in this process.

One of the things that I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, is this particular idea, this initiative, came forward from employees from officials within the Department of Advanced Education and Skills. We had asked our front-line workers to be able to come forward and inform us, tell us, how could we create greater efficiencies, how could we work more effectively, more efficiently, to be able to provide a better, bigger, stronger result. And this is one of the ideas that came forward.

There was recognition that there were two sets of employees doing roughly the same work, roughly the same skill set, yet involved in two separate functions. This is an innovation which I think has the potential to be implemented across government, be reviewed and studied and potentially reviewed across government a little bit more effectively as well. We would almost consider it a bit of a pilot project in that regard.

One other thing that I would point out is that these measures have indeed been – the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of Public Engagement have both been consulted on these initiatives, and the protection of individual privacy is indeed protected according to these particular provisions. I think, Madam Speaker, that this would form basically the core, the essence, of the amendment to bring forward.

Now, there are some changes that are going on within the Student Loan Corporation, for example. We’re going to be moving more and more of the collections. Right now the federal government is authorized – as we’re paying the federal government to collect on provincial student loans that were issued after 2007. We’re paying about \$300,000 a year for that service. We have an excellent group of officials that are highly capable of doing that work, and quite

frankly, they're better at it. They're more effective at it.

So if we were able to provide them with greater duties to be able to do that kind of work, then I think we're all better off in the process, and there will probably be a healthy benefit to the public purse as a result. So I'm very pleased about that.

There's not really too much else to say. I've enjoyed receiving questions. Maybe I'll be able to provide a little more in-depth replies if there were specific questions, but, Madam Speaker, the actual amendments are very short, very tight, very scripted and it simply allows for information exchange between two sets of collectors, two sets of employees, and allow for information exchange under the rule of law and with no breach of privacy concerns whatsoever.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll surrender my spot and look forward to hearing if there might be consent from all parties to be able to proceed.

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to speak to Bill 37, An Act to Amend the Income and Employment Support Act and the Student Financial Assistance Act. I want to thank the minister for outlining exactly what this act is about, and outlining two key components here. One, that this was driven by staff – and staff, no doubt, in those line divisions would have a better understanding of how it can become more efficient, and how their responsibilities could be well in line with a better opportunity to be able to, not only collect the money, but deal with the clientele in a more effective manner.

I did have the privilege over my career to work for both of those divisions, particularly in the Income Support and collections division as a supervisor for a period of time, but also connected with the student loan process in the formation of the corporation a number of years ago.

The minister is right. When the Department of Advanced Education and Skills really became one entity, a multitude of other services began to fit under that umbrella. It was then that staff started to look at, we have similar people with similar skill sets doing similar work but doing it for a different clientele set. Somewhere along the way there should be a way of collaborating and bringing them together. I'm glad the minister – one of the key things, one of his first bills – was able to achieve that.

There's no doubt, I will be supporting that. We, on this side of the House, will be supporting that, but there a number of good things here I like about this. One is streamlining it, but I'm also glad to hear the minister and them are moving forward in taking some of the services away from the federal government. The complaints we get around people trying to identify monies they owe, or if they feel they're being harassed in a certain manner or being able to get documentation, be it because they need to move to some other level of a loan process or into another schooling system or be able to outline exactly what they owe is when they try to deal with the federal government.

The provincial part of it has been fairly efficient. People know it. We've have the collection officers in place with the Student Loan Corporation. We have a whole act that oversees exactly what we do there. People understand that and they work collaboratively.

The Income Support act itself has provisions in there for the collection of overpayments. It may be done a little bit differently in past history because of the nature of some of the Income Support clients' needs. But since, we've been able to move away from those key challenges and get into the point of those who have been identified as having an overpayment and having the ability to pay or an ability to discuss future payments. Knowing which files will be stagnant for a period of time, which ones are collectable and which ones are in default that we have to make some decisions on exactly what's the best move forward.

So putting this under one umbrella, changing both acts so the Student Loan Corporation has the ability, in a two-fold process, one that the Income Support division and their staff can also

be part and parcel of the student loan collections process and vice versa.

It's a great opportunity to now, instead of having six under the AES collections officers and seven Student Loan Corporation officers working separately in separate parts of the building, in some cases separate buildings, yet in some cases it's either similar clients – and it doesn't necessarily have to be the similar clients, but it's exactly, in most cases, the similar process you would use to collect money.

You would determine if they have an income; they have an ability to pay it. What monies are owed? Is there some discrepancy about what's owed? Is there a challenge on that? And being able to move it so you have a clean file that would reflect exactly how much money is owed to the state itself, and how we go best about collecting that without imposing hardship on people.

I know the officers have leeway there under the policies to be able to work out repayment plans, or relief in certain cases, or to put files on hold because knowing that the circumstance of the individual may change down the road, that we can collect the money.

In all these cases, these are debts that are owed to the province and owed to the taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador for various reasons. Obviously, the student loan one is based on the principle of borrowing money for your post-secondary education. Then, at the completion of that, or if you didn't complete it, you're still responsible for the payment of those monies. So it is ensuring that we find a way to do it without invoking too much hardship on people and without it being too invasive.

The process we have here is fairly simple. Now it will be a collaborative approach here by all 13 staff, and, as the minister outlined, if we're going to be able to take on some of the other responsibilities that we were paying the federal representatives who were collective monies, that either saves us money or gives us additional resources to be able to collect more money, which in turn helps our provincial financial situation, and/or gives another way for the clientele to be able to access information or get advice on how they best go around trying to

square up their debt loads or work out a repayment plan or look at a financial plan for the future.

I've looked at some of the changes that are there. They're fairly simple when it comes to the administration, because it's just the collaboration of two existing processes, but putting them under the bigger, which is the Student Loan Corporation, that over the last number of years, the last decade, has put a lot of work into to make sure this is a very efficient, a very tight, and a very open process so that people would understand exactly what it's about, and our ability to expand as our post-secondary moves forward as our student loan process moves forward – but now having the collection division which could then, itself, maybe that moves, becomes a bigger entity and becomes the collection agency for all of government and different entities.

If it's outstanding loans that people have to government in other ways, if it's business loans that people have, if it possibly could be child payments that people owe. Maybe that becomes more efficient that we have it under one, and it all fits because people are trained.

One thing about this, there's a training process. It's just not as simple as making a phone call. There's a process here of knowing, legally, what you can do and what you can impose. There's even an ability to understand and research, and to a certain degree, a little bit of investigative – particularly from a paper trail to understand whether or not people have the ability to pay. Maybe there are people out there – and we've run into it and in my own career I've run into it – where people have an enormous amount of monies that they've earned, they just have chosen not to pay back the debt that they were given in good faith from the people of this province.

I see this as a great opportunity to streamline and make more efficient what a line department is doing with two separate divisions. As the minister has taken the first lead of noting there's a partnership with the federal government in the sense of taking back something that we've been paying for and expanding our ability to do it.

I would encourage the step he's taking by listening to staff, that they listen to staff about – maybe there are other line departments or other units in other departments that this could be better fit under this umbrella, that we become the collection agency for government, become very efficient and would give us a better understanding at what a given point how much monies we're owed, how many people are still in good standing and making those debt payments to us and which ones are in default so we have to make the decisions about how we move forward on those.

Madam Speaker, I will be supporting this bill. I'm encouraging my colleagues on this side to support this also.

Thank you.

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

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

It's great to have the opportunity to rise on Bill 37, An Act to Amend the Income and Employment Support Act – oops, sorry; I don't think my microphone was on. We can start over.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 37, An Act to Amend the Income and Employment Support Act and the Student Financial Assistance Act. The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills did a great job, I think, explaining that this particular act is really looking at just streamlining two positions, certainly as did the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

What a great idea as a result of the Government Renewal Initiative, particularly the Renewal Initiative that invoked the public service sector to come up with ideas within their own departments. Here we have a classic example in the Department of Advanced Education and Skills where you have one arm collecting under the *Student Financial Assistance Act* and the legislation is only providing them to collect monies with respect to provincial student loans.

At the same time, with respect to the income and employment support overpayments, we have another financial arm, if you will, collecting funds. So the merger of these is a natural marriage I would say and certainly something that's great that comes from your front-line staff.

I have a lot of respect for the front-line staff within the Department of Advanced Education and Skills, having worked very closely with the staff there for the last number of years, in particular in the Income Support department. I have a great relationship with those folks in the Income Support department in Stephenville where they handle all the caseloads for all of the applications, if you will, and the case managers and client service officers in the Corner Brook office.

One area around the Department of Advanced Education and Skills where I didn't have a great deal of knowledge was, in particular, around the *Student Financial Assistance Act*, other than being the recipient of a student loan and making payments on such. The ins and outs of that I wasn't entirely familiar with.

I give credit to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, the Member for Corner Brook. One of the things he did when he first took office was he arranged for all of the MHAs on the West Coast to sit down and have a very thorough and detailed briefing with all of the aspects of his department at the office in Corner Brook, at which time we were given a great overview, I must say, of the *Student Financial Assistance Act*.

Again, as the minister alluded to and the Member opposite, there is certainly nothing contentious here. In doing some due diligence, of course, this was vetted through the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Office of Public Engagement.

One of the other things in terms of efficiencies and streamlining services, what's important to note here is that while we did have two financial arms here and there is a natural merger, of which to become more efficient, there was no reduction of employment or job losses as a result of this efficiency. It is certainly just a great idea put forth and something to tidy up the legislation to make things easier.

With that, Madam Speaker, I don't have anything else to add.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

MADAM SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers if the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills speaks now, he will close debate.

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

I very much appreciate the support and the kind words. I would love to take credit for this but as I noted, and the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and others have noted, this was indeed an initiative that came from staff, from the very people that understand the process, the service culture, the best – who understand how to make things most efficient and effective for each and every one of our benefits and for the benefit of the Treasury as well.

I'm delighted that it appears that we have all-party support on this particular initiative. I guess we'll let the process go forward from here.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read a second time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK (Murphy): An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act. (Bill 37)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill has now been read the second time.

When shall this bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 37)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Government House Leader.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 37.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Madam Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 37, An Act to Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act." (Bill 37)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Government and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 37 carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Acting Government House Leader.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I ask that the Committee rise and report that Bill 37 has been approved without amendments.

CHAIR: The motion is that I do rise and report Bill 37 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked me to report Bill 37 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and has directed her to report Bill 37 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. JOYCE: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Bill 17.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I move, seconded by the minister of early education – sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. KIRBY: Education and Early Childhood Development.

MS. C. BENNETT: Education and Early Childhood Development – it's been a long couple of days, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the minister for reminding me.

I move that Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5, be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 17 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5." (Bill 17)

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

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

I'm pleased to stand in the House this evening to speak to what is a very important component of the budget that we presented on April 14. Bill

17, which relates to the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, is an extremely important bill for our government and an extremely important piece of legislation, we believe, to make sure that we are taking care of the most vulnerable in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Through the budget exercise and the planning and all of the analysis that was completed, and based on the discussions we had, we certainly recognized that there was an impact on many people in the province as a result of the budget that we presented.

We are ensuring, Madam Speaker, that the impact of the budget is lessened on those that are the most vulnerable in our province. That is why we introduced the new Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement. As we have discussed in this House, we are also enhancing the Seniors' Benefit.

This new benefit will provide financial assistance to individuals and families with net income less than \$40,000, with those eligible receiving up to \$450 for an individual, \$60 for a spouse and \$200 for each eligible dependant. Of course, individuals and families with net income of more than \$40,000 may be eligible to receive a partial benefit depending on their family income.

The annualized cost of the Income Supplement is \$63.7 million. In addition, \$12.7 million annualized has been provided to enhance the Seniors' Benefit by \$250 annually. This totals approximately \$76.4 million for both of these important benefits, Madam Speaker.

As part of the introduction of this Income Supplement, the HST credit was eliminated and replaced with the Newfoundland Income Supplement effective January 1, 2016, and this new benefit will provide more money to low-income households. Eligible recipients will receive their first payment, consisting of two quarterly payments, in October of 2016. And for those people who are watching at home, just to clarify again, the first payment under the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will be received as two quarterly payments in October of 2016.

There is no application required for the supplement; however, eligible individuals must ensure that their annual income tax return is filed in order to receive their quarterly payments. I might add, Madam Speaker, that under the old HST credit, cheques were received on an annual basis and certainly we feel that the quarterly payments are also a benefit to low-income individuals in our province, as they will be able to anticipate and plan for that cash earlier than they would have with an annual benefit.

Madam Speaker, the supplement will be based on the family net income and paid directly to eligible individuals, and as I said earlier, through quarterly payments. In addition to the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement we have also introduced, as I've said earlier, the enhanced Seniors' Benefit. Our government is committed to making sure that the Seniors' Benefit delivers meaningful and equitable benefits to low-income seniors in this province, and government is enhancing the benefit to provide additional support to all eligible seniors in our province.

As I've said, the maximum benefit amount for the Seniors' Benefit is being increased by \$250, from the old \$1,063 to the new \$1,313. Many seniors that receive this benefit will also receive payments in respect of the new Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement announced in this budget. The 2016 parameters of the enhanced Seniors' Benefit for all eligible seniors are the maximum benefit amount that I just referred to. There's a phase-out rate of 11.66 per cent – that remains unchanged – a lower income threshold maintained at \$29,402, and an upper income threshold increased from \$38,519 to \$40,663.

The change to quarterly payments, as I said earlier, was made so that eligible seniors would receive assistance throughout the year instead of the single payment that was previously made in October. Approximately 48,200 households will benefit from these changes to the Seniors' Benefit, including seniors who receive a higher benefit amount, or receive a partial Seniors' Benefit for the first time.

Madam Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, together with the

enhanced Seniors' Benefit, will see eligible seniors receiving a maximum payment of up \$911.50 in October 2016, with additional payments of \$455.75 in January and April of 2017, compared to one single payment of \$1,823 in October 2016.

Also included in this bill is the elimination of the Manufacturing and Processing Profits Tax Credit, which will generate additional annual revenues of \$31.8 million. As well, in addition, the Dividend Tax Credit rate will be reduced for non-eligible dividends from 4.1 per cent to 3.5 per cent for dividends received on or after July 1, 2016 to maintain integration of the corporate and personal income tax systems.

The estimated impact is \$1.4 million in annual revenue. As a government, we have a responsibility to ensure there is a plan in place to address the unprecedented fiscal challenges facing our province. However, we also have, and take very seriously, our obligation to protect and support our low-income seniors, families and individuals in the face of these necessary new revenue measures.

Madam Speaker, we must always, as a society, ensure that those that need the help most receive it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It is a privilege to stand and talk about Bill 17. Just for those who are watching at home, there are three main components here that the minister talked about. Two were directly tax revenues because they are changing the tax scene, particularly around the Dividend Tax Credit and the Manufacturing and Processing Profits Tax Credit.

Then what also is being proposed here is that there are a number of adjustments and collaboration and eliminating of certain tax credits but under that heading these are ones that

would be enticing and supportive of low-income individuals here as part of it.

It's a unique change to a bill where, in some cases, we're changing the formulas or we're changing the percentage on certain areas to generate some revenue as part of the process. The other is then to streamline or to collaboratively put together a Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement and enhance the Seniors' Benefit by changing some of the existing processes and tax credits that are there.

I'm just going to outline some of the key things here. For those who may know and say, well, you get up and you talk all about the impacts of the budget; this is not what would be considered a money bill. While it's directly linked to the budget and it's part and parcel of what's being proposed here as an incentive and supports for low-income individuals, and particularly seniors, it's seen as a direct financial benefactor process and investment, but it's not seen as one of your normal money bills to be able to talk about that.

What we're talking about here is the corporate world having to step up to the plate and pay more of its part here to ensure that the financial challenges that we are facing right now are less of a burden on those who can't afford it. I think that it's a move forward there. It's not a dramatic cut that it's going to do major damage to some of the corporations here from how it's done. Some of it is done directly, that there is a cut and it will generate money. Some of it is also done in a way that it's the percentage and depending on how viable companies are this year or future years, it may not have a direct impact on them.

But in the normal stance, it should generate enough revenue, hopefully, as the minister has outlined, to offset some of the other incentives that are put in to address some of the challenges that seniors and other citizens are going to have when it comes to additional costs this year.

There is no doubt the collaboration here of two direct tax credits differently in the corporate world versus putting in a process and a supplement that would enhance and support seniors in most of these cases and low-income individuals is no doubt a good use of this bill.

I will be supporting this, and no doubt when we get into Committee I'll have a couple of questions there that I want to look at to ensure we have a better understanding of exactly how this is going to benefit the people in the province, and particularly that it doesn't have a major detrimental effect on the industries that are helping drive the extra monies that are being generated.

With that being said, as I said at the beginning, the corporate world has a responsibility to help out the province when it's in financial dire straits and also to help out those at less advantage. So in this case it's a good movement of the money. It's streamlining to a certain degree, the supplements themselves so people would understand it. There will have to be, no doubt – and I'll talk to the minister about this in Committee – a process of being able to explain to people, because people are used to two or three different tax credits here.

If you come from a low-income family, those are the things that drive how you pay for your phone bills, your light bills, when your oil company comes at certain times of the year when you fill up your tanks, these are the times when people rely on that money. You don't want to make it confusing that people are not sure, was I to fill out an application, was I to make a call, was there something I needed from Revenue Canada that I didn't have. You don't want people sitting and waiting.

Too often I get calls from constituents – and I know we all do – saying I never got my particular tax credit. It may be as simple as they didn't tick something on a form, or they didn't fill out their income tax. They may say, well, I had no income this year. Not realizing all of that is what drives us in our society, and particularly those in the financial world, to understand exactly what it is people earn and who fits in various categories, particularly under programs and services that are going to be supportive of people who have particular hardships.

I understand this will help streamline that and put it into that category. I do understand there is a slight, maybe even a little bit of a modest increase. That's a positive for people because as we've already outlined in the last number of weeks, people are going to face some additional

challenges. Their normal monies they would get in the fall of the year to fill up their oil tanks now may not go as far with the additional taxes on that.

So this is a step forward into at least addressing that, but particularly – I'm hoping, and as I get my head around it a little bit more and a couple of questions I'll have for the minister in Committee – around streamlining it so we ensure that everybody gets what they are entitled to and gets it in a timely fashion, because there's no doubt people are going to have a hard number of years.

If somebody falls behind, even companies are no longer going to be able to give the leeway they once did because their profit margins and their ability to ensure that their creditors give them some leeway is based on the principal of them being able to generate their monies and have it in play. Obviously, it's taxpayers' money that the program has been put in place to support individuals. No doubt you want to be able to move it out so you know exactly what you have in your coffers then for other programs.

You want to know to make sure that everybody who is entitled to it gets it. You want to ensure that if there are any hardships on people, they're addressed. You want to know and let the corporate world know the monies that are being generated from either a reduction in some of the tax regimes you had or some of the discounts you may have had, are now no longer available, but they're going for a good cause. As good corporate citizens, I would hope they'd understand that and then they would readjust their expenditures to reflect exactly what it is their profit margins have to be to be sustainable here.

I do also note the fact that there are a number of changes within the system here to reflect better administration within the act itself. Part of it is just wording and housekeeping, but some of the bills here actually reflect how they collaborate with an existing section so they flow a little bit better as part of the process.

I'm happy to say, while I do understand there's no corporation out there that would want to have a reduction in some of the discounts they may have had or some of the processes they may

have had for different discounts, the reality is everybody has to do their part, particularly when it comes to the corporate world here to help out.

It's good to know there is going to be, at least a stability here around – because we're hearing all kinds of rumors about if we're in such a fiscal restraint, how are the people who are most vulnerable still going to be able to receive the supports that the last three or four administrations have put in play.

A process here to move it under one umbrella and make it more efficient and having it based on a qualifying level of income, obviously, then will make it more efficient, but I have to stress again, when you're changing something – in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly if you're dealing with people in rural or isolated areas who may not have access to information constantly, then you need to ensure the information is readily available to them and it's explained in layman's terms because they may not have computers.

They may not have access to certain pieces of technology. So as a result, they can do whatever has to be done to ensure whatever they're entitled to they get it as quick as possible without any hassle. If it means cheques have to be issued, if it's direct deposits in some cases, there are challenges around that.

So having that information out, and if we're going to be doing our dual-quarterly payments in October – I'm going to get the minister, when I get a chance in Committee, to just ask for a little bit more clarification so all of us in the House and those listening can have a better understanding and explain it to their loved ones or their neighbours or the people they work with on a daily basis, exactly when they can expect certain things, what to expect and the process they would have to go through to ensure they get that.

Madam Speaker, with that being said, I'll take my chair. When we get to Committee stage I'll have a few questions for the minister so she can explain and we can get the proper information out to the general population.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to rise here to speak on Bill 17, second reading of a bill, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, which is the Income Supplement and enhanced Seniors' Benefit. We have some great things going on in the District of Bonavista; however, we still have a lot of work to do.

This bill is very, very important to my constituents. We have an aging population. We have seasonal employment. We have a lot of minimum-wage workers who are in the district.

I'm not going to speak long on this. The Finance Minister and the Member opposite did a very good job of talking about that. There are some things I wanted to highlight.

The Income Supplement itself is providing \$63.7 million to low-income seniors, individuals, families and persons with disabilities. I'm just going to re-emphasize a point that the Finance Minister made. The new Income Supplement benefit will provide financial assistance to individuals and families with a net income less than \$40,000, that's taxable money, with those eligible receiving up to \$450 for an individual, \$60 for a spouse and \$200 for each eligible dependent. Individuals and families with a net income of more than \$40,000 may be eligible to receive a partial benefit depending on their family net income.

Going back here looking through this, the sliding scale starts at, I believe, 9 per cent at \$40,000. For a one-earner income at \$40,000 net income, you'll have a quarterly payment of \$227.50. That's very good news for the families.

On top of that, you have the enhanced Seniors' Benefit which was an investment of \$12.7 million. That's an additional \$250 on the current \$1,063 for a total of \$1,313. You take the Income Supplement and you take the enhanced Seniors' Benefit, total that together and you get a total investment of \$76.4 million which is a very significant investment to those who are our most vulnerable people, as I mentioned.

All this comes into effect on July 1, but there's going to be a double payment for anyone affected in October. One of the concerns I had brought up to me time and time again is how is this going to affect me, especially when I'm a senior. I said, normally you'd get a thousand dollars in October. I said, now you're going to get a double payment, which is going to give you about \$910. That's your July and October money. So the money you had put aside for your Christmas gifts, your furnace oil, your wood, whatever, you're still going to get that; but, in January, you're going to get an additional \$455.75, April you are going to get an additional \$455.75, and it will continue and continue. People get used to this and plan their years around the additional Income Supplement that they will receive.

One other thing I wanted to point out is there is no application required for the supplement; however, eligible individuals must ensure that their annual income tax return is filed in order to receive their quarterly payments. So if you filed your taxes last year, Revenue Canada is going to take a look into it and we're going to get out your payment based on your taxes. This supplement will be based on the family net income, not gross income, net income and paid directly to eligible individuals in quarterly payments.

I just want to talk about some examples I have here of the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement with the annual Income Supplement, which is your Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, with your Seniors' Benefit, if you qualify.

If you're a single senior with a net family income of \$16,000 you have the Newfoundland Income Supplement, annual Income Supplement, of \$266, with a Seniors' Benefit of \$1313 for a quarterly installment of \$394.75. As I mentioned, a senior couple with a net family income of \$26,000 will get a Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement of \$510. You add that to their \$1,313 and you are going to get quarterly installments of \$455.75. It goes on and on.

A single person that is eligible to claim the disability tax credit – you get a lot of injured people; you have a lot of people who aren't able

to work. If you have a net income of \$22,000 your annual Income Supplement is \$650. So that is going to be a quarterly payment of \$162.50. If you're a single parent with one child with a family net income of \$16,000 you get an annual Income Supplement of \$466. So that's \$116.50 every three months.

I can go on and on, but it is a sliding scale. It's a percentage that comes off. If you hit a certain threshold, you are not automatically cut off. It is a sliding scale so you will actually get something to a certain level.

Madam Speaker, that's all I have to say. I think it's a wonderful program. It's going to benefit the people in the District of Bonavista greatly. I look forward to voting and supporting this bill.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Just a couple of little points I want to make on this. I know once we get into further discussions, as we discussed the last couple of days, on budget stuff because this is – the Income Supplement is good for a lot of Newfoundlanders, low-income seniors and people. Overall, when you look at it – and it's the problem that we're having with the whole budget, it's the cumulative factor that people are seeing. It's the increase in different taxes.

While this is great for seniors, it's the whole effect of this budget that has happened on seniors that I think that people should be looking at. I know that all over the province, everyone – people that can apply for this, it's great for them.

At the end of the day it's the number of charges, whether it's the gas and income tax –

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the Member that –

MR. K. PARSONS: It has a lot to do with it. It's a benefit that your –

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay.

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind the Member that it's not a money bill.

MR. K. PARSONS: I know it's not a money bill, but it's also –

MADAM SPEAKER: I ask him to speak specifically to Bill 17.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay. Yeah, well, we'll be supporting it. I'll get to tell the reasons later on why in Bill 18 or 19.

MADAM SPEAKER: If the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board now speaks, she will close debate.

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

I certainly look forward to having this discussion continue in Committee. We'll leave that to the House.

With the House's permission, I will turn it over to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the said bill be now read the second time?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5. (Bill 17)

MADAM SPEAKER: This bill has now been read the second time.

When shall this bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 17)

MADAM SPEAKER: The hon. the Acting Government House Leader.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the House now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 17.

MADAM SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MADAM SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Madam Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5.” (Bill 17)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just a few questions for the minister around the process – and I know it’s done on a quarterly basis, and I know you noted that the fall, in October, there’ll be two quarterly payments made to catch up and bring people in line with exactly the process. So I’m assuming – and if you could clarify – this will be based on their 2015 income tax filing, as part of the process. Will the two payments be in one cheque or two separate cheques? If you could just clarify that for me, please.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yes, it would be very important for eligible residents of our province to ensure they have filed their 2015 tax return, because that will be the trigger for the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement.

To answer the question, I think the Member mentioned before we were in Committee, while I am standing, was around the double payment in October. There is insufficient time to implement a payment as of July 1, so as a result there are two payments happening in October. From what I understand, it will be processed on the same cheque, and that’s why there’s a double payment in October, and then the payments will kick in every quarter after that.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister; that clarifies those concerns I had.

The other concern I have – and I talked about it when I spoke to the bill – is around getting the message out to people, because there is somewhat of a change here. I know one is an enhancement and one is a new approach to it, or at least a new naming of it. What thought has been given to it, or what process will you be using either through the Department of Finance or respective line departments that may have

access to people who fit the criteria with low incomes?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Well, the creation, Madam Chair, of the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement tool that is on the government's website is available for residents of the province, or their families, or government employees or constituency assistants, people that work for not-for-profits. All of us who support and advocate for our parents or even for our friends and neighbours, that tool is there. Recognizing that there are limitations to people's access to the government website, there is paper information that's available.

We'll continue to use dialogue with stakeholder groups to make sure the information gets out to seniors. I certainly encourage the Members of this House, through the work that we do with our constituents, to support that effort.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister for clarifying that. I have one final question here: Were there any stakeholder discussions with the corporate world around the Dividend Tax Credit changes in putting this process together?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, there are ongoing conversations through the Department of Finance, certainly since I've been minister, but also with prior ministers around regular consultation with stakeholders around tax changes. Whether it's the St. John's Board of Trade, whether it's the CFIB, all those lobby organizations provide feedback to the province on a variety of tax issues.

In this particular case, with the manufacturing and processing tax – and I will have to confirm this, but I believe we're one of the few provinces that actually have it, so it's an unusual tax that's applicable. I will double check that for the

Member opposite. I wouldn't want to be giving him misleading information. It's very important that we give the accurate information in this House, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I'll ask the Clerk to call for the vote.

Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 9 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 9 inclusive carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 9 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5 carried, without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Acting Government House Leader.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I ask that the Committee rise and report Bill 17 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee do rise and report Bill 17 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have asked me to report Bill 17 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and has directed her to report Bill 17 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. JOYCE: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. JOYCE: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Give me one moment, Mr. Speaker, to find the page we are going to. I'm going to ask that I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MS. C. BENNETT: I will change that, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL, the hon. Member for Humber – Bay of Islands.

I move, and seconded, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions and a bill relating to the imposition of tax, Bill 19, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 19, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

Resolution

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I'm pleased to stand in this hon. House of Assembly and speak to this important piece of legislation this evening.

As part of the very difficult choices made in *Budget 2016*, the retail sales tax, or RST on insurance premiums will be reintroduced. The previous administration eliminated the RST on insurance premiums in 2008. This was only one of the many measures they took that were unsustainable and have contributed to the fiscal situation that we face today, Madam Chair.

Our government and the people of the province are facing a very serious fiscal challenge when it comes to the operations of government and we needed to take action with significant revenue measures to help address the deficit. As a result, the RST on insurance premiums is being reintroduced at 15 per cent effective July 1, 2016.

The RST will apply to insurance premiums for property and casualty insurance policies. Mainly for vehicles, homes and business locations. It does not apply to life, sickness or health premiums, Madam Chair. A tax will apply to substantially the same tax base as it did in the past. It is estimated that the revenue measure will generate, as we suggested in the budget, \$111 million in revenue annually.

To provide some history on this tax. It was first implemented in 1968 under the *Insurance Premium Tax Act* and was then moved into the *Retail Sales Tax Act*.

Prior to the implementation of the HST in 1997, the rate for RST on insurance premiums was 12 per cent and the GST does not apply to this type of transaction. So as a result, the HST does not apply. As a result, the province decided to continue imposing the RST on insurance premiums and on the private sale of used vehicles. The tax rate on insurance premiums was increased from 12 per cent to 15 per cent at that time.

This Retail Sales Tax is a provincial sales tax, not a HST; therefore, businesses will not be able to claim input tax credits for the tax paid. The tax will be applied for contracts renewed or new contracts entered into on or after July 1, 2016.

Government has been talking with the industry regarding the reintroduction of the RST on insurance premiums and we will continue to work closely with the industry.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It feels like déjà vu almost. So here we go. We're back debating a resolution that's directly related to the implementation of the budget. For that reason, we will have lots of debate and discussion this evening. That's important, because in the last 24 hours in particular, I've been amazed at how many people have taken the time to call or write. We have piles and piles of pieces of correspondence that people want brought to the House of Assembly to express their concerns about the budget, and it's not just about one element.

I'll talk for a couple of minutes about this particular bill related to the Revenue Administration Act and taxes on insurance premiums. That is an issue people are really, really concerned about. I don't think the public has fully realized the tremendous impact this bill will have on people, on families. I think it's one of those things that when people get their bills they'll fully appreciate and realize the impact. Similar to the levy, similar to gas tax, it's something people will definitely be concerned about.

This type of bill gives us an opportunity to talk about all the issues people are concerned about related to *Budget 2016*. As I said, I'll speak briefly about some of what's contained in this bill and then I'd also like to talk about some of the other issues that people have asked me to bring to the House of Assembly. I suspect tonight my colleagues will be bringing forward concerns as well.

It's nice to be on the early shift this evening, Madam Chair. I should acknowledge that reality as well. We're bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

This bill will enable the introduction of the retail sales tax on insurance premiums. This retail sales tax, as the Finance Minister indicated, will be reintroduced on July 1. A 15 per cent tax will be applied to all insurance premiums for home insurance, auto insurance, recreational vehicles and so on.

I'd encourage the people of the province for a moment to think about how much insurance you pay for in the run of a year related to just home and auto, and add 15 per cent. So that's effectively what's happening with this piece of legislation. It's important to note, because there

has been some confusion in the public. I've noticed some confusion myself on social media related to health insurance, life insurance and mortgage insurance. These things are not included. So we're really talking about home and auto and large recreational vehicles and so on.

The total projected annual revenue that government expects from this is \$111 million, according to the Department of Finance. Installments will be paid at the same time as insurance premiums. For most people, that means it will be paid monthly. Some people pay their insurance up-front, some people pay it in a couple of installments. Lots of people divide up the cost of their home insurance and/or auto insurance and stretch it out over the 12 months.

The 15 per cent will be charged on dues. The 15 per cent will also be charged on assessments, it will be charged on transaction fees, it will be charged on processing fees, it will be charged on policy fees. So pretty well everything on your insurance bill will be subject to this new 15 per cent tax. It won't be charged, though, on interest and underwriting fees if they're shown separately on the invoice. As long as they're shown separately on the invoice, the 15 per cent tax won't be applicable.

If a person's policy contains property inside and outside the province, the 15 per cent tax will only be charged on the portion inside the province. I actually had somebody reach out to me through Facebook yesterday to ask that very question. They have property both in Newfoundland and Labrador and I believe in Alberta, and they were concerned about what the implication would be, given they deal with the one insurance company and I guess it's all connected to the same policy. If the insurance company is not registered in the province, then the individual will still pay the 15 per cent retail sales tax, but will have to self-assess.

Now, the 15 per cent tax will become effective on policies when they are renewed, or on new contracts that are entered into on July 1 of this year or later. So if your renewal date is July 2, then you will be hit with this tax. If you go to get something insured on July 2, then you'll be hit with this tax. If you go and set up a policy for

the first time or renew a policy on June 30, you won't be hit with the tax.

That particular element makes some sense. You've got to have a logical implementation date. So while I have concerns about the insurance tax, the implementation aspect is not something that I think we can argue a whole lot about.

Even when it comes to this 15 per cent tax, if that was the only impact that people were going to feel as a result of this budget, or if it was one of only a couple of impacts people would feel as a result of this budget, then I think we'd have a hard time standing here and putting up too much of a fight. When you look at the overall impact of the budget and the thousands of dollars it will cost the average family in Newfoundland and Labrador, then this 15 per cent tax on insurance is one of those big issues in the budget that hasn't gotten the kind of attention yet that I think it will, especially when insurance bills start coming out post-July 1.

Just back to the implementation point, if a person renews their contract before July 1, they won't pay the 15 per cent tax until they renew their policy. If it's a yearly renewal, it means they will not have to pay until June 2017 if they renew in June 2016. I think that's fairly straightforward.

For the average person in Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Chair, who has home and auto insurance, we're talking hundreds of dollars here. This is not a small amount of money. I think when the budget was initially introduced, people really focused on the levy. That was sort of a focal point of the anger, the frustration, the disappointment and all of those emotions that surrounded the budget.

Then gas went up 20 cents, and I think all of a sudden that became another focal point. So I really believe this is the next big one. There are lots of other things in the budget that people are upset about which we'll talk about tonight; cuts in education, cuts in health care, cuts to infrastructure, cuts that will limit access to certain programs and services, particularly in rural regions of the province. This insurance tax, no matter where you live in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's going to hit you if you have home

insurance or auto insurance, and a lot of people do.

A lot of those people that are being hit with this are the same people who are the most hit by some of the other measures that are in this budget. I think that's why people will be upset. I think that's why we feel an obligation to look at it holistically and not just pick on one particular point of the budget, but talk about the total impact of the budget when it's applied to an individual or to a family. That's what we'd like to spend some time talking about this evening.

I have many pieces of correspondence that I could share. In no particular order, here are a couple of departmental related questions. I know there are ministers around this evening and maybe at some point during debate they'd like to touch on these issues.

Here is one from somebody who's a town councillor in our province and has some concerns about the impact of the budget on municipalities. The minister has assured us in the House that municipalities will not be greatly impacted but I think there are a number of issues in the budget and falling out of the budget that people have questions about, that municipal leaders have questions about.

It is just this past weekend municipal leaders from our province, a fair number of them, gathered in Winnipeg for the Federation of Canadian Municipalities annual conference. From what I hear from talking to a couple of people who were there, there was discussion among the Newfoundland and Labrador contingent about some of the budget issues and how it could potentially impact municipalities.

Also, some of the opportunities that may exist for municipalities as a result of these fiscal challenges and how municipalities could potentially be part of a solution in providing services and meeting the needs of regions and working together without enduring further downloading from the federal government or the provincial government which has been a long time concern of municipal leaders.

This individual writes: What is the government's plan for provincial roads that are within the boundaries of municipalities? A very good

question, Madam Chair. They have already said that some roads will not be plowed if there is a private contractor to do it. Are they planning on downloading those roads to municipalities? I don't think it was specifically addressed in this budget, but budget number two is coming.

The spending challenges have not been addressed at all by this budget. So this looks like a real threat for municipalities. It's a good point to have some discussion about. I think municipal leaders want some clarity on what the future does hold.

If they do, are they going to compensate municipalities or just leave us high and dry with the additional costs? We will be faced with costs for additional equipment to do snow clearing and summer maintenance and also require additional personnel. If the government does not offer some kind of additional support for these operations the only place municipalities can go for the additional revenue is the property tax payers. This will place additional financial strain on property owners and municipalities.

During my 10 years in municipal government, I remember we would often say there's only one taxpayer. So we all pay our share of municipal taxes, provincial taxes and federal taxes and when the possibility exists for downloading from one level of government to the next, we always need to bear in mind that ultimately it's the same person at the end of the day who's paying the bill. Municipalities have faced downloading over the years at various points in our history.

Given the financial situation we're in, I think it's understandable that there are some municipal leaders in our province with some questions. I was asked to present those issues as they relate to municipalities. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs will be speaking at some point during the debate. He may wish to speak to some of those issues, I have no doubt.

Here's another issue that I think is a little more controversial – and I should say, as I said last night, Madam Chair, when I'm sharing this correspondence on behalf of people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, my quoting or sharing the correspondence does not necessarily equal an endorsement. Much like the Twitter

philosophy, I guess, which we've discussed in recent days in the House of Assembly. I do feel an obligation, whether I necessarily support the view or not, to bring those views forward.

I hope during the debate in the hours ahead that Members will keep that in mind. I may agree with aspects of what I'm presenting, I may agree with all of it or I may agree with none of it at all, but I have a responsibility to bring those concerns forward to the House of Assembly. Other than censoring some inappropriate language or some language that's just unparliamentary – a lot of this correspondence will reference individual MHAs. One of the rules we have in this House is we're not allowed to mention the actual names of Members, not even our own names. So one of those weird and wonderful parliamentary traditions.

I'll omit those things as I share the correspondence: I know this may not get read in the House of Assembly during the filibuster or at any other time, but I'd like to know where the government stands on revamping the Advanced Education and Skills system to eliminate spending by cutting off people that don't need to be in it, therefore saving the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador millions of dollars. I addressed this issue with my MHA, the MHA for Terra Nova in the past, but he either refused to address it in the House of Assembly or the Liberal government refused to address it at all. I'm currently watching and waiting to see if this gets addressed.

Now that was – what day is this, Tuesday? That was this afternoon. It's funny how we lose track of time in here. This gentleman from the Clarendville area is suggesting there are perhaps reforms that can be made within Advanced Education and Skills that would lead to savings. That's been a challenge for governments for a long time. It was a challenge for the previous government. I know it must be a challenge for this government.

One of the things we're really proud of is the Poverty Reduction Strategy that we've implemented over the last number of years. That has made a huge difference. That has taken people out of the Income Support system and gotten them above the poverty line and kept them there.

One of our big fears with this budget, Madam Chair, is that people will be driven back below the poverty line, and that's one of the reasons why we need to have the debate that started yesterday afternoon and is going to continue tonight, perhaps into tomorrow, who knows, because these are issues that really matter to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I see my time is about to expire. I look forward to having many opportunities tonight – until I need to go to bed at some point and take a brief nap – to share these issues. If people have concerns, they have ideas and they have questions they want asked, they can email them to us. My colleagues are here for Conception Bay South and Cape St. Francis and others, and we will work hard to make sure those concerns ultimately this week –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: – get brought to the House of Assembly.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Again, it's a privilege to get up here and start here at 7 o'clock this evening. We'll see how far she goes into the night.

Madam Chair, it's amazing when you talk to people in the districts. They understand what we're trying to do and understand what we can do. There's no doubt that the government has the majority here. At the end of the day, they get basically what they want when it comes to legislation and what they want to bring in. But I feel obligated and I think my colleagues feel obligated to do our best and stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When you look at, and you listen to the open line shows, you see the news shows in the evenings, and general conversations with the normal beings we will call them of Newfoundland and Labrador, people want to be heard. It's so important that they be heard, and that's a huge problem because we had the promise again – I spoke about promises all day, all last night. You had promised that you would be listening to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's obvious that the government is not listening to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador by bringing in such bills that they're bringing in tonight.

We said it last night two or three times that it's too much, too fast. There are just so many different things. It doesn't stop. I think the normal person out there understands that there is a financial crisis in the province, and no doubt they do. But to put it all on the backs of hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, seniors and people who are on a fixed income, our youth, everyone, people are just saying this is just too much.

For some people here in the House of Assembly, maybe it's nothing at all. Maybe it's just you have to pay a few extra bills, so be it, you got lots of money or whatever, but to the common Newfoundlander and Labradorian this is very difficult.

This bill that we're going to talk about tonight here is Bill 19. I know the minister said they brought it in in 2008 and should never have done it, but I bet that every Liberal that was on this side of the House in 2008, when this bill was brought in, I bet they voted for it because they saw that it was giving Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a break.

We all know what it's like to pay car insurance. We all know what it's like to pay house insurance. Anytime you can get a break on this, it's important. People did appreciate it, but it's a combination of so many different things in this budget that people are upset about.

We just spoke to Bill 17 and I wanted to get up and make my point. I had to talk to the bill, but now I'm into Bill 19, I can talk about Bill 17 because I can talk about anything on a money bill, just to let you know.

While we did some good things for seniors and the supplement is a good thing – there's no doubt about it. It puts an extra \$250 into seniors' hands. I like the fact that it's done over a period of time so there are different cheques coming all through the year; but, at the end the day, it's nothing because when you look at 16.5 cents they're going to pay extra on the gas that's going in their vehicle. When you look at now, in this bill here, what we're going to do to them is we're going to charge the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, their insurance on their cars and insurance on their homes and insurance on recreational vehicles is gone up by 15 per cent.

I asked a question in the House of Assembly about a month ago to the minister. She came back the next day and told me that they'd have to have a boat, they'd have to have an RV and all this and their total amount for their insurance would have to be \$7,000. I told her it was going to cost a family of four, \$1,000. I had a person call me and say: Kevin, my insurance is gone up by \$1,000.

She came up with the fact they would have to have a boat, they'd have to have an RV, but it wasn't so. What they had was two children, one going to post-secondary and one planning on going to post-secondary. I think one of them might have had a little accident over the year. As we know, especially young drivers, once they have an accident, the insurance goes right through the roof. That's like all of us, I think, unless you have the new plan they came up with now that you get one free one or it's (inaudible) and then you have six years.

Once you have an accident, and once a young person has an accident, they're talking a \$3,000 almost \$4,000 for insurance. This family of four, they had house insurance, they have two vehicles – they had to have two vehicles because the young fellow was going back and forth to school. Like I said the two children are insured, you want to make sure they are insured and covered, and his wife and himself.

I believe they have a quad; I think nearly everybody in Newfoundland has a quad, but I mean that was just the basic – there was no RV. There was no boat. There was nothing involved in it but the total amount of insurance – he said

the extra cost on the insurance to him was going to be \$1,000 more a year on a family. That's just on insurance alone. That's not counting the price of gas going up by 16.5 cents. Last week it went up 18 cents and we have no cap on that whatsoever. If gas continues to go up, government just said no, let her go. There is no stopping that at all.

But just look at the impact that this is having on a family – the family, I know them pretty well. They are a modest family. An extra \$1,000 is going to mean that they are going to have to come up with \$1,000 that they are not going to spend maybe at a restaurant; it may be something to small businesses somewhere in the province. Maybe it's their holiday that they'll go on or whatever. But here it is \$1,000 more that they are going to have to pay.

I have another fear with this insurance too. By going up by 15 per cent sometimes – and we look at it all the time; we hear it on the news. There are a lot of people out there driving without insurance. I would imagine the reason why most of them are driving without insurance is because it's hard to afford it. So I'm just hoping that this doesn't increase people that do drive without insurance because that's not good. I mean, we don't want to see anybody have accidents but if there are people on the road that are not insured, that's not good for anyone and it's hard.

This is just another factor that we've been talking about for the last couple of days. What we've been talking about is it's a tax again – if this was the only tax that you brought in, if you didn't have the levy that we talked about for a long while there yesterday, and if you didn't have the gas tax, and if you didn't increase income tax and every other fee that's out there – there are 50 new fees that you introduced. You increased everything from 300 licences and different bills that are out there now, people have to pay more.

This whole budget is all about taxing people. The problem with it, a lot of people have a problem in the province, is it is tax, tax, tax, cut, cut, cut, but there's no plan. There's nothing there to show the people we have a plan in place. Once we get this factor here we're going to invest. We're going to take the money, we're

going to invest in and we're going to diversify the economy. We're going to do something.

People don't see a plan. People see absolutely nothing from this government. You can see it. All you have to do is listen to the open line shows, listen to people on the street. People are just so upset because there's nothing there. The future, the hope that people have in this province has been taken away and it's been taken away by the taxation they've been doing. People have the fear. They're worried about where they're going to get the money, where are they going to be able to pay their bills.

You take it, while we do a supplement for seniors and now when they go – and you can mark it down, they will have insurance on their cars and they'll have insurance on their home. Please God, they will have insurance on their home. Here's what you're doing, you're taking the money right out of their pockets. Then they have to make a decision.

Here's the decision I have to make: Will I heat my house? What do I do with my groceries? You can mark it down, like I said last night several times, if you look at a lot of people in this province, when they get their paycheque at the end of the month or at the end of the week, I guarantee you they can tell you where each dollar is going. Now, as of July 1, when they go to renew their insurance on their cars and renew the insurance on their home, they have an additional 15 per cent that they have to come up with. To most that's a lot of money, that's hundreds of dollars.

Like my colleague said, most of them pay their bills on a monthly basis, so they know exactly where it is. If you look at a person that's paying a \$150 bill a month on his insurance, now he has an extra 15 per cent to pay on that \$150. That's huge.

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

I remind the Member his time for speaking is up.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

I'll be up to talk about this later on.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Good evening, Mr. Chair.

There's always a new Chair. You have to keep watching, there's always a new one.

CHAIR: Three cheers for the new Chair.

MR. PETTEN: I echo what my colleagues have been saying of the insurance tax, I know my colleague for Mount Pearl North said it. I've said this many times – actually, I say this probably every time I get up. The insurance tax is one of the taxes I always bring up, but I don't think it's been talked about even in the public domain and in this House as much as probably it should be.

My colleague for Cape St. Francis just pointed out that these people are looking at probably a thousand dollars extra cost a year. As we all know, the levy, before it was adjusted, the highest threshold to that was \$900 a year. We know the public outcry that came with that and it's still a public outcry.

We've been here now for quite some time. We were on the levy, now we're into insurance, but it brings us back to that point of the public outcry with the levy. In my opinion, there are a lot of families going to be hit harder with this insurance tax than there would have with the levy. I say that from before any adjustments were done. I think you can find that on record.

I know on *Open Line* this morning, or I heard somewhere along my travels, this lady was a senior and she was really upset. She felt she should pay her insurance early and she'd get off without having to pay the 15 per cent. That is not the way it's designed.

I understand that, that's the way those insurance – on renewals, if July 1 is your renewal date, but there are people trying to find – and if you're a senior, I can see where they're coming from because, as one of my colleagues just pointed out, people who are on fixed incomes, as we all know, dollars are tight. Dollars are going to get tighter as this budget – as we say all the time when the different increments of this budget takes effect.

We have July 1 insurance tax, the levy will fall. We're not sure exactly, but the mechanism has been all over the place, but I guess one way or the other, whether it's at the end of the year or even now, we know that's coming too. Gas tax, we're paying that now. Our income tax will come up in taxation.

It almost gets exhausting sometimes because you feel like tax, tax, tax. My colleague from Cape St. Francis said everything is tax, tax, tax, tax. You know, unfortunately it is.

Driving in here this afternoon, or lunchtime today, Mr. Chair, I'm not sure, so I may be wrong, but I think it was someone who represents the taxpayers association. They're saying this levy and other tax measures – we're talking about the insurance one as well, but we can go anywhere of course with this bill – it's bad for the province, it's a bad tax.

His commentary was similar to what I've heard in this Chamber. I don't know if any of us are tax experts but this guy is supposed to be a tax expert. I know when he said his statement – I've heard it said here by a lot of us in so many words, it's crippling.

I think it was yesterday – you want people to spend money. Consumer confidence, it has to come back to consumer confidence. If you want people to spend money that drives your economy. As your economy is being driven, people spend more money, there's more confidence, there's more taxes for government and more employees. You attract business, you attract people, and you attract investments. As it has been said many times, you don't tax yourself into prosperity. It just don't happen, it will not happen, it cannot happen.

As we've said many times as well, we understand we're faced with a financial crisis but I guess – and I've heard this said too, there was a better way. Taxation of this level, regardless of what financial situation you're in, when you're going to do a tax regime like this and affect every single person in the province, it can't work. You're taking the confidence right out from underneath everybody.

I said it before and I could say it again, but we all know it, I don't have to tell anyone in this

House. People don't have that same feeling about spending. We'll see it as the year goes on. It will be interesting to see how retail sales numbers reflect at the end of the year. As we all know, in the fall and over the Christmas season that's a lot of – we get the retail sales numbers leading into budget time. That equates into consumer confidence. I can't see consumer confidence being up this coming year. That should be a direct reflection on the effect of this budget.

The Minister of BTCRD a while back was boasting about tourism numbers – a totally different case. This year's numbers are based on last year's investment. The investment stayed stable so next year's numbers shouldn't change, but it's not a matter of – consumer confidence and with our income tax and with our economy, it's pretty immediate on a go-forward basis. We know now, we're starting to see the effects.

By the fall, next year's budget – well, we have another budget, I believe, don't we? We have part two coming up in another few months that we don't know, but I guess in March or next April – the numbers they're forecasting now I think will be a lot lower. Again, I'm not an economist, but I think common sense should prevail there that people are not going to be spending. People are not spending now.

As I said here the other day and I'll say it again, I have a lot of people in my district that their spending has – they're contractors building homes. New home construction has bottomed out. If that's an indication, new home construction has bottomed out in one of the fastest growing communities in Newfoundland, that has an effect right across the province. If it's having an effect in CBS – if anyone ever were reading up on it, it was always CBS and Paradise are the fast growing communities in Newfoundland, and Atlantic Canada for a few years. So when you're seeing everything coming to a halt there, I mean it's caution to the wind, because I think it will have a crippling effect on our economy.

Speaking about this bill on insurance – we'll have lots more time tonight to get up, I'm sure, to go on to other stuff. Pertinent to the insurance tax, the Town of CBS has to pay an extra \$350,000 this year, alone. That's a result of the

insurance tax and the gas tax. They haven't factored in all the other numbers. That's the easy – the so-called, low-hanging fruit. They can say quickly they know the insurance tax, 15 percent on it. They can take their gas, roughly their usage and put the 16.5 cents with the 2 per cent HST on. These are easy numbers. I mean, it doesn't take a lot of work to figure that out. They're looking at in the vicinity of \$300 to \$400,000 extra over and above a budget that has to be a balanced budget under the *Municipalities Act*.

Every municipality in the province that already has their budget done – they operate on a 12-month calendar, most of them – they've got to find extra money. CBS is one of the largest towns, so that's in the bigger municipalities. You've got Mount Pearl, you've got St. John's, you've got Paradise, you've got Corner Brook, you've got Grand Falls-Windsor. Then you go down the line to Gander – all these municipalities will be hit. We don't know the full effects yet. I know from my own community – that can have a pretty harsh effect on a smaller municipality, because we all know what they operate on. They're always looking for a new municipal framework. They're looking for more money every day.

So now they've done a budget in December that they got balanced one way or the other – they balanced their books, which they have to – then to be hit now in May, June, or April, May and figure out their numbers and they're going to have to come up with extra money. A small town, \$100,000 is immense. I'm out in CBS, we're a bigger town, but the numbers were crunched the year, and they had themselves boxed in a corner.

They will probably find the \$400,000, I'm sure they will – but at what cost? Like I said a while back, it was a big public outcry in CBS because they cut back discounts for seniors. Just one factor that saved a small amount of money in the big scheme of things and there was a huge public outcry. Their argument was we had to do it to balance the books. I don't know how they're going to come up with this \$400,000. I hazard to guess they'll stay away from seniors this time, but they have to find it. So something will suffer because of it.

So I'm going from a large municipality to an individual, middle-class family, to a senior, to a student. Again, I say it and I say it and I'll say it again – it's tax, tax, tax, and it affects every single person in the province. No matter what it is, you can't turn around and the budget is not a topic of the day, because as I said, and it can't be overstated, it affects every single person in the province: man, woman, child.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I'm only going to speak for two minutes because I know a couple of Members opposite were talking about municipalities and I just wanted to give one example. I spoke to a city councillor from the City of Corner Brook and he talked about this large amount – I don't know what it was, 400 – I can't even remember the amount but it was a huge, huge amount that they were going to lose this year.

I spoke to him Saturday at the Great Humber Joint Council and I said: How much is the city losing? He said I went back and said explain to me how you're losing this money. Do you know how much they are using? Ten per cent of what was announced publicly – 10 per cent. The money that they can charge off as a town or municipality and the money that's coming in is 10 per cent.

I'd love for the Member opposite to give this figure that the Town of CBS is losing \$400,000. I'd love to get a breakdown. I'm not saying it's not accurate; I'd just love to have it so I can see it. Because I know when the City of Corner Brook made this large figure, large number, and the city councillor went back and they asked questions and they said I'd love to see it. A lot of the funds that are coming in – and it's sustainable.

Anyway I'd just like to see it, if you don't mind. If you could ask the town – I'm sure you have it there because I'm sure –

MR. PETTEN: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: You'll get it, okay. I thought you would have it there saying – anyway, thank you very much for that.

Mr. Chair, I'm not going to belabour that point. It is just that the information that is out publicly when you speak to the councillors privately and you get the information privately from the councillors – and this one with the City of Corner Brook is going to get me the actual information and I'm hoping to have it by Thursday so I can stand up in the House of Assembly and show the information that is thrown out there is not accurate.

I won't keep speaking, Mr. Chair. I don't want to get into a heated debate here tonight but I just wanted to bring that up and I look forward that, hopefully tomorrow, I can get that information from CBS so I can sit down with the mayor and say, okay, explain to me how you're losing \$400,000 over six months this year because all these fees will take over six months. If that is fact and prorated next year it is \$800,000. I can't see how they are going to lose \$800,000 over –

AN HON. MEMBER: It would be nice to look at.

MR. JOYCE: It would be nice to look at.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Out of the 10 per cent, what they said, yes.

I'm hoping to get the figures Thursday. I was told that by a city councillor. That's what I'm going to get and that's why I'd love to see what CBS is getting. Because if CBS is losing \$400,000 over next year that means they're losing a million dollars – \$800,000 over a full year. A million dollars – I don't even know what CBS budget is \$18 million, \$20 million, I'm not sure.

It's an increase I'd love to be able to get justified by the towns because I spoke to a lot of smaller towns. Sure, there's going to be some but with the sustainable partnership, they will not be

losing. Next year, I think they'll be in money and the year after with the sustainable partnership, with the gas tax share and the MOGs. They'll be in money.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: You can't budget it next year because you haven't made up your budget for next year. You can't budget for the third year because you never made up your budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: You wouldn't have it in your budget. That's what I'm saying, but the money is coming. I couldn't be in your budget. So you can't say three years down the road, well, we're going to budget for this because the money's not there yet. Their budget they have now, next year they will have more and the year after, they'll have more. Even if they lost a portion of it, they'd still be better off.

I'd just love to see the numbers, that's all. I thank the Member for committing to get them back to me. So I won't belabour that, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to point that out. When I spoke to the city councillor from Corner Brook he agreed to get me that.

I'd love to see it. I really would because I heard the numbers being tossed around on many occasions but I have yet to see anything laid out for six months this year that a town is losing \$400,000. I'm not saying it's not. I'm just saying that no one has shown me or the department just so I can see it. If it is so, I will stand up and say here's what's happening. I just know with the sustainable partnership program, Mr. Chair, most towns would be better off even with some of the measures that are put in place.

Mr. Chair, I didn't want to speak about it but, as I said, at the Great Humber Joint Council meeting this weekend, it was in *The Western Star* today, the biggest issue is waste management. It wasn't the gas tax. It wasn't the levy. It was waste management.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Burin Peninsula is the same.

MR. JOYCE: I met down on the Burin Peninsula – an interview I did today with CBC – and the big issue on the Burin Peninsula is waste management because once you get into waste management and you put the cost – it used to be 60 or 70, all of a sudden it's up to 220 or 250 per household. There is \$170 levy the waste management is putting on every household in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

No way in the world, when the waste management came in – and I'm not here to argue, I know the Members opposite – there was no way in the world that the waste management, when it was brought in in the strategy, was to bring the rates up so high.

It wasn't supposed to be. That's why, hopefully, we can find some way to help out towns because if it keeps rising and rising, that's a levy on every household, Mr. Chair. That is something, again, we inherited that we have to try to work with and bring down because that is a big issue with a lot of municipalities.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: I say to the hon. Member, a waste management report was brought in, the funding was brought in. I didn't mean to get into it, but, Mr. Chair, the capital for the waste management came from the federal government for the gas tax.

What happened – and I didn't mean to get into it – if you read the report, there were supposed to be two sites set up, first over on Eastern and Western. Somewhere along the line, the previous administration took the funds and set up the one in Central. The one in Central is so large now they are saying, okay, it's not worth putting one in Western because the one in Central is so big.

The report that your government put in place – I'm not here to cause an argument, because I'm trying to get along with everybody. The report you put in – I'll show you the page, show you the copy of the report – that if garbage is shipped from Western Newfoundland it's an extra \$1.8 million in transportation. That's right in the report. The concept was there was supposed to be a subsidy from the government to help with that cost. That was part of it.

They held out, and then one night at a meeting with government appointed individuals, they decided, no, let's move it out to Norris Arm without the subsidy. At that meeting, which wasn't even on the agenda but it came up through a discussion – get this, the City of Corner Brook representatives weren't even at the meeting to vote on waste management from the City of Corner Brook. The largest municipality on the West Coast, they weren't even at the meeting to vote there.

The rep out at Pasadena, Gary Bishop, the mayor wasn't even at the meeting. They went ahead and voted and then went ahead to Norris Arm. So that's some of the concerns and frustrations from the people. I'll give you a good example. I'm not saying it's going to change, because once you review it – because the site now in Western Newfoundland is a big capital cost. It could be, I think, \$75 million or \$80 million, minimum, to set up a site on the West Coast for that.

How you can take garbage – I didn't say Ramea – from Ramea, bring it across the boat, bring it up the Burgeo highway, get to Stephenville, bring it down to Norris Arm, you tell me how that's cheaper. The Town of St. Anthony, take it from St. Anthony, five hours up to Deer Lake, another three hours to Norris Arm, eight hours driving on trucks. You see the frustration, and that is the frustration.

So when you're talking about the towns, and if you talk about the City of Corner Brook – and I know everybody is trying, and I'm definitely not trying to – because it is an issue that we inherited. We all have to work together and I spoke to the Member for Cape St. Francis, we have to come up with a solution together because it's costing a lot of money. If we don't do that, Mr. Chair, there's going to be a levy on every household in Western Newfoundland much larger than what's going to be there now. The cost is going from \$75 million, it's going up, up and up. That's the cost of the garbage.

Mr. Chair, there are a lot of hidden things that's happening here. What we're trying to do as a government and what I'm going to try to do as the minister, with the help from all the MHAs here – what we're going to try to do is try to work through this. Work with the municipalities,

work with all the groups, work with all the waste management committees to see if we can bring the cost down so we can keep it down to a manageable level. Every dollar that goes onto it is going to be passed on to the householder.

I didn't mean to step in. I look forward for the Member to get me that information tomorrow; they're going to lose \$400,000 in six months. I look forward to getting that.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Once I get it I'll give it to you, yes.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, it's an honour again to stand here in this House and speak to a bill being presented. Unfortunately, it's one that I have some reservations about because of the impact it's going to have on people.

I've echoed here when I've gotten up and argued for ways that we may be able to improve our education system and outlined exactly that we do support wholeheartedly all-day kindergarten. The fact is from a financial point of view, investing in all-day kindergarten now at the expense of some of the existing other programs are a challenge and a detriment. I say that in the context of the fact my argument always was it's less of an impact if you're not taking away something that people had versus implementing something they never had.

The issue here is the same thing with this, we're now taking away a rebate or break that the taxpayers had in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's only a number of years ago that the former administration implemented no tax on insurance because they saw the impact. As the insurance rates were rising all through Newfoundland and Labrador, they saw the impact. They wanted to

ensure that people could afford to have insurance on their homes, afford to be able to drive insured, even if it was with the public liability ability; one, for their own security, but also for the security of other peoples around them.

One of the ways our administration of the day found that we could at least give some other incentive and some enticement, and maybe that extra threshold where it was going to be harder from a financial point of view to have insurance, we could give them some kind of a rebate. The easiest way to give a rebate was we wouldn't charge any tax. We worked out a deal that there'd be no tax on insurance.

That was a savings, a substantial savings for people. We noticed the insurance policies increasing. The insurance industry will tell you that. They ended up getting more people who hadn't had insurance on their homes, which meant they had to do more inspections. Things were identified in homes to make sure these homes were safe for people. So there was a benefit for that, not only financially but we ended getting a safer society, being around the cars people were driving and the homes.

I also want to talk about – earlier this morning I got up and I had some legitimate questions, some from my taxpayers and some of my colleagues from the former side when we're having good conversations with each other and said you're aware, you guys had \$28 billion over a period of time that you spent, and what do you have to show for it? I said you're legitimate; we did have \$28 billion or so. I'll even go a bit further and say we had in the vicinity of \$30 billion from our tax revenue from the oil industry.

That was things that were negotiated through some of the royalty regimes. Some of it was pure luck. That's what life is about too, luck, and being able to take advantage of those situations. In this case, to take advantage to put it back for the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador but it's a legitimate question.

We are in a fiscal crunch. People say maybe we spent too much. We had all this money but we did spend it in areas where people had identified there were challenges. We had some major

infrastructure needs and there were certain things that people needed. People needed a break in life to be able to maintain a certain standard of living or move to another level either it is around safety or enhancement of their own quality of life. Like I just mentioned about the insurance rebate and taking the tax off that.

There was a method to why we were doing that and there was an end result, and it worked out. More policies were sold which meant more people were safe as part of the process, and we ensured that people in our society would not have to worry about if there was a hardship from an accident or a fire of some sort like that.

I want to outline exactly – and I'm giving the \$30 billion level, it may be a little bit higher than what we would have normally had, but let's give it that because we always generate money in different areas. So I can explain to the viewers at home and to my colleagues across for those who may not have been around, may not understand it. This is some in-depth research that's been done to outline exactly where the monies went.

Now, you may not agree how we spent it, but I will give the outline of exactly where the money went so people would understand there isn't \$30 billion that was blown on some kind of a big party and nothing to show for it. There's an asset shown in some way, shape or form to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador out of that \$30 billion.

One of the things people need to realize, for years and years we were relying on our federal counterparts to support us, and it's called equalization. Through equalization we were getting a billion, a billion-plus per year as part of that process. That was because we were an economically depressed province. We were just finding our way. We were just starting to get control of our own resources. We were trying to find our economic plan in life. It took a period of time to get there.

The way it works with any jurisdiction, particularly any province, if you get to a point where your income levels are higher based on your population to a certain scale, and then obviously you're entitled to equalization. If you're on a lower level at a certain period of time or a certain threshold you meet, then you're

not entitled to it. All provinces have the ability to draw upon that, depending on the income being generated from various categories.

So for years and years, since our Confederation, we were drawing down on equalization and it was part of being part of this bigger entity of the country we call Canada, and it's part of what you do. In the mid-2000s, as our oil industry started to take off and our royalties and our other mineral industries and our employment rate started to soar, we managed to get to a point where we didn't have to draw down on the equalization and we no longer qualified. So there was a scale as we were being weaned off that until we got to a point where, in 2008, we were no longer entitled to it.

On one side, that's a hard thing. You don't have a billion-plus dollars coming in from the federal government, but on another side it proves that economically you're moving forward and now you can give back to other provinces that may have some challenges. That happened. Ontario, who we were reliant on, to a certain degree, for a number of years from employment and what they were paying into the equalization formula plan, we now could put in to offset some of the challenges they had when the manufacturing industry started to go down.

So these were ways that we could also have a bit of pride in what we were doing, take control of it because now it was our money. We didn't have to fill out applications. We didn't have to be saying how we fit and pigeonholed into something that the federal government felt this is what we have to do, or hoops we have to jump through, to ensure we get money and only be able to use it in certain categories. We became the stewards of our own demise, but in a positive way. We could set up exactly what we wanted to do. We could get rid of negative programs and services and put in positive ones.

The \$10 billion is the \$10 billion that we would have had in equalization, but as a result we didn't get that. That \$10 billion had to come off the \$30 billion that was being generated through our oil revenues. So there was \$10 billion automatically. It's no more money in, no more money out, but what it is, is money we now have control of, that we earn, and is part and parcel of our own economic viability in this province. So

that was one part of it and it was a positive thing. It's where it gave us pride again; it's where we could initiate other negotiations with other jurisdictions, other countries, other companies to come here. We didn't have to bow down and take the mere pittance. We had control over what we were doing, so that's what we did.

In infrastructure, we invested \$6 billion over that period of time. That's less than a decade, \$6 billion, and that went into things such as schools. I talked about earlier this morning, anybody ever remember the '80s and '90s and even the early 2000s, schools were closed down on a weekly basis due to mould, or some schools were too cold because their heating infrastructure didn't work, or there were issues around the location of schools from parking or safety factors. All of these issues were major control issues that we could not do anything about because we didn't have the economic ability to do it. It had an impact on our education levels.

As a result, we said what do we need to do? To have a sustainable community and a sustainable province you need to be able to make sure your education system works for you. What we started to do is we endeavoured to start investing in our infrastructure: \$6 billion. So \$6 billion and the \$10 billion for the equalization, we're up to \$16 billion. Out of that \$6 billion, these are things you have. They're assets that are owned by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are 17 schools that we built, brand new ones. There are 36 other ones that we did major renovations – major expansions to. There are eight projects on the go now to build new schools. There are 1,600 renovations to existing schools to ensure that the mould and that be gone through either putting in new heating systems, new air conditioning systems, new windows to make things conducive to our environment so that people would have a good learning entity and a new learning environment, so that things would be at the level we intended them to be. We wanted to ensure our society had a better opportunity, from an education point of view, than the previous one.

We built highways and byways. We built roads. The Trans-Labrador Highway, we invested hundreds of millions of dollars up there because

we saw the benefits of having that road network connected. We started from Labrador West and we came right through to Labrador centre as we move forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: We continue to do that, to invest in our infrastructure. We continued to do that. Firefighting equipment, fire trucks went out because we had these small communities who didn't have the safety equipment. First responders, volunteers who went into fires with equipment that it was just as easy if you went in with a T-shirt on. They were no safer.

We invested into enhancements there and ensuring that people were safe when they did these types of things. We did that up to the tune of \$6 billion. No doubt, it's a continuation that would go on and go on. I know there are monies allocated in this year's budget to enhance infrastructure. It's an ongoing thing, but we were so far behind we had to spend and catch up at the \$6 billion mark.

Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to go through the other things we invested in over the night.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Well, excuse me for one second there, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Seeing the Member is sitting down –

MR. KENT: I am on my feet.

CHAIR: Not sitting down?

AN HON. MEMBER: No, he's not sitting down; he's still on his feet.

CHAIR: Okay.

MR. KENT: I'm ready. Thank you.

I thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for offering to pinch-hit there for a moment. I want to compliment on his work in the House this evening. We've both been acting as House Leaders for a period of time and we were able to make progress on several bills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Mr. Chair, there's a little bit of disruption happening over here that I'm hoping you can help me manage. None of the disruption tonight has been created by the hon. minister, so I appreciate that.

As I said earlier when I spoke to this bill, tonight I'm going to use the opportunity to bring –

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Can you guys just head down there, somewhere? He thinks I'm joking, Mr. Chair. I won't name him. Thanks, guys.

I'm going to use the opportunity in debate tonight to raise concerns that have been brought to me on behalf of people all over the province. We've also been having lots of banter about the debate and this filibuster on social media, and I guess I should clarify for the record so it's in Hansard that I don't believe that John Riche is a protester. I just want to get that out there right away. I've found him to be a fine, upstanding constituent in my district. I've never felt threatened by him.

His taste in football is dismal, though, Mr. Chair. I do need to point that out. But I don't feel threatened by his presence, no matter where he is.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is he a Pats fan?

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. KENT: No, he's not a Pats fan; that would be worse.

Anyway, back to the matter at hand. I'm mentioned in my opening comments this evening that people will be outraged by the increase in insurance costs. I just received a message on social media from a woman who did the math tonight, and the cost to her family is over \$800 a year. So that's what we're talking about. We didn't get into it, but she may or may not have to still pay the levy as well.

People are also upset about gas tax. So I want to read some correspondence that I received this evening, actually. It says: I'm emailing you to voice my concerns about the gas tax. My husband just retired and his monthly income is \$2,200 a month. I'm unable to work due to a car accident I was in, in 2004, in Ontario. My husband doesn't qualify for GIS because they base this income not on what he is getting now, but what he got last year when he worked. So we are not eligible until July 2017.

My medications are \$150 per month, and they are not covered.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair; I appreciate your protection.

My husband, who is a diabetic, has suffered from bladder cancer, high blood pressure, thyroid problems, and high cholesterol, takes medications that are about \$500 a month, and we currently have no coverage for those either. Our mortgage is \$1,100 a month, so you do the math.

Starting next month, both of us will no longer be taking our medications. We live in a rural community and with so many medical issues we are required to see various specialists. Unlike people who live in St. John's or other larger communities, we are required to travel to Grand Falls, 166 kilometres one-way, or St. John's, 230 kilometres one-way. We can't afford to do this. So along with not being able to get medication, we now have to stop seeing the

specialist as well. Then again, I guess if you can't afford the meds you put them on, then seeing them is kind of pointless anyway.

Ask the Premier if he will pay for my husband's funeral when he passes away because he can't get the medical help he needs because he can't afford it.

These are the kinds of horrible, desperate situations that we're hearing about in recent weeks. They are individuals who had difficult circumstances to face in their lives prior to this budget, but the point that needs to be made, Mr. Chair, is that this budget and the combination of decisions that have made by the Liberal government makes things –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It makes things so much worse for so many families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So these stories need to be told. I'm hoping by taking opportunities through this debate on Bill 19, and also the debate that will resume on Bill 14 at some point, we will be able to bring as many of these concerns as possible forward. In some cases, individuals like this person have asked their MHA to bring their concerns forward. They've been watching the House of Assembly. They've been watching social media. They've been hopeful that at some point they would hear their own MHA stand and be counted and bring these concerns forward, but, unfortunately, for many people that hasn't been what has happened.

I think, Mr. Chair, you saw my papers fall to the floor as you recognized me to speak, so we're a little out of order here but we'll carry on.

I have another message that was received earlier today from – I think I would categorize the gentleman as a former Liberal –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I'm not sure why that's funny.

AN HON. MEMBER: Is it Paul Lane?

MR. KENT: No, it is not the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, but he's also a former Tory, in fairness, and there is a lot of former Liberals around these days as my colleague has pointed out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask for order, please.

The hon. Member.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I seem to have awoken the giants or something like that, I don't know.

This gentleman writes: I worked so hard to campaign for the Liberal government on public promises and personal help from certain MHAs. The rise in taxes, the levy, not only takes money out of my pocket and puts me further behind from trying to see my daughter; but, with my own health issues, it makes it that much harder to trust anything that comes from anyone's mouth again. That is my view.

It's hard to read that stuff, Mr. Chair, but these are messages that people have contacted me about in the last 24 hours and asked me to present on their behalf in the House of Assembly, so that's what I'll do.

Here's another one from a gentleman that I know. He's originally from the Bonavista area and now lives in the great District of Mount Pearl North. In some cases, as I'm going here, Mr. Chair, I need to do a little bit of censorship so that I don't say anything that's unparliamentary:

I refuse to call you Premier and I refuse to refer to you as the Liberal Party anymore, as you don't resemble anything liberal. You're totalitarian in every sense of the word. I'm not sure if it's your ego or your incompetence that limits you from seeing the simple truth.

Let me elaborate. Three years ago my wife and I were forced to purchase a home that was too small for far too much money in order for our two sons to have a place to call home. We accepted this and are still paying more than we should for it. We were also very excited about the screeching halt in the housing market as soon as we bought – just full of luck we are. Add to that the rising cost of groceries and electricity, and my wife and I were left with barely anything at the end of the day. Keep in mind that we both have good-paying jobs. It will show just how much we were and are paying out.

Fast forward to your ill-thought-out budget and cutback scenarios galore, what do you want us to do? Starve so we can feed our kids? We now have three kids and even less to go around thanks to you. There are no words for your lack of common sense, lack of leadership and, well, sense of reality. Stop punishing us for your own benefit. Pack your bags and get out of here for a long time. You don't deserve to call Newfoundland and Labrador home.

There's a lot of anger in those messages, Mr. Chair. I don't think it's a desire on the part of average citizens to be disrespectful. I think people are just filled with such rage and such anger that they're not sure where to turn.

What I'm hearing over and over again from people across the province is we don't know what to do. We're signing petitions. We're posting on social media. We're voting in polls. We're calling our MHAs, some of whom are not calling us back. We're sending emails and we can't get a response from certain ministers or from certain MHAs. We just don't know where to turn.

That's why this debate matters. This is not just some kind of political game that's being played here, Mr. Chair. This debate matters because people deserve to have a voice. People deserve to have an opportunity to have their concerns brought forward to the House of Assembly. If government won't bring those concerns forward and if government in the leadership it shows or doesn't show and in the work that it does, doesn't reflect those concerns and those wishes of constituents from around Newfoundland and

Labrador, then we have a responsibility to make sure those issues get raised.

That's what we'll do tonight. That's what we'll do tomorrow. That's what we'll do for as long as we can.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I was sitting here patiently, I was somewhat reluctant to speak tonight because I think I'm operating on about three hours sleep since yesterday morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The level of noise – again, I can't hear the speaker.

Mr. Minister.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for protecting me.

I've been sitting here patiently and I know that I have limited amount of sleep but there's only so much the rear-end can take when there is so much garbage going into the head.

It's very difficult to sit and listen to all of these comments. Mr. Chair, it's great but sometimes when you try to be theatrical and only look at – and I understand very clearly that it's the intent of the Opposition to bring only the negative pieces to the House. I understand that.

Mr. Chair, that's the role that they do; however, you wouldn't know that that's the only comments that are coming in. I received a message this afternoon as well. So it's not only the Members of the Opposition, and I'll it read out. It says: Mr. Hawkins, during the past few weeks, I have been following the proceedings in the House and have been listening to the people on *Open Line* and in the coffee shops. My

comments reflect the feelings of most people who are disgusted with the former government and disappointed with the actions being taken by the current administration.

If you would –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chair, I would respect the Member opposite not to be putting words into my mouth or to be pretending who this is from.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: If you would, please allow me to take you back in history when, in 1934, Newfoundland teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, which nearly repeated itself if not for the action of your government. The Commission of Government in Newfoundland was established in a response to what was called an extraordinary set of circumstances. The collapse of the world trade during the Depression of the 1930s was particularly damaging to the Newfoundland economy, which depended on exporting large quantities of fish and forest products. In 1933, following several turbulent years of severe budget deficits and heavy foreign borrowing – sound familiar – the British government established a royal commission to investigate Newfoundland's financial difficulties.

The commission's report suggested replacing responsible government with a Commission of Government that took over the day-to-day operations of the province until Newfoundland was once again self-supporting. The Commission of Government, Mr. Chair, took office in 1934, according to this person, and remained in power until Newfoundland became a province of Canada in 1949.

Therefore, history shows that had the current government ignored the extraordinary set of circumstances that the former government ignored, I am sure it would have led our province back into bankruptcy. The general consensus is that the PCs did too little, too late, while the Liberal government did too much, too soon. However, I am sure that most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians realize that

unprecedented action had to be taken, otherwise someone else would be running our affairs if history repeated itself. That's an email that I received today, Mr. Chair.

So again, we have been talking about, if you listen to the Opposition and if you listen to the Members opposite, and if you read the emails, we fully understand the impact this budget is going to have on people. We've never, ever, ever stood on this side and said it was having no impact on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Somebody has to be impacted by a budget where we're trying to correct the mess that we're in.

My honoured and educated colleague calls it junk bonds; we're that close to junk bonds. Do you know what, Mr. Chair? He is absolutely –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: – totally right.

CHAIR: I'm having a real problem hearing the hon. minister.

Order, please!

Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It might be nice for the Members opposite to listen what we're saying sometimes because we are making some good points, I would hope, from time to time. I understand we are all passionate about this province. I love this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I love this province. Of course, I've lived all of my life on the Island part. I've visited the Big Land on a number of occasions, looking forward to going back again.

Mr. Chair, I am so proud to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian. As I said many, many times, the choices that we have to make may not be necessarily for me, I'm getting up there now in years. I'm a senior citizen and I've had a good life in this province. I don't know how much longer I have to live. I might have five days, I might have a year and I might have 10 – who knows?

I'm telling you one thing, Mr. Chair, my pride is in my children and my grandchildren. I am so proud of them. As I said before, I have six wonderful grandchildren: four in Ontario, two in Newfoundland and Labrador. I wish I had all of them in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it's just not possible because my children have jobs in Ontario that are well-paying jobs and are doing well for themselves. I have a son here in Southlands that, right now, is doing quite well in the city; and my two grandchildren that I have are in Gander.

Really, when we look at what we are doing for this province, we have to understand it may not necessarily be for us – we have caused the problem, folks. Our children and our grandchildren have not caused the financial mess that we're in. They have not caused it.

We are responsible for the mess that we're in financially because we are in a financial mess and we are about that close to bankruptcy. I don't know how many times I have to say it. I am honest; I am passionate about what I am saying. It is incumbent upon us, as elected officials, to make sure that we have a path forward so that the young people in this province have an opportunity, and they have a hope not built on paying for our debt, a debt that we are going to be kicking down to them.

Where else is it going to come from? Nobody wants to raise taxes, nobody wants to cut services, and everybody wants to keep the status quo. How can that happen? Tell me, how can that happen? It doesn't make sense to me. It just cannot happen.

We have an obligation to the people of this province. We have an obligation to our young people. We must be passionate about what we're doing and we must understand that we have to chart the course for the future. It's based on sound financial management. It can't be wishy-washy. We can't borrow, borrow, borrow, borrow forever and a day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: There has to be an end to that, Mr. Chair. There has to be. We have to

understand that we have an obligation. Yes, I get passionate; I get emotional about this because I care about where we are. I care about what we are facing.

I'm concerned about where we're going as a province if we do not make tough choices; choices that we have to make and they're not easy. People are going to be impacted by it. I'm going to be impacted. Just about, I'm sure, every single person in this province will be impacted by the choices. Mr. Chair, we have to chart a future for this province.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It's again a pleasure to get up and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. I really like the passion of the Minister of Transportation because I think a lot of us have that passion in here. We're here for a reason. I say it every time I get up that I don't believe people on the other side really believe that they're doing things wrong.

I'll tell the minister something, I someday wish to have grandchildren. I do have two children now and I tell you I can't wait to have a grandchild. It will mean so much to me because

–

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: I know. I can't be (inaudible).

I tell you one thing that this budget is doing. While I understand where you're coming to with the grandchildren and everything else, when I talk to seniors who pay their price in this province, who've done their part for us and have paid the price all these years and they're being taxed to death, they're worried about where their food is going to come from. They're worried

where the heat in their house is coming from. Don't forget those people either – do not forget those people.

While you get up here and you stand and throw your arms up in the air and everything else and say we have to make these hard choices, don't make the choices on the backs of the hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who did so much so we can be here today, and did so much for the people in the province.

You're right, the budget is about choices.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Quite a little bit of extra noise coming from that section here, I'd like you to keep it down, please.

MR. K. PARSONS: It is about choices, minister. I have no doubt at all it's about choices, but it's about making the right choices.

Last night when you spoke you said you went to Twillingate, 180 people in Twillingate and there was only one table in Twillingate that said anything bad about the budget – only one table. I'd ask you a question now tonight, and I know you're an honest man.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'd like to advise the speaker to address the Chair, please.

MR. K. PARSONS: I'd like to ask the minister, while he got up tonight and read an email – and it was positive a one. I'm sure all Members over on the other side get a scattered positive one, but I will guarantee you, I can tell by the way they're looking at me right now that the majority of the ones they're getting are not positive. They're not positive. You can pick them out. You can cherry-pick them all you like. You can cherry-pick them because most of the emails – all the emails that we're getting, other than a scattered one –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Come on, let's see them.

The ones we're getting have all your names on them. They're sending them out to everyone. Every MHA in the province, they're sending them out, and I haven't seen very many positive ones. A scattered one maybe is not too bad but most of them, I tell you now, Minister, and you know I'm right, the majority of the emails you're getting are not positive.

We are living in a time and we know, unless your head is right in the sand all together, unless your head is so far down in the sand that you don't see what's happening in Newfoundland and Labrador, take it up out of there and have a look. Take it up. Take your head up out of the sand.

We have a Premier of the province who wouldn't answer a question two days in the House of Assembly. He wouldn't answer a question, two days in the House of Assembly being asked questions. What's wrong?

We're here tonight, at 8 o'clock in the night –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: We're here tonight, 8 o'clock in the night, with about 20-odd Members here in the House of Assembly and the only ones – the minister was the first fellow to get up. There's only two on that side after speaking and we're here talking about the budget. None of them are even speaking about the budget. Not even getting up to talk about the budget at 8 o'clock in the night. I can see that being 12 o'clock or 2 o'clock tomorrow morning, I would understand that one, but 8 o'clock in the night and not getting up to talk about the budget. That's unbelievable. People are watching.

You're wondering why the VOCM poll, like I said last night, had 28,000 on it – about 28,000. I don't think the Member from Mount Pearl did all the 28,000 votes. I really don't think so, because I can tell you right now –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: I don't think the Angus Reid poll that showed from 60 per cent down to 17 per cent was done by one person either.

It's time to get your head out of the sand. Listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're speaking to you. They're talking to you. They're sending you emails. They're upset. They're frightened to death that there's another budget coming this fall. They're frightened to death about jobs. They're frightened to death of what's going to happen. Nobody knows what's going to happen this fall. There's a fear out there that's unbelievable. What does that do to people when they have that fear? What do they do? Do they spend money?

We're talking about a bill here tonight that's taking 15 per cent on insurance, putting insurance up 15 per cent on homes and stuff like that. The majority of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would understand. The minister said people don't understand what we're doing. Every time the Minister of Finance gets up on her feet she doesn't think anybody understands. I tell you right now, people do understand. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do understand. They see it. They see the Members across the way won't get up and talk about this budget. They won't tell the positive things because there's not much in it.

The Minister of Finance, before the budget even came down, said there is nothing good in this budget. Well, I'll tell you there are a lot of good things in the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Listen, there's money getting spent on roads. That's a good thing. There's money getting spent in municipalities. That's a good thing. The seniors grants, there are a lot of grants that were there before. The Home Repair Program and stuff like that, that's still there. Those are good things.

We're not the ones who came up and said there's nothing good in this budget. It's you guys who said there's nothing good in this budget. It's gone. She's gone b'y she's gone.

Let me tell you something right now, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't

believe that. The pride we have here as people, we've been through hard times before. We'll get around this one, I guarantee you. I can say here tonight, I know down the road, it's a little bit difficult for us right now, but down the road I believe, I really do believe that Newfoundland and Labrador will be just like it was 10 years ago. We're in a cycle. We're down. The price of oil is down but it will come back up again.

I have great faith in our fishery. I really believe in our fishery. I have to say to the minister, I have some major concerns in the crab fishery. I really do. I'm a little bit concerned talking with fishermen in my area, and I know you are too, in the 3Ps in the crab. I'm talking to fishermen and they're not even going down there. They're saying it is soft crab there and the catches are very low. Off here, I think it's 3L or 2L – 2J off here they're saying –

AN HON. MEMBER: 3L.

MR. K. PARSONS: 2L, yeah. They're saying the catches off here are very low also. I've been talking to people the weekend and they told me in the last week or so they're up to where they were on par last year. That's a concern. The fishery is a huge concern. The fishery is a place where we could be making investments in our budget.

There's one little part of the budget that I really have to – and I know small communities all over the province took advantage of it. It was a small grant they used to get for like \$1,500, \$3,000. The minister will agree with me, it was nice. I know the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, people out in her district took that, and we all did around. Your harbour authorities had a few dollars.

I know in Torbay they put up a gate. In Flatrock they did some work around the wharf, just to beautify it actually. In Bauline, the grant that I got them down there, they got a new pump to clean off the wharf. People will say that's Small Craft Harbours, they should be the ones doing their part, but that's not true. Small stuff like that, we cut that out the year.

There was \$300,000 I believe, Minister, that was in that grant. When I looked at it in the budget there was only \$10,000. I think that's there just

to cover the few grants that are left over from last year. That's a cut to our fishery, and maybe it just had to be done. This time, maybe there are some grants we can look at. Hopefully, down the road we can bring that back again. I don't doubt it at all.

I'd like to ask the Members across the way, I'd really like to ask you, get up and tell your constituents. Get up and tell them what's good about the budget. Get up and tell them. Tell them what the positive things are in the budget. Get up and do it. They want to hear from you.

We have a Premier two days in a row that sat in this House of Assembly and had question after question asked to him and he never even got up and spoke. I'm not sure now, I don't know about today, but I know yesterday he didn't even go out and meet with the media. I don't know if he did today or not, I didn't see what happened today. So I'm not sure whether he did or not.

The people of the province deserve better. They deserve better. They deserve to have a government they can trust. That's what happened in this election and it's what happened with this budget. They trusted you. They thought you were going to be able to do what you were supposed to do and their trust in you is gone. They feel betrayed.

I want to get up and speak on something else. I'm going to get up here 10 times tonight and speak on different things, but you know it's time for you to get up and talk.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always a privilege to stand on my feet and represent the good people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair on the Southern Coast of Labrador. I just listened to the Member for Cape

St. Francis. I've actually listened to him a lot, like most people here, over the last 25 or 30 hours. We haven't had a lot of sleep.

One thing noteworthy, he's been up 15 or 20 times on behalf of his district and he does a very good job bringing forward the issues of his district and he does a good job raising the issues in the budget and what's wrong, but, Mr. Chair, I've not heard him table a solution. I've not heard him table a solution. We're going at this again now into the second night and he's identifying the issues with the budget. He just asked a question to the Members on this side of the House, where are we, do we have our head in the sand. Well, I want to say somebody who was in charge –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – of this government for the last 12 or 13 years must have had their head in the sand for the mess that we picked up on the 30th of November.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I'm pleased tonight to get up and talk about my district and where I can best represent my district, the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. Let me tell you what has been happening. Over the last two or three years since I sat in Opposition, I brought many, many petitions to the floor of the House of Assembly, many real issues in a rural district.

One of them I'm going to mention is fire trucks. When I have a community like Cartwright that's the second largest poll in my district, that is 200 kilometres from the nearest town, they have a fire, a man loses a house; a month later they have another fire, a man and woman loses their life, the fire truck burned in it. Again and again and again, I went to the minister and I said I don't have to make a case for these people. They've been wanting a truck for 10 years but now the case should be there. People have lost their lives; more people are going to lose their lives.

We saw 20 fire trucks get announced – one in a Liberal district. Finally – finally – the now

Leader of the Opposition was in Labrador and he made a last-minute decision because there was pressure put on by the member for Grand Bank at the time, and he announced a fire truck in August. Guess what happened? Guess what we found out? After we won the election on the 30th of November, I went over and met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and said: What is the status on the fire truck? He said they never put it to tender. If I wasn't sitting down, I would have fell down. I could not believe it, playing with people's lives. Nineteen trucks announced in Tory districts.

We need a formula in this province where we are able to allocate people according to needs. If the leader was here right now I would ask him, stand up and tell us why that truck was announced for Cartwright in August and November 30 – and actually the fire truck, the minister put it out to tender on December 22.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I am in a district where we have many issues and I want to go back for a moment and talk about what would have happened had we not took extreme measures with this budget. I mentioned it last night. When you become bankrupt, as a province, and we're teetering on bankruptcy, and another province takes over your affairs or the Government of Canada takes over your affairs, I thought about Combined Councils, a very important group in Labrador coming in tomorrow, into the House of Assembly. The Combined Councils of Labrador, an umbrella group that represents all the municipalities in Labrador.

Once or twice a year, they travel in to St. John's and they meet with the various ministers and they put forth the issues on behalf of the district. Now, I thought about that last night. Just imagine if we had gone bankrupt and these people are going to take their money and go to Ottawa somewhere and try to have their issues put forward or they are going to go and meet with Nova Scotia or someone like that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: We were in a very, very serious situation. But, Mr. Chair, let me use a few minutes of my time to talk about some good things that are in this budget for the people that I represent in Labrador. Ten per cent of the provincial infrastructure budget, Mr. Chair, the Trans-Labrador Highway – I said it many times in this House while parts of this province was getting their second lot of pavement, we were still fighting for our first.

Every single weekend I'm driving on hundreds and hundreds of kilometres of gravel road, and we're a stone's throw from so many projects that have contributed so much to this provincial Treasury. It's not good enough, Mr. Chair, the neglect that has happened, but I am happy to be a part of a government now that sees that it's time for Labrador to come up and to be equal with the rest of the province, and that's the direction that we are moving forward in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Route 510, Mr. Chair, from the border of L'Anse au Clair down to Red Bay, pavement that is 40 years old. Many, many times I've petitioned, more cold patch there – we used to use it the Dalmatian highway. More cold patch there than was pavement. It is just a miracle, Mr. Chair, that someone has not lost their life.

I am so thankful that the Minister of Transportation and Works is using provincial dollars to leverage federal funds so that we are going to start to move the pavement now, redo that from Black Rocks north down 44 kilometres.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, every day we hear people talking about drinking water and how it's a basic right and it is 2016. Well, Mr. Chair, sadly I have many, many seniors in my district that don't have good drinking water today as I stand here. But I'm very, very grateful that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been working very closely with Ottawa and many of my capital works projects that through years and years of neglect because we were in the Opposition and we did not have a formula in place, the previous government didn't have a

formula in place where they allocated based on need, we were not getting our fair share of the money – again and again and again.

I am very much looking forward, Mr. Chair, this year to the approval of the capital works and seeing some fantastic work going ahead in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: Some roadwork, some money for sewer, some money for drinking water, for wells, for communities.

So when I get asked, how can you stand and how can you support a budget like your government brought down? I want to say a couple of things to that, Mr. Chair. We just had 10 or 12 years where seeing expenditures go up, up, up. At the same time the expenditure pattern was going up, cutting taxes, the revenue was going down. Think about, Mr. Chair, in your own household. Think about it –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Members opposite to keep it down to a low roar, please.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We respect them when they're on their feet and we ask that they respect us the same and return that, Mr. Chair.

Think about it in terms of your own household. If you have a certain standard of income and you have this much expense and then you start cutting back and cutting back, your income gets reduced and your expenditure goes up, sooner or later you are in trouble.

That's where we find ourselves as a province when we are paying \$20 million a week – I was at a kindergarten graduation on Saturday; beautiful, bright little children. I asked them all kinds of questions; they were sharp as tacks. Something like the ones my colleague talked to at Beachy Cove Elementary. I bet you those

five-year-olds that graduated, if I said to them, if you keep spending more money than what you have, what would happen? I'm sure they would know the answer. It is pretty simple arithmetic, really. I was something like the former minister of Finance with the Tories, I wasn't good at math but I do know that. I do know that you cannot spend more than you're taking in. Sooner or later, you will find yourself in the place that we do as a province.

MR. BROWNE: Tell us about the fixed link.

MS. DEMPSTER: Well, yes, I'm going to mention ferries before I sit down, because in Labrador we have the Strait of Belle Isle and we deal with a lot of ferry issues. There's one positive thing I want to say, this year, this winter, I am very happy to say that in the five years that the winter pilot project ran, this was the best winter we have ever had, Mr. Chair, and the ferry ran out of St. Barbe for the whole winter.

Mr. Chair, we have had many, many bungles. We've seen many bungles from this previous administration when it came to the ferry. They announced a provincial ferry strategy. They went over to Romania when they probably could have been out to my colleague's district, the shipyard in Marystown, and they ended up with all these tariffs. They spent millions in ferries and they did not even have the infrastructure, Mr. Chair, to dock the ferries when they came.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: And, Mr. Chair, they bungled our RFP so bad, after several delays the RFP got pulled off the table.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: It's just a stall tactic, Mr. Chair. The RFP got pulled off the table. They appointed all these people to this transportation advisory committee and they spent a fortune putting together a document called: What We Heard. Mr. Chair, what they heard was what we already knew. Everything they heard, the money

that was spent and the delay was what we already knew for a long time.

Mr. Chair, it's very sad. As it sits today, we still don't have the new ferry that the people of that part of the province certainly deserve. Right now, we see we are in this financial calamity that they have created.

I see that my time is out, Mr. Chair, and I look forward to getting on my feet again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to see we have spirit across the way. I have to say, it's good isn't it. My colleague got the juices flowing again. It's good to see. It started off with the Minister of Transportation and Works, but they all have districts. Forget about the minister's portfolio. I represent people, and I'm sure there are people around who would like to see what they really think, and it's good to see.

The Minister of Education, to his credit, gets up a lot, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Our Opposition House Leader gets up. The Premier is in hiding. It's good to see you up speaking about Labrador. It's good to see you up speaking about your district. It's nice to see more people up, but I have to say it's better than nothing.

I never have to worry about the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's kind of a race to get to your feet to beat him. I'll give him that much, and he's passionate.

AN HON. MEMBER: He gets excited.

MR. PETTEN: Yes, he does, but he does a good job. He speaks his mind and we have to respect that.

We have a new Mr. Chair now, so welcome.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: Oh, yes. We have order back in the House again, thank God. She was on the rails.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: It's been a long two days, Mr. Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Chair, things are digressing here in a hurry. I have to stick to my text.

We speak about the budget, people talk about the levy and we're talking about insurance; this Bill 19 of tax on insurance. Well, ultimately, it all comes back to the same thing. My example of the levy is people find it insulting, but I think with a lot of actions in this budget a lot of people find insulting. Someone said why do I have to pay all these taxes? Why do I have to pay – someone referred to the levy as a head tax and a cover charge.

I was talking to this guy one day, we had a conversation and he said you know I pay every day. I don't need to pay a cover charge to live here. I pay every day to live here. Every time I buy a pop, every time I buy a coffee, I file my income tax. Every time I get paid, I'm paying to live here every single day of my life. I don't have to pay an extra fee. There is a lot of truth to that, because we do pay everywhere.

Everywhere we go there is a tax on everything; there is a fee for everything. Most of the time it finds its way back to government, which is fine. The government are left with the public purse to look after the roads we drive on, our health care, education. It all goes around and makes sense but I guess adding some fees on, people do find it insulting.

I heard earlier tonight, the Minister of Finance pointed out that this tax was removed on insurance in 2008. I don't know, and I don't think anyone opposite is going around with no insurance on their homes or their vehicles but insurance without tax on it is pretty steep. I have a clean record right across the board with no claims and my insurance is pretty hefty. You only have a home and a couple of vehicles and a couple of other small items. It is not anything extravagant and it's thousands of dollars a year for insurance. I guess some people could find that insulting. I don't really call it insulting as much as troubling, because when you removed the tax on insurance back in 2008, I don't think that was a bad thing.

We hear Members opposite say we are on the verge of bankruptcy but that goes hand in hand with my comments that I say over and over again about consumer confidence and the bounce in your step. That commentary has been on the airways around here now since December month, shortly after this government took over. The channel is not changed, actually it's gotten worse. I wish it wasn't that way. I mean let's be honest, we all live here. Outside of politics when we check out of here we go home like everyone does. You feel it on the streets and you see it around your neighbourhood. You see it from people you know.

I say it again and I don't care how many times I say it because I'll never overstate it, it's not the way it should be. Yes, you hit a bump in the road. Personally, people hit bumps in the road. They lose their jobs or they're in a financial crunch. They are stressful times, there's no doubt. We all said before we understand the province. Because we're an oil-based economy or commodity-based economy it's why we're struggling.

I have a list there and I won't go through it again. I did it before and I think most Members opposite that have been around and most people live in this province, they like to say it was a lot of money wasted. As much as they might say it's money wasted, a lot of these same people opposite ask for everything and then some when the money was available.

You can't apologize for building new schools, new roads, health facilities, doing pension funds,

giving your public sector raises, new programs, a lot of social programs. A lot of people looked at the former PC government as the most socialist Conservative government ever in this province really because the programs were in place because people wanted them. I don't think any of those things were a waste of money.

Is there a government that's ever been in power that didn't waste money? Absolutely not, and this government here will waste money and next and every government previous. So that kind of grows old. If everyone opposite was there and oil was at \$120 a barrel, this conversation would not be going on. It would be the government down the road that when oil bottomed out to \$40 a barrel that you'd be in the same conversation again.

In saying that everyone opposite is fixing the world's problems forever and a day, no, you're biding your time until oil goes up again. Then the spending will increase because the public will come to the door, they'll be looking for programs and they'll be looking for spending. You'll need to build those extra new schools. You have a lot of stuff that's being deferred now will need to be picked up on and there will be new things coming. Every day that goes on a road wears out; a building needs to be replaced. It's life, we live it at home. You have a home you need to renovate. If you have a vehicle, you need a new vehicle every few years. It's the reality of life.

In saying you're curing all the world's problems – and I know you're faced with a dilemma. Whoever would have been there would have been faced with this dilemma. In November, when we were all knocking doors, the 40 MHAs here and other people who ran in that election, anyone that wasn't with this government, the government of the day, the Liberal Party, were listening to promises day in, day out, day in, day out. You flick on the radio, you flick on the news. I said it before and I'll say it again, in all sincerity, I had no reason to question it. There were a lot of people out there – the skeptics – but, fair enough, that's part of the game, too. I just said if they can do it, good on them. As we know, that turned out not to be the case.

That's something that you guys have to explain to people, not me. I represented myself. I went

out and I wasn't selling that. I was who I was, and a lot of Members here were like that. But the promises – once the trust is gone, everything is gone.

As the saying goes when someone betrays your trust, you can live a long time and you can go back, you'll never forget that they betrayed your trust. You'll move on and you'll probably run into them people and carry on normal conversations as if everything is fine. Deep in your heart of hearts that never leaves you.

Budgets aside, and a very sincere note, I really believe that will be what will dog this government for the next three-and-a-half years. I really, truly do. A month is a lifetime and a week is – in politics, they say anything is possible. That is my opinion, the point I'm getting to; I think that's why there is so much anger.

All the other notes that have been said, like the Minister of Transportation made his points, and fair enough and what had to be done, we are teeter-tottering on bankruptcy and all that – I don't know if it's that extreme, but we know we're in a crisis and we have to weather it. If oil goes up we'll, no doubt, be in a better place. I think outside of all of that the biggest challenge is going to be faced by Members opposite – this budget is going to be with you for a long time. The decisions you've made in the budget, which tied to a lot of your election promises, is going to be with you for a long time.

You've lost a lot of trust in people. As my colleague for Cape St. Francis said, in my last few seconds I'll say too, your Premier, who happens to be the Premier of this province, should get up and answer questions of the public. He's the Premier of the government, he's your leader but he's the Premier of this province. He's my Premier as well. People want answers from that man. He should get up and speak to the media, regardless of whatever else – and that's becoming an issue too. We have two days and counting, and I believe this is trickling into the big problem this government is facing with this budget and everything else.

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you very much.

MR. JOYCE: I am just going to stand up on a point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs, on a point of order.

MR. JOYCE: Bill 29, just two things, the Member was just – I don't even know what district he is in.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: CBS.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for CBS and the Member from up in Cape St. Francis, both of them stood in the House of Assembly and said the Premier won't answer any questions the last two days. Here's Hansard from yesterday where the Premier stood on many occasions to answer questions.

When you want to have a debate in this House, speak what's true. Here's Hansard and I'll lay Hansard down that you can see that the Premier did answer questions in this House of Assembly yesterday.

Please, please read the information and say what's correct here in this House of Assembly. Add some validity to the speech.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's always a privilege and an honour to stand here in our hon. House of Assembly. It's our constituents who put us here. I'm very proud of the 15,000 constituents that I represent in Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District and, of course, I will always stand and represent their needs and their concerns.

First, before we get going, I also want to reflect on a very successful festival. It's an annual festival in the Town of Bay Roberts which is called the Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival. It was a big success. It continues to grow each and every year. We had many visitors travel from outside of town and even out of the province to come. I'm also happy to say that the government, through the Department of Tourism, invested \$15,000 into this festival, which was a privilege to announce at the time.

Just to reflect on some commentary that we're hearing tonight with regard to fire trucks and whatnot, I have to weigh in on this one. We know how the fire trucks were handed out prior to the election. Having said that, it's very important that our volunteer firefighters and our firefighters throughout the province have the proper equipment that they need in order to save lives and to help put out fires and to help emergency services. I'm happy to say that the Town of Bay Roberts received a fire truck and well deserving.

I'm disappointed, however. The Town of Upper Island Cove, another town in my district, was also somewhat led or insinuated that they, too, would potentially receive a fire truck, but that did not happen. It did not happen prior to the election, but we did indeed have a meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's something that I will certainly continue to work on.

This particular piece of equipment is a special fire truck. It's also for medical services. It is noted that firefighters in Upper Island Cove are also trained for medical services and emergency services. So I would like to recognize that and we will certainly continue to work on that.

Of course, I have to go back to a very important topic in my district which I talk about frequently – and I will continue to until we turn that sod – and that is, as we know, Coley's Point Primary.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. P. PARSONS: That's right; we can all say it together.

I'm happy to say we had a meeting today actually. Some staff from the Town of Bay Roberts, along with the mayor and a councillor, travelled in from Bay Roberts and we met with the Minister of Transportation and Works. Again, the minister understands that this is very important, as does the Education Minister. It is something that we are certainly going to continue to work toward.

Again, just to recap, I want to go back in time. I'm always a fan of travelling back in time and I'm going to take us back to December 11, 2007. This was a letter from a consulting firm – noted it was sent to the then Education Minister Joan Shea. The firm will remain nameless, but I will quote some of the professional opinions here in this letter. This says, and I quote: In my opinion, the school has exceeded its life expectancy and usefulness, and it is not economically feasible to reconstruct the facility to achieve current standards to the 25-year lifespan.

It goes on to say: The extent of the renovation and repair for the expected product is not a viable solution. A new school should be built to meet the 25-year primary education needs of this community. Again, I reiterate, this is from 2007. It begs the question, what happened? We are in 2016 now; we know that money has been allocated for this school. In a time when the province was rich with oil money, again the \$25 billion oil royalties and in three past budgets there was money for this school, but we didn't see anything happen.

As a matter of fact, the only thing that we did see that still remains today is a picture of this sign saying the promise of a new school would soon arrive.

MR. KING: Nice sign.

MS. P. PARSONS: My colleague for Bonavista, it is a nice sign, but hopefully this sign is going to mean something more. We want to break ground on this school.

I will reiterate this school services communities from Port de Grave, Bareneed, Shearstown, Butlerville, Coley's Point –

MR. KING: Beautiful town.

MS. P. PARSONS: Absolutely, and with a growing population, beautiful town, a strong population – we have an expanding population in the Conception Bay North region all around, in particular with Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District.

Again, the need is there and the school is at capacity. I had a recent conversation again with the principal and it is currently gravel. There is no asphalt, no pavement, so there is a concern with lines and safety guidelines for the new busing routes that will take effect.

I hear from parents as well on a day-to-day basis about their concerns, but it is something that I am certainly going to continue working toward with our ministers and whatnot. Again, like I say, I will lobby. You will hear Coley's Point Primary in this hon. House until we see that. Please God, when that day comes, I invite all hon. colleagues here in this House to come out and celebrate that opening for that facility, for those children in my district who deserve a new facility.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: That's right. My colleague across the way from CBS says the previous administration won't apologize for new schools, absolutely not. Every child in Newfoundland and Labrador, and Canada for that matter, deserve to live and grow in a healthy, up-to-date, modern facility to accommodate their needs and modern life. I will say that. Of course, not apologize, but we can't overlook communities. We can't overlook districts for political reasons. Whether or not this was the case, I will certainly continue, like I say, to lobby for this cause.

Also, I want to talk about the courthouse in Harbour Grace as well. It's a very important topic, of course, since the budget came down, in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. This service has been in place since the 1800s. The building itself, the old building which no longer houses the current service is a national

historic site, but it's no longer fit. It's no longer safe or suitable to operate now, so they have moved to an alternative location.

This service accommodates 50,000 people in our region. This is bigger than a Harbour Grace – Port de Grave district topic. It is Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, it's the District of Harbour Main, the District of Carbonear – Trinity – Bay de Verde, Placentia – St. Mary's. Again, 50,000 people utilize this service annually. They have a full docket every week on a day-to-day basis.

I have been working with the Town of Harbour Grace, and I must commend the people of Harbour Grace. They've come together on this, and also the town council. The old building, as we know, is an historic site but unfortunately it was neglected. There were no investments put into that building. As we know, unfortunately, it's closed shop today.

Again, I want to commend the town council in Harbour Grace. They're working very hard. They've actually formed a committee. I've been working with that committee. We've been meeting with the Justice Minister, and it's certainly something that I'm going to continue fighting for, for lack of a better word, and lobbying for, because that's what we do here in his hon. House.

Also, you can't get up here and not reflect on the past because that is the job of the Opposition, the Third Party, and, of course, the government and whatnot.

AN HON. MEMBER: And the fourth party.

MS. P. PARSONS: And the fourth party, you're right.

There's a lot of talk of smart choices and the right choices. When you're put in a position of responsibility and authority, there is a lot of pressure and there is a lot of expectation to make the right choices.

Nobody wants to play the blame game or whatnot, but we can't let go of the fact that a \$19 million contract was forgiven for Humber Valley Paving. That's a shame. The libraries we're seeing closed right now and the cuts, that

\$19 million would have been utilized today, absolutely.

I will stand on my feet again. We're here round the clock. We've been in session since yesterday, Monday, 1:30 p.m. We're now up to Tuesday at 8:40 p.m. I want to thank the people at home if they're tuning in. They're watching what's happening here. They're supporting their Members. They're making sure that everybody is staying on their toes and keeping everyone accountable.

I also want to thank the Members and staff from the Bay Roberts town council for travelling in today to meet with myself and the Minister of Transportation and Works to fight for the cause for Coley's Point Primary school. We've got 350-plus students in an area with an expanding population, a 60-year-old-plus facility. We know over the years it's been looked over and passed on since 2007. That's a significant time.

We will keep this at the forefront. We're going to hear the words Coley's Point Primary in this hon. House until that happens. I want to reiterate that to my constituents, absolutely. If any constituent would like to reach me to have a meeting with me for any concern – and I have been corresponding through email, through social media, on the phone, some meetings in person – my office number in my constituency is 786-1372.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. P. PARSONS: By all means, please reach out.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand and talk to Bill 17, the *Income Tax Act*, to talk about that and talk about our *Revenue Administration Act*, talk about our tax bills around our insurance act and talk about all the things relevant to the budget, Mr. Chair. I need to clarify some

misinformation. I think it's probably, just not understanding exactly the whole process of what went on.

There was no \$19 million of taxpayers' money that was paid out to anybody or lost in any way. What happened with Humber Valley Paving, they were paid for the work they did. Somebody else came in and did the rest of the work. The same amount of money was paid for the contract a year later. It cost a little bit more because of the fire in Labrador. The work all got done.

As my colleagues from Labrador would attest, it's a great highway that goes from Lab West right to Goose Bay, a great piece of work done. I would have liked to have gotten it done a year earlier, but unfortunately the forest fire, the company runs into some problems there. We protected the taxpayers and ensured the job was done. It's all done. It's a great asset for the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to get back to what I had started outlining exactly where the \$30 billion worth of oil revenues that we had for the last eight years or so, while we were in government as an administration, where we invested. I'll just quickly go back to it again. I'll just explain to people in my last opportunity to speak: offsetting equalization, \$10 billion; infrastructure, \$6 billion. So it's \$16 billion that we had to put back or use for day-to-day operations or invested in infrastructure.

Poverty reduction; we invested \$1.2 billion into poverty reduction. Mr. Chair, as everybody knew and all the organizations, every level of government and the people in this province knew, we had some troubles in this province. Because we didn't have the economic base for generations, there were some challenges in our communities based on the principle of geography, we're so spread out. You're trying to sustain small communities. You're trying to sustain infrastructure in those communities. Your monies to be able to put into the support mechanisms for people are minimal. You can

give them the base things if you're trying to also supply services and that.

What we did is we looked at how do we improve the quality of life for people who have some struggles, or for people who want a hand up and not a handout. We said let's look at developing a strategy, a Poverty Reduction Strategy. Let's build that from the inside out, and the inside out being let's engage all the agencies who already do work on a volunteer basis, who already do it as a partnership for us to support the people who need things in this province.

So we reached out to the churches. We reached out to the agencies who have been serving them. We reached out to the professionals. We went internally within government; the expertise that we have internally to assess exactly what is it we need to develop to make a Poverty Reduction Strategy so that we improve the quality of life for people.

We started to carve out exactly what was needed. We even went so far – and this is probably the smartest thing we did – as to have consultations with the average citizen, the people who are facing turmoil, the people who are facing every day challenges. We asked them: How do we improve your life? What are the struggles? Why do you find yourself in these situations?

They gave us a litany of challenges they faced and it goes back from early childhood – and I talked to the Minister of Education in our debates the last number of days about early childhood education and the benefits there. We saw those benefits. So that was in the back of our mind as we were carving out exactly how we move things forward.

It talked about employability; it talked about supportive services, everything from domestic violence to how we also do housing, to all the other supportive things that were necessary. We talked about all that quality of life and people's only sense of worth. We talked about all those things.

How do you do that? First of all, you have to engage people; you have to have a structure in place. Then you have to put the amenities. Then you have to invest. Those investments meant

improving people's quality of life by giving them access to services, providing other types of supports that would be necessary to be able to get them to the next level. The ultimate level was to get them to a point where they were comfortable and ready for some type of training so they can move on to gainful employment and to be employable.

Particularly, it was perfect timing because as we started this process, so did our economy start to improve. So there was another demand from the industry that we needed people to fill certain positions. We had an ability to look at what we needed from a structural point of view and from an employment point of view, but particularly look at the skill sets of some of the people that wanted some supports from us, or particularly the skill sets they didn't have or the skill set they'd like to have and what we needed to do to put that in place.

Over a course of a period of time, we gave some incentives for people to go to work. We would give clothing allowances for their first-time employment, so people could go into the workplace with the proper footwear, wearing proper clothes so that they didn't stand out as somebody who had some challenges or were economically challenged or depressed. They wanted to look like they would fit in, a sense of pride, so they could go to a job interview and feel comfortable about what was being discussed and being able to sell themselves exactly on what their ability was.

We put those things in place. Then we said we needed infrastructure out there. So we worked with the college systems. We worked with the not-for-profit organizations who supply all these services. We worked with the professionals to say there are certain types of services that may be necessary for people; it could be counselling services. There could have been some challenges.

We implemented things around dental programs so people could go in their workplace and would have pride if they were in the service sector and wouldn't feel intimidated in any way, shape or form. That amounted to \$1.2 billion. I think that's probably some of the best money we ever invested because that's money we directly invested back into our citizens.

Not just money that we gave them something and they went away, and three years later that's wore out and it's gone. We invested in them as individuals, their own skill set, their own ability to take control of their own lives. This is what this was all about. It was simply a way of investing so people would have control of their own lives and their own destiny, and would become better productive citizens, be it from an economic point of view, being from a social point of view being included, being that their offspring and their children would be more engaged in the community, be it that they would be volunteers and give back to the community.

No doubt, we had a vested interest here. Our vested interest was if we invest in people who become productive citizens in the sense that they're employable and they're gainfully employed, they're paying taxes and they're no longer a ward of the state, then obviously that frees up more money for us to invest in other areas. More particularly, it gives our citizens control of their own destiny.

That's what we did, and very efficiently. So much so that we went from the lowest when it came to services and net worth, and providing self-esteem and citizens feeling like they have control of their own lives, to the best in the country, so much to the point that other jurisdictions wanted to look at how we did it. Places outside of Canada came in and said can you give us a breakdown, how did you outline your strategy, how did you start it, what was the crux of the first process, who was engaged in it.

So we did that. When we look at it, over an eight-year period to invest \$1.2 billion that would go directly for tens of thousands of our citizens, and particularly the next generation of those citizens, I think it was a really good investment. The return is twenty-fold, and we're still seeing the benefits now as we move forward. But outside of that, the process, we learned a lot about how the next generation, the type of services we'll need to put in place to try to minimize the impact on poverty.

Does poverty still exist? No doubt. Are there still challenges for people? Without a doubt. We could invest another \$1.2 billion and still have some challenges. But the framework is in play; we know exactly what has worked. There's no

doubt when the economy gets better, and there's no doubt we need to still have a responsibility that we ensure that people don't fall further and further behind – we made too many good, positive steps forward, and too many people were engaged in this process, and too many of the agencies were established based on the principle of being able to support people, so that if they step back, they still have the support to be able to continue being able to be progressive and move forward.

That benefits all of us. As we get an aging population, we want to make sure that sector of the population is taken care of. To do that, we have to ensure the sector that had some challenges prior to that needs to be engaged and needs to be productive and have a skill set to be able to provide the service we need.

So the \$1.2 billion has gone a long way. The difference is we're not investing anywhere near what we did then, but we're still gaining from it. Those people who went out in the workforce are still providing services. They are no longer wards of the state. They are no longer a cost process for our taxpayers. They themselves are now people who are taking a leadership role in their respective communities. That was \$1.2 billion, very valued; it was a great learning process for us because we have a template to use. It put us on the national and international stage for being able to sell our wares and share our wares with other jurisdictions, and it gave a sense of hope to thousands of individuals.

No doubt, as we get over this hump financially, we can take the next stages of our Poverty Reduction Strategy and move that forward so people who have gotten to phase one and two but have an ultimate goal of getting to phase three or four and being able to do whatever it is that they wanted to do in life, be productive, ensure that their families are taken care of and are engaged and have abilities to productive citizens also, we can do that. But, particularly, more importantly, for all citizens of the province, it gives us an opportunity to show that we have another part of our sector that can also service what we need in this province.

Mr. Chair, there is another part, but I will outline the rest –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – of it as I get a chance later on tonight.

Thank you, Sir.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

That was an interesting speech from the Member over there. I'm not sure why it is Nick McGrath resigned now if everything was fine and dandy with Humber Valley Paving, nothing went on, and why his leader had said that he would have fired Nick McGrath had he not resigned. It seems very odd now that everything was hunky-dory with the Labrador paving contract. But anyways, there are all kinds of stuff coming out here.

I just wanted to have a few words about the library reorganization and something that came up here in the House of Assembly which I continue, a month later, to try and figure out why the person said this. Basically we've talked about it here. I have tried to give as much information and be as open and transparent as I can about it. The libraries board worked with the department through the Government Renewal Initiative to come up with a plan for regionalization of the libraries because the libraries were 50 per cent underfunded in comparison to other jurisdictions. We thought, they thought, that a better model would be one that provided people with a better level of service.

That would involve everyone or 85 per cent of the population – not everyone, about 86 per cent of the population being within a 30-minute commuting distance of a public library, a regional library, and then those libraries having a minimum service standard; for example, 30 hours of operation per week because some of them are only open for a dozen hours a week or 20 hours a week and so on.

The model that was adopted by the libraries board – in the end, while no one wants to lose a public service in their community; it was about 10 per cent of the existing library patrons who were affected by this – 10 per cent. To give you a sense of the 10 per cent, I'm a library patron of the Corner Brook library. And 14 years ago I went into the Corner Brook library and got a library card so I could use the Internet that weekend. But according to the statistics, I'm a patron of that library. That's how accurate some of the statistics are. But 10 per cent of the library patrons, yes, we acknowledge are impacted by this.

We are reinvesting a significant amount of money, nearly \$650,000, back into the system. The libraries board is reinvesting that money back in to ensure better collections, more up-to-date materials, more access to digital libraries. We know that the use of digital materials has gone up 25 per cent in one annual report year after year, and more access to books via distance.

One day here in the House of Assembly the Member for St. John's Centre – so this is the NDP's perspective – stood up and she said: Closing libraries, this is only something that happens in times of war – this is like something that happens in times of war. Whatever the comment was, it was about times of war.

Every day, Mr. Chair, when we come in here in the House of Assembly during this year, the 100th anniversary of Beaumont-Hamel – where blood of young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians was shed in France, in Belgium and in Europe – we get up every day and we read out the names of these poor young fellows that are, I believe, almost all men who never got a chance to come back home after World War I. The Member for St. John's Centre believes that what we are doing is like something that happens in times of war.

This exposes a gross naïveté about the nature of war. I don't understand war. I don't claim to be an expert on war because I've never participated in war. I never want to participate in war, but I would never stand here in the House of Assembly – we're reading out the names of boys who died and did not get a chance to come home

from war – and compare closing public libraries to, somehow, warfare.

Why is this important? Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians went to World War I; they participated in the Boer War. They didn't get a chance to come back from World War II. They volunteered for Vietnam and they didn't come home. They went to the Korean War with the Canadian Forces; they didn't get a chance to come home. Some of us know people who went to Afghanistan and did not come back alive in our lifetimes. To say that this is somehow equivalent to war is absolutely a mockery of people who have the guts to put on a uniform and go out there and fight so that we can have the privilege to stand here in this House of Assembly and govern our affairs in the way that the people of the province democratically elect us to do so.

You can disagree with the decisions, but that sort of rhetoric is absolutely out of place in our discourse here in the House of Assembly. Why is this important to this debate? When people want to participate in a debate they look to their leaders to set the auger for the standard at which people will debate. They look to their leaders to set the standard for discourse, for discussion. Well, if their leaders are setting that as an example, there's no wonder – like the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville said, somebody went onto his Facebook and called him a Nazi the other day.

There's no wonder people use that sort of language when their leaders are taking the public discourse down so far, when they just throw around language like this is like a time of war, when they know nothing about war. They have no appreciation for it, and I don't know if they honour it or they have any idea what those families go through when their loved ones don't return from war, or in fact when they are at war and you wonder about whether or not they are going to return in one piece or not, or if they return alive, whether they'll have post-traumatic stress disorder and suffer for the rest of their lives because of the trauma they experienced.

I call on Members of the House of Assembly here this evening, raise the tenor of the debate. Don't go down there. We don't need that. Don't use that kind of language. We need our

Members of the House of Assembly to be better than that. Honour the sacrifices of the people who didn't get a chance to come back here and enjoy what we enjoy. They gave up their lives. This year, the 100th anniversary of the sacrifice at Beaumont-Hamel in France, honour their sacrifice and raise the level of the debate. Don't drive it down there that far because people will follow that. They'll believe that is actually reasonable, that's something that we ought to be doing.

The Member for St. John's Centre, I have absolutely no idea why you would rise in the House of Assembly and say that. You could say it's a bad decision. You could say I don't like that decision. You could say people are going to be disappointed; people are going to be put out by the decision. I accept all of that, but don't ever say that this is like we are at war unless you know what war looks like – and I don't know, we have one gentleman over here who is a veteran of the Canadian Armed Forces. I'm not sure if anybody else here is. I'm not sure if anybody else is here.

We've had people here who have worn other uniforms in the police force, but don't stand here and tell us this is like we are at war when you know nothing about it, because that just drives the debate down so far. Then the people who are looking to Members of the House of Assembly for leadership in difficult times, they think that this sort of cop out is the way we should be acting, and it's not the way we should be acting. It dishonours the sacrifice of our veterans.

I have been sitting here since the 10th of May, I go back and I read it every now and again and try to figure out why it is you would say something like that here. It's absolutely ridiculous. Considering, like I said, for Honour 100, what we do every day and this was said after this was read out. We stand here every day and somebody reads out these names so that we can honour the sacrifice of these people who went and fought for us and didn't get a chance to benefit from the things that they fought for us for. They did not get that opportunity.

Here we are in the most privileged position, there are over half a million Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and there are only 40 of us who have the honour and the privilege to come

in here and stand in the House of Assembly and try and represent the values of what we believe it is to be a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, and try to fight for the things that we think members of our districts and communities deserve and need to have; to try and ensure they have health care, have decent education, have roads, have all the things that our vets fought for.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It seems there are some emotions running high in the House of Assembly this evening, and that's not uncommon when we're having this kind of debate. I understand we may be striking some nerves when we're bringing forward issues and concerns on behalf of citizens of the province.

I think the matter that the Minister of Education was just referring to was brought forward by a Member of the Third Party, from what I gathered from that angry speech. In fact, I just received a message from someone who listened to that speech and their reaction was, how are people like our young kids and seniors going to be able travel 30 minutes to a regional library? Now with the cost of gas, who could afford it? Maybe all communities don't have libraries, so we need to punish the ones that do and aid our illiteracy. There are some people out there who took exception to some of the comments just made by the Minister of Education.

On a related note, speaking of libraries, I have a couple of issues I want to raise in this period. I received another message this evening from the District of Exploits and it's related to libraries. So based on the dramatic performance we just witnessed, it might be an appropriate time to share these concerns.

Again, without saying anything unparliamentary, Mr. Chair, I'll work my way through this message. Approximately 75 people met with the MHA for Exploits Friday evening at our library in Bishop's Falls and presented

him with a petition to reverse the decision of closing our library. He said he would present it in the House of Assembly. I didn't see petitions yesterday or today, and I don't know if he did. There was a good turnout, considering it was 4:30 on a Friday evening. The spokesperson for the library said we have nearly 2,000 members with about 10,000 transactions per year. So clearly, a pretty busy library in Bishop's Falls.

In the District of Exploits the libraries in Bishop's Falls, Norris Arm and Point Leamington are closing. He also said a number of times that this move was demoralizing, referring to the MHA for Exploits, but he still voted for the budget and the closure of libraries. This is tearing the guts out of rural Newfoundland and Labrador and a step backwards for our education in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Perhaps the MHA can speak to the petition. I don't recall it being presented today, Mr. Chair, but I could be wrong and we still have probably a couple of other opportunities at least this week and perhaps more next week for petitions to be presented. The Member is going to speak that, so I'll take my place after I have my time to speak and perhaps he'll address that. He looks interested in speaking to that, so I thank him for that. I think it's great when MHAs can rise and speak on behalf of their constituents.

I also have a note here that was addressed to our Premier. It was acknowledged by the information management specialist in his office. I think we all need to be reasonable enough to acknowledge that the Premier would be getting a far greater volume of correspondence than anybody else in this House, I would imagine. So it's not realistic to expect that the Premier himself would be able to write a personal response to every single piece of correspondence that comes through his office. That's not realistic at all.

I know, even as an Opposition Member, I'm having a hard time keeping up with the volume of correspondence right now. I suspect it is worse for government MHAs and far, far, far worse for the Premier's office. Fortunately, he would have folks in his office to assist him with that and to acknowledge correspondence, as is the case here.

Mr. Premier, I feel compelled to write you in regard to recent information that has come to light regarding the retention of McInnes Copper and Cathy Dornan to assist with labour negotiations. I find it troubling and peculiar that this step has been taken at a time when you are asking the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to make sacrifices and endure hardships. It seems ridiculous to me that you're going to the public and saying we can't afford to give unions a raise while paying \$600 an hour to deliver that message. That's a wage most people can't even dream of.

You already employ people to handle public sector collective bargaining negotiations. They are government employees who draw a salary in a department that has a budget. I am of the understanding that this will end up costing the people of this province in excess of \$1 million – and this is why I'm bringing up this email at this particular point in time – when you have just closed libraries to save the same amount.

It could be then said that the government has closed libraries to pay a law firm to negotiate on their behalf with public sector unions. I have listened to you on radio and television this week defend your budget – this email is from several weeks ago, of course – by telling people it was hard to find a million dollars in this budget; it was hard to find \$50,000 even. These are tough measures, no doubt about it.

Then where did this money come from? Or from where did it suddenly become available? The optics of this is terrible and it makes me wonder if you have anyone in your office who manages the image of the government and the optics of the decisions you make. Did that person pull you aside and advise that hiring this firm at this extraordinary cost is not going to play well in the public eye and it is very counter to the message you are trying to convey.

Where you even aware of this decision and, if so, were you aware that Robert Dornan is a personal friend of the Finance Minister? Again, the optics is terrible and it reeks of the very cronyism that you attribute to the Opposition. I voted for you and I am having a very hard time coming to grips with that decision. This is just the latest in a series of inexplicable decisions your government has made.

My God, man, you've been in office for four months – it is now six months. I've talked to many people who are having the same trouble as I am. Regret is the deepest of human emotions and it cements itself in the memory. Don't make the people regret voting for you, Mr. Premier, because in four years' time that painful memory will prevent them from doing so again.

I anticipate your response, though I have little hope of receiving a sincere one.

Now again, I want to highlight that this correspondence was acknowledged by the Premier's office. I've confirmed that. I have a little bit of appreciation for the incredible volume of correspondence that the Premier must receive on a daily basis. But it is an important issue and it is one that I was asked to raise here again this evening in the House of Assembly.

Anyway, I've expressed concerns on behalf of those who are speaking out against library closures in the District of Exploits. I thank the MHA for indicating his willingness to speak to that this evening; I have no doubt that he will. I need to pick up on something that the Minister of Transportation and Works said when he was on his feet. He seems to have taken exception to me holding him accountable for the comment but in another dramatic performance tonight he was very quick to accuse me – he used the word “theatrical;” I was being theatrical by reading into the record the emails that are being sent to me from people around the province.

Well, these are issues that need to be raised. People are upset and sometimes they're using colourful language. Some of the choice of words is a bit challenging and I know that some of it may be offensive to some of the Members opposite. I'm trying to censor it as best I can when I present it in the House, Madam Chair, so that I don't say anything that's unparliamentary, but these issues have to be raised.

If the minister thinks that I'm somehow being theatrical by presenting those concerns, I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but I can't apologize for that. These issues need to be raised. Simply reading into the record, emails, like I just presented from people in the province that have concerns, I don't think there's much drama on my part. While some of the language may be a

little dramatic, it's because people are outraged. They're frustrated. They feel betrayed. They feel that they were lied to. They're looking for answers and they don't feel they have a voice. That's why this debate in the House of Assembly is so very, very important.

I see I only have a minute left so I'll pick a couple of short messages to share at this point in time, Madam Chair. Several hours ago someone who I believe lives in the District of St. John's West wrote: Can you ask why many Liberal MHAs haven't bothered to respond to constituents who have reached out to them? I know many who haven't even received a simple acknowledgement, myself included.

We've been in here a long time together; I know that there are lots of MHAs on both sides of the House that are working hard to respond to inquiries from constituents. Again, I would ask people to be patient and mindful of the fact that we're getting a larger volume of correspondence than perhaps ever before. I've never witnessed this and I was in government. I was a government MHA at times where government was not doing too well in the polls and there were lots of controversial issues that people were concerned about, but I've never witnessed anything like what I'm witnessing right now.

I'll acknowledge that people deserve a response, but it may take a little bit of time just because of the volume that we're dealing with.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

MR. KENT: I see my time has expired –

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. KENT: I see my time has expired, Madam Chair. I thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to hearing from the Member for Exploits.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I would have to concur with the Member for Mount Pearl North that we've never seen anything like this because in all of our history we've never seen \$25 billion disappear. We've never seen it gone to the wayside, Madam Chair.

In our 66 years since Confederation, we've accrued \$12 billion of net debt. If no action was taken in this budget, that number would double in the next five years. Madam Chair, I do imagine that Members opposite have never seen the likes of this before. Neither have we, I say to the Members opposite.

To put out the suggestion, Madam Chair, that we're not responding to our constituents – well, I can tell you I've been responding to mine. And I'd like a constituent to come forward to me who I haven't responded to. I've been emailing them back and forth, we've been on the phone, we've been having meetings and we've been in our districts. We've been very active in responding to our constituents and listening to them and bringing their concerns back to the government caucus.

Madam Chair, how does the Member opposite think the changes came about to the levy that they don't even want to talk about anymore? The changes brought forward to the levy will ensure that three out of four tax filers never have to pay it. Those are changes brought about as a result of the work of this government and a co-operation and a relationship with the federal government that they never had.

They signed pledges for Stephen Harper but it never came true, Madam Chair. They went around campaigning for John Ottenheimer and everyone else that they were going around with. Where did it take them, Madam Chair, I ask? Where did their coziness with Stephen Harper get them? Because in the few short months that we've had a federal government, a Liberal government in Ottawa, this Premier has had more meetings with the prime minister than their former premier had at all, I say to the Members opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask Members to keep their conversations down or take them outside.

Thank you.

MR. BROWNE: So while I'm on the topic of the federal relationship, Madam Chair, I'd like to expand on it. We have seven outstanding Members of Parliament now in Ottawa who we work with on a daily basis to confront the issues that we face as a province and, so far, the fruits of our labour have been shown.

The Members opposite don't want to tell the story of the good, productive work that has occurred with our federal partners, but just look at what has happened already. The levy, as an example, this was something that we were never comfortable with at all. This is something that we said from day one was temporary, and this is something that we committed to do. We held true to that commitment as soon as was possible as a result of the relationship with our federal partners.

Now we raised the threshold of taxable income from 20 to 50. We went forward. We removed the cap on the \$900 and made it a more progressive tax structure and, indeed, three out of four people will never pay that levy, Madam Chair, and I am very happy about that. I think all Members are happy about that, even if they won't say.

You take the announcement that Fisheries Minister Foote made about the additional day to the food fishery. Now Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can take to their boats every weekend in July and August without fear of weather and wind getting in the way. They can make safe and prudent decisions and will have access to the resource that we rightfully should have access to.

We see the Member for Cape St. Francis over there and I'm glad whatever part he played, but I can assure you, you never got that out of Stephen Harper, I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: Your pledge didn't yield that for you, did it, I say to the Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: What else have we gotten from the federal government, Madam Chair? A doubling of Canada summer jobs across the country by our new prime minister to help young people gain employment through the summer.

What about the ferries, Madam Chair? We heard the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island get up here tonight and talk about how we tried to make lives better. Well, how about sending ferries over to Romania without doing their homework, costing \$25 million on a tariff. Thank God we had a federal Liberal government to help us forgive the tariffs. Imagine. That work could have been done in Marystown in my district or somewhere else in the province at least, or the opportunity should have been given.

The Member opposite is heckling me again because he refuses to admit the fact that now the province is being billed \$50,000 a month because you didn't have the foresight to build a proper wharf, I say to the Member. A ship-building policy that was failed, I say to the Member opposite.

The list of our federal accomplishments continues, Madam Chair. Minister Foote delivered on the stabilization fund among other things. I'm proud to say that Members on this side of the House have a good working relationship with our federal partners. I know I have a good working relationship with Minister Foote.

We're working very hard with her, myself and the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, on a number of files for economic development and to engender economic diversification in our districts on the Burin and Avalon peninsulas, Madam Chair, I say. Whether it's the mine in St. Lawrence with Canada Fluorspar, whether it's the Grieg aquaculture proposal that affects all of Placentia Bay, the fish plant in Burin is something that we're working on and the Marystown Shipyard. Myself and Minister Foote

had a meeting with the council and union just recently. The Premier is committed to getting involved with this. We're going to put the people back to work if it's within our power to do so. We are committed to working with the communities that we represent.

I say to the Members opposite, their embrace of Harper got them nothing more than a loan guarantee for a project that has been blatantly mismanaged, Madam Chair. We don't know the cost; we don't know the schedule. That's all their federal relationship got with them.

Of course, we can't forget the CETA announcement that they forgot to invite their federal friends to. Then the federal friends turned around and said they didn't know anything about it, Madam Chair. That's the kind of mismanagement they were turfed for last fall. We have not forgotten about it, I say to the Members opposite. We won't forget about the \$50,000 a month you're getting billed because you didn't know about the wharf that you should have built.

Madam Chair, I'm compelled to rise because I wanted to set the record straight. I've been listening to the debate over the last few days. To people tuning in at home, we started this yesterday –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: – at 1:30 p.m. I left the House of Assembly 7 a.m. this morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: I went to an event to welcome the Venezuela Ambassador here at 8:30 this morning. I returned to the House of Assembly at 1:30 p.m. and it is now 9:30 at night and I'm still here, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: I said that is the kind of hard work that you'll get on this side of the House of Assembly. I have no doubt that the Members on that side work hard as well, Madam Chair, but we're putting our efforts into strong

management and better planning for the future so we don't get stuck with \$50,000 a month bills because we didn't build a wharf that we should have known about.

AN HON. MEMBER: Bought the vessel first, didn't have a wharf.

MR. BROWNE: Bought the vessel first – it is a lemon now parked down in St. John's Harbour, and the bill is getting sent to this government.

I also want to set the record straight on something that the Member for Mount Pearl North said yesterday when he was talking about his awesome attrition plan where they would replace eight out of 10 workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: The Auditor General came forward, Madam Chair, and said that this awesome attrition plan would have to be done 19 times for it to yield the kind of value this province would need. So that's what the Auditor General thought of their awesome attrition plan.

Madam Chair, the comments that we hear from the Members opposite, I have no problem with a lot of them. I mean, there are lots of legitimate points that we can debate on the budget. There is no doubt about that. We are not sticking our heads in the sand, as the Member for Cape St. Francis tries to suggest we do. I can say that we are very committed to fiscal prudence in this province.

We hear the Member for Bell Island get up and talk about how hunky-dory Humber Valley Paving was. Well, why did Nick McGrath resign? Why did the Leader the Opposition say had he not resigned, he would have fired him? That's how hunky-dory Humber Valley Paving was. You hear the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair up talking about the impacts on the small businesses. Well, I say to the Members opposite, that is a black mark that you won't get rid of very fast. It is something that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador won't forget, and I certainly won't forget.

In my last minute, I want to make some comments because I don't know how long this debate will last. I want to make some comments on the lack of hope that they say is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: – eluding this budget. Well, I say to Members opposite, there is hope, but belief must exist. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador put their trust in us. They put their trust in us and we will ask them in four years to judge us on a four-year record, not five years. Because when they judged your 12 year record I say, Madam Chair, they spoke loud and clear to the full extent of what their record was.

We are putting forward tough measures because of the mess that was left behind by this government. I can say as a newly elected official, do you think it gives me any pleasure to come in here and vote for all this, Madam Chair? Of course it doesn't. It disgusts me every day to think that after \$25 billion we're left in this position.

What choice do we have, Madam Chair, but to address it head on, take the bull by the horns in a way that the Members opposite refused to do and address the issues to move this province forward so there can be a future for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, so there can be a future for the young people of Newfoundland and Labrador and so we can engender and bring about a brighter future for this province?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to stand up. Obviously, I say to the Member, that was a very passionate speech. Obviously, there was a lot of passion. You have a lot of history there, a very passionate speech.

Madam Chair, I'm just going to speak about the district for a few minutes, the District of Humber

– Bay of Islands. I'm just going to speak about the people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair is having difficulty hearing the Member that she recognized.

Thank you.

MR. JOYCE: I'm just going to have a few words about the District of Humber – Bay of Islands that I had the pleasure to represent many times. I was first elected in 1989, Madam Chair. It's always an honour and a pleasure to be a Member for the old district of Bay of Islands and Humber – Bay of Islands.

In 1989, Madam Chair, when I first got elected, 95 per cent of the people in the Bay of Islands never had water and sewer – 95 per cent. All of Corner Brook had it – 95 per cent. Gradually, we were working on it and over the years it gradually got better and better. I spoke to many councils. I'll just go through the towns in Humber – Bay of Islands where I know a lot of people and a lot of people know me, and in Corner Brook and the Corner Brook area.

I'll just go with Lark Harbour. There's no doubt back in the '90s, Clyde Wells at the time, who was the premier, left money in the district, in Lark Harbour, to try to get water. They had a plebiscite; they wouldn't take it. They're actually looking for water now.

Madam Chair, are there any guarantees made by this government? We can't make any. The previous government didn't make any guarantees either. I'm not saying anybody is making guarantees, but they are looking for water and sewer in Lark Harbour. Hopefully, we can supply some water and sewer.

When you move up, Humber Arm South which includes Frenchman's Cove, John's Beach, Benoit's Cove and Halfway Point; they did well with the water and sewer over the years and the roads. The Allen's fish plant in the area is a big employer in the area. At the time, Madam Chair, I remember when we were trying to put water

and sewer in that area there was none coming off what they called the hilt.

I remember Clyde Wells always saying that we can't create the jobs, but we can create the infrastructure for the jobs. I know the water was put in and they helped expand the plant – a big employer in the whole South Shore of the Bay of Islands, big employer. I'm very pleased with that, and just finishing up the last phase in Frenchman's Cove of water and sewer.

I know on Route 450 there is going to be some roadwork done this year. The tender is already announced and Marine Contractors has the tender for that portion. When you come further up, Madam Chair, is the Cook's Brook bridge, which needed to be replaced, and now that's being replaced. I have to say that it was last year I lobbied and it was the previous government that had put in the money last year for the Cook's Brook bridge, a much-needed bridge. The turn itself was very dangerous and there was a bridge being put in. The work, as we speak, that's being done. That just improves the quality of life for a lot of people, improves tourism all throughout.

Madam Chair, when you get in Curling, Curling is a part of Corner Brook and we just approved some money through the federal government to do some water and sewer and roadwork in Curling and Georgetown Road, that area, Riverside Drive. So once again, the federal MPs did come through. I know Gudie Hutchings, who is the MP for the area, sometimes she doesn't get in on the credit because it comes out as provincial, but I know she worked very hard. I remember going back on the plane with her and she wanted to know every project that was going to happen in the Corner Brook, Humber, Bay of Islands area, she wanted to be a part of it and she wanted to know whatever we can do to help out.

I always said in this House Judy Foote is/was, and all with the other MPs, very supportive. I said to Judy Foote when we made an announcement out in CBS, you mustn't have a portfolio because you're doing so much work for Newfoundland and Labrador. I just wanted to recognize that Judy Foote is a big supporter and Judy Foote is helping in a long way in a lot of this money that's coming, Madam Chair.

When you go in Corner Brook, we already announced some funding for some roads in the area in through Corner Brook. I'm not sure the exact amount, probably \$4 million or \$5 million under the PTIC fund. So it was much-needed money. Even the mayor of the City of Corner Brook and the council were very pleased. There are a couple of other bigger projects the council in Corner Brook are looking for. The bridge there on Main Street and the waste water separation is a big project for the City of Corner Brook.

Madam Chair, I can't forget the hospital in Corner Brook. I'm not going to get into any debate about the hospital in Corner Brook, just not going to do it, but I know first when we got in we got together with the Minister of Health, the Minister of Transportation, the Member for Corner Brook, and we went through it to get the design work. We're hoping to have the design work for the long-term care facility completed this summer so we can bring something to the City of Corner Brook. The design for the hospital is going to take a bit longer, but I know we're all working on it. I know the Premier himself has asked many times okay, where is that? We're moving it ahead.

Madam Chair, just for the people in Corner Brook, let them know, the pensioners and the mill – a big issue. I deal with the pensioners and the mill unions all the time. I have to say the Member for Corner Brook is dealing with me on a regular basis. The Premier is dealing with me on a regular basis. They are helping to secure the pensions in Corner Brook and helping to secure the mill in Corner Brook. It is a big employer. The last figure I had there was almost \$18 million – don't hold me to that because I'm just going on memory – worth of pension money for the mill going in the City of Corner Brook. That's a lot of money.

So to the pensioners who I speak to on a regular basis, we are working on the pensions with Service NL, with the Department of Justice, all the members involved, we are working on that diligently. They know where we are at with that.

Madam Chair, the Minister of Transportation and Works when I go across to Route 440, he made a commitment. He made a commitment that the roads are going to be done on a priority

basis. That it is going to be done on what the regional managers put forth.

Madam Chair, as a politician, we all try to fight more for our district than others and sometimes you have to adhere to the minister but the minister said to me, we are setting out a priority list. Do you know what I said, Madam Chair? I'm good with that because I knew the Bay of Islands, the North and South Shore, needed funding and there has been funding put in, two contracts. One was to fix the Gabion baskets there in Plant Hill. There is a second one to fix the road washed out in McIver's that was there for at least seven or eight years that the minister, the department, tagged it as a priority.

Out in Cox's Cove there was flooding along the main street where the fish plant is and that was part of one tender, \$900,000. The second tender that went out for the North and South Shore for pavement was over a million dollars. It was all done on a priority basis. There was no influence whatsoever, Madam Chair, and I feel that's the way it should be. I know the people in the North Shore area are very pleased and will be pleased when all the work is done, and the same on the South Shore.

When you get into Irishtown-Summerside, Madam Chair, there are a lot of places there haven't got sewer. I know up in Christopher's Cove and Plant Hill they don't have sewer. Hopefully, no guarantees of course, but hopefully with this federal funding, waste water, that we'll be able to find some way to get some projects started, get some projects moving. I say to the people in Irishtown- Summerside, we are working on your water problem. There's a boil order in Irishtown right now. We are working on that problem to help solve the boil order in the town. We are working with the town. I'm working with the mayor on a regular basis. He's working with his firm and we're working with the department.

I know the fire department in HIS is looking for some funds to help with the fire hall. They had a fire truck there, the expanded hall, new members, and they're looking for some funds to do that. I know they raised a lot of money on their own to put forward. I don't know what can be done but we'll be definitely looking at it to help out.

Madam Chair, when you move down a bit further, you go into the Summerside part and they have a lot of water and sewer. They're doing well. There are some roads that need to be fixed, going up Plant Hill; I've stood in this House so many times.

Meadows is doing well. Madam Chair, Meadows themselves are looking for some money for some side roads. I think they all have water and sewer, 100 per cent. A few years ago, I have to say, there was Kevin O'Brien who sat in this House and helped with the recreation. There's a recreational complex. Myself and the Premier went down there last year at the big games that they had. It's an outdoor facility, Madam Chair, second to none in the province. This year alone, I think there are 152 kids playing ball hockey in the summertime. In the previous government, Kevin O'Brien was a bit part of that. He helped me to get that done, so I have to give Kevin O'Brien credit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: When you move down to Gillams, Gillams is a smaller town. Scott Blanchard and his wife, and the whole recreational committee – there's one commitment I made was to try to get a softball field. When they dug it out by Meadows, Madam Chair, there was 16 feet of bog.

Could I ask for leave for a few minutes to finish up?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Sixteen feet of bog, so we couldn't put it next to the recreational complex that they had because of the cost, so Gillams stepped in. Scott Blanchard, his wife and the whole recreation committee stepped in. I have to say the previous government helped out last year with some grants. This year we're chipping in some grant money already. That softball field will be ready this summer. I just thought how important it is. There's a K-12 school there and one of the biggest sports they have is softball. The only place they can practise is drive about 40 minutes to get to Corner Brook. They

couldn't even host a provincial tournament, Madam Chair.

As you go further out, there's a bit of water and sewer in McIver's, and in Cox's Cove there's a major water system. So I just tell the people of Humber – Bay of Islands thank you very much for your support. I know there are difficult times but there are times better ahead. I thank the Members opposite. For the District of the Bay of Islands, I just hope and pray that when the funding comes through that everybody is going to have clean drinking water, safe roads and we'll expand our economy in the Humber – Bay of Islands area so that we can improve in tourism and help work in the area.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to be back in the House of Assembly again. I managed to get home and have a little nap, whatever, recharge the batteries, have a shower and now I'm all ready to be at it again and looking forward to spending maybe the next 24 hours or so here now speaking to Bill 19.

I just want to say that I really enjoyed the speech that time from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I really like his softer side. I have to say he did a really good job there. I like it when he does that. Unlike the Member for Placentia West, I think he must have been watching George Baker videos or something before he came here because he was all fired up there. But I appreciated it; I thought it was pretty good. It kind of reminded me of – what were they called – the rat pack or whatever they were called.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: You had Tobin, Baker and somebody else. I can't remember who it was. But I found it pretty entertaining. I got to say it was a good job, really entertaining. I don't think

I could top that one, I can guarantee you, and I'm not really fired up at the moment.

Madam Chair, we're speaking to Bill 19 now. I guess just for anyone who is tuning in, we were debating Bill 14 which was the levy bill. The Government House Leader basically had recessed – not recessed, I'm not sure what the word is, but had concluded debate temporarily, we went into Question Period, and now we find ourselves at Bill 19. Bill 19 is the insurance tax. So we're actually debating Bill 19, the insurance tax.

We're not finished with Bill 14, so I guess we're going to have a nice, long debate on Bill 19, then we're going to go back to Bill 14 and we're going to continue with a nice, long debate on Bill 14. I suspect we're going to be here for quite some time as we continue to bring these issues forward that the people have.

Madam Chair – sorry, Mr. Chair; you changed the Chair there. As I said a number of times, and other Members have said, it's really interesting to see how the public have become engaged in this whole debate and how we're continuing to get emails, Facebook messages, Twitter messages and so on, from people who are actually watching the debate and sending us messages and emails asking us will we read it into the record of the House of Assembly, or ask questions on their behalf.

I think it's absolutely wonderful. I mean, you think about social media and so on, how great is that that people can actually watch this and, in real time, they can send questions or comments whatever so that their voice is literally heard as opposed to anecdotal evidence you get from talking to people on the street? Now you can actually read in real time things people are saying.

With that said, I have a tweet – no, Facebook –

MR. CROCKER: From Steve?

MR. LANE: No, I say to the Minister of Fisheries, it's not from the Member for Mount Pearl North.

This one here is actually an email or it might be a tweet, I'm not sure. It's one or the other. I

wrote it down anyway. I want to say in advance I was asked by this individual to read this into the record. I can't use names; I can use districts I guess. It is not in my district and I certainly mean it is not me attacking any district, but I got this and I was asked to bring it up so I'm going to do so.

This one says: Mr. Lane, I have been trying to get answers out of the Member for Bonavista I guess or Bonavista South or whatever the district is there – he says the name – since April, even attended his budget meeting out there in Bonavista District.

My husband and I make, between us, \$52,000 a year and that was last year when he claimed common – I guess she meant common law. He has speech therapy in Clarendville once a week because Bonavista does not have a speech therapist. So please, can someone tell me how this gas tax will help our family now costing us more to take him there? Also with auto insurance rising and food taxes because of this gas, how long will we continue to give our son the services he needs or deserves?

I guess the issue there is there is no speech therapist in Bonavista. My understanding there was one at some point in time. I'll leave that to the Member to – and again, I say to the Member, that's not me. I got sent the message. He is probably aware of it and that's good. Anyway, I only got this today.

Basically they are saying that with gas gone up, now they have to drive to Clarendville so that's going to be an issue for them and for their family. I throw that out there because I was asked to.

I have a Facebook message as well and this person says: I have to be able to house, feed, clothe and educate my children. The way things are now I can barely afford to keep our car on the road. I don't have the privilege of being able to "suck it up" in quotations. This person is basically saying they're struggling to make ends meet now as it is.

Obviously, if they have a vehicle and so on – so obviously the cost of insurance, which is the bill we're talking about now, the increased cost of gas and registration and all that kind of stuff and

all the other taxes, this person is basically saying I can't afford to live now. Whereas, I guess, some people have used the expression that some people on higher incomes perhaps can suck it up or absorb it or whatever terminology you want to use, all these increases. This person is saying that they cannot absorb it.

I think it's important to note that was another message that was received, Mr. Chair. The other one I had – and unfortunately here we go again with technology. It's great when it's working. I'll have to get the other one the next time I speak.

Mr. Chair, before I take my seat – because I'm running out of time. That's the problem when you only have 10 minutes.

MR. CROCKER: You'll get another chance.

MR. LANE: Oh, I'm going to get lots of chances, I say to the Minister of Fisheries – lots of chances.

A couple of issues here, I raised this one last night. I'm going to raise it again because I thought it was an important point. I sort of direct it to the Minister of Finance. When she spoke a couple of times I never heard a response, not that she is required to respond to my question or this question under this format. I throw it out there again. It would be nice to know.

This person talks about the fact that – in terms of the levy, when we look at the levy it's based on individual versus household. The example given here by this person is: I'm in a household, two people are working and they make \$50,000 each or they have a net income of \$50,000 each. They would be paying \$100 each in a levy.

If the husband had a net income of \$50,000, that's \$100 in a levy; the wife had \$50,000, that's \$100. That's \$200 that household pays. Now, at the same point you have the neighbour next door. The wife is, say, working and the husband is living at home or vice versa and the spouse is making \$100,000. Now they're paying \$700 in a levy. You have two houses side by side, husband and wife, husband and wife, exact same scenario except this one has two people working at \$50,000, this one has one person working at \$100,000. This household pays \$700,

and this household only pays \$200. That is a very legitimate point.

How can anybody logically look at that and say those should not be the same? It's \$700 in this house, \$200 in this house, the exact same family income. I guess one of the flaws being pointed out here is that instead of looking at these things on an individual basis, the levy should have been looking at it from the perspective of a household income, because it's the exact same amount of money in the household. How can one pay 3½ times as much as the other household in a levy. That's just not fair and equitable. It's not something I really thought about until this person pointed out that scenario, but it's a very legitimate scenario and it's a definite flaw in how this levy is being applied. I wanted to throw that out there again.

I have many other things I need to bring forward, but unfortunately I'm down to seven seconds. So I'm going to take my seat and I'll get many opportunities to speak again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I stand in this hon. House humbled to be representing the good people in the great District of Exploits, but I guess on this particular bill and the current situation, indeed, the people of the province. I'm also humbled in another way by the economic challenges facing our province. Our government has made tough decisions that affect every person in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I refuse to stand before you and say we could have done nothing and allowed our province to go bankrupt.

I ask, Mr. Chair, what does the Opposition want us to do? Do they want us to take inaction, as they have done during the past decade thus ensuring an unstable, fiscal footing for our people? Our government has taken action, action that should have been taken by the previous government. It seems the Opposition would

prefer that we continue down the same path they were taking, which would have bankrupted our province. Would they rather we not govern, not make tough decisions that they refused to make?

The situation we are facing today is due to the fact that the government of day had no direction, no long-term plan to alleviate the problems facing us today. That's just some of my thoughts that I know I've done previously; maybe not 100 times but I've done it.

Now, this here I'm not going to cherry-pick, so if I may, and if you'll indulge me, this is from the Office of the Auditor General dated January 29, 2016: "Auditor General says Provincial deficit levels not sustainable.

"In his Report on the audit of the financial statements of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, delivered to the Speaker of the House of Assembly today in St. John's, Auditor General Terry Paddon raises serious concerns regarding the Province's ability to sustain the level of unprecedented deficits forecast in the December 2015 Economic and Fiscal Update.

"The Province recorded a deficit of \$986 million in 2014-15, the highest in our history." I didn't say that. No one in this House said that. The Auditor General said that. *"Additional deficits, totalling \$12.2 billion, are forecast from 2015-16 to 2020-21, an amount greater than the Province's entire Net Debt at March 31, 2015. Deficits of this magnitude are not sustainable."* To the people of the province, that's not coming from the Liberal government, that's not coming from the Opposition, that's not coming from just anyone. It's not coming from outer space; it's coming from our Auditor General.

"When compared to the size of the provincial economy, the forecast deficit for 2015-16 of almost \$2.0 billion will be over 3½ times greater than the next higher province. This level must be reduced.

"Dealing with the anticipated deficits will require hard choices that will affect all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador," said Mr. Paddon.

"Measures to address the size of the deficit will have to consider opportunities to increase

revenue from existing or new sources and reductions in spending, Mr. Paddon noted. These measures will have to be implemented within a reasonable timeframe.

“Seventy per cent of program expenses are directed towards health, education and skills development and over 50 per cent of Government’s program costs are spent on salaries and benefits,” said Mr. Paddon.” – no one else – *“Any meaningful reductions in expenses will have to consider the entire breadth of public services and consider how and where those services are delivered.”* That’s the Auditor General’s cover report of January 29, 2016.

Now, I want the people back in Exploits to know, and in the province, that I believe that this House of Assembly – like I alluded to in maiden speech – is full of sincere hearts, reflective of all the people that we represent in this province.

I served a long time as mayor and I want everyone here to know if you doubt it and the people in this province and back home in my district, that I don’t know what else I can do to be sincere. When I find myself at a table, I’ve always argued and presented the case for the 12 people who were sitting at that table for 15, 20, a lifetime, that is we’re running into hard times and something had to be done. I’ve always been a believer.

If people outside of this House tonight want to take it out of context and want to run with it and bad mouth me, then that’s fine and dandy. But as God is my witness, I’ve always advocated that those 12 people around that table that have been there for a lifetime, if it means moving from prime rib steak to keep the 12 there as opposed to keeping six there and continuing with the diet of prime rib, then the 12 people can stay – in my humble opinion – and we can eat round steak until things get better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Now, for the question with my good friend there, the Member for Mount Pearl North, I indeed did go to a meeting on Friday in Bishop’s Falls and it was a good meeting. It was well attended and it was a civil meeting.

MR. KENT: I heard that.

MR. DEAN: Yes, it certainly was.

I came out here late Sunday evening. I assured my constituents that the petition would be presented. The timelines – I got here yesterday morning, went on the fifth floor to have staff look after it for me and have it delivered to the Clerk’s office so it could be printed for my delivery. At which time I was told that the three cover signatures, authentic signatures, weren’t in the package. Of course, wanting to be true to my word, to the people back in Bishop’s Falls and in my district, I did everything I could in light of the fact that we were busy here for the last 24 hours, amongst other things, to ensure that this was done.

That was delivered by the mayor of Botwood today because it just so happened that we were having a session with Dr. Haggie. So that didn’t get into my hands until approximately 4 o’clock today. That will be looked after first thing in the morning. To the good people back in Bishop’s Falls and the District of Exploits, you have no worries. I’ll do like I’ve done when I was mayor and, on more than one occasion, I’ve spoken out when federal politicians and provincial politicians were quiet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: I know all about job loss in tough economic times when companies fall on hard times. I know about job loss in other ways and I won’t go there, not tonight. I’ll keep that for another time.

Anyway, with that being said, I spoke to the Premier earlier; I spoke to Minister Kirby. The library issue, as I assure the people in Bishop’s Falls – I can’t speak for any other MHA, but this government is open minded. While the clock is ticking, we’re open minded to meetings which Minister Kirby said not a problem, Jerry, when I spoke to him about it yesterday. He said we’ll set up a meeting ASAP with the library board and the leadership in Bishop’s Falls and anyone else for that matter. This government is really open when it comes to that.

On that issue, we’ll do what we can as a government to be fair in moving this issue

forward. No promises – we can't make any promises on that because we found ourselves in a difficult situation. Time is running short. The other thing is we had a great session today with the Minister of Health, Minister Haggie. Again, a commitment to review the service levels and everything also at the Hugh Twomey Centre is on the table, with no strings attached.

With all that being said, I haven't been up here a hundred times, but I will be. Give me some time. You people give me some time. It's like the old saying goes, it's not how much you say; it's what you say.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: It's nice to see the Minister of Fisheries wanting to get up. He'll get his turn. We have all night; you'll have lots of time to get up.

Mr. Chair – oh, that's a look. Indeed it is a privilege to get up again – the last couple of days I've gotten up a few times – and represent the District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis. Before I start off tonight, I'm going to applaud the Member that just got up for Exploits. I had a good talk to him today, a good man.

There are a lot of times we do things in the House of Assembly, I do my part and you do your part, but we're in it for the same reasons. I know you are, just like I am. We represent people in our districts. We're more or less the advocates in their areas. People do come to us.

There are a lot of times that you can do good things to help and sometimes there are things you can only do your best at. I'm sure the people of Exploits will know that you'll do the best for their library. It's sad that we're to the state we're in. It's sad that there are 54 libraries that are going. Again, I'm going down a different road than I had planned, but I guess I have all night so I'll go there again. While I'm talking about libraries, I might as well get going on that road too.

I say to the Member, I know that sometimes in your district that people are there and they're ready to get mad with you and everything else, but you keep your head up and do your job that you're doing and people will respect you for that. I know that you put yourself out there to do the public thing and stuff like that and I really believe that people do it for the right reason. I'm sure you, along with all other Members here, are doing it for the right reasons, as am I. That's part of it.

We'll have our arguments. Mr. Chair, I used to play a lot of hockey and the fellows used to say to me, b'y, you're a different fellow on the ice than you were off the ice. I had a role to play on the ice and I played my role. I knew what my role was and what happened on the ice stayed on the ice. I'd be the first fellow outside to have a beer with you afterwards or to meet you down at the club afterwards, and that's the way it was. We'll argue in this House of Assembly and we'll disagree on things, but I hope that when we do go outside that we respect each other.

I'm sure that we're here for the right reasons, just like I have the respect for that man tonight to get up here and do what he did tonight. He is representing – and I really do feel for Members across the way because it must be hard to do petitions and people come to you and ask to present a petition. It's not easy. I was in government for seven years and I'm kind of glad no one ever asked me to present a petition on their behalf. If they had to, I think I'd do the same thing as you are doing. I'd have to, because they are the people that I represent.

I was never put in that position, but I have to say it must be difficult to do that kind of thing because you are really asking your government to do something to represent the people. I know the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave is after doing it a couple times, and some Members here. I'm after telling you, look, I respect you for that. It's a difficult situation because you're really there to represent the people that elected you. I applaud you for that.

Now, I just want to take comment to the Minister of Education now. While I'm talking about libraries again, it's not the topic I – I'm going to have to use this topic I have here the next time I get up because I'm gone too far into

this one now. He was talking about libraries and he talked about 30 minutes away. Do you know what? Thirty minutes away may seem like it's just around the corner or just around here, but 30 minutes for me is the Witless Bay Line from here. That's a long ways away; that's 42 kilometres to go to Witless Bay Line – from the Confederation Building to Witless Bay Line is 30 minutes. To a lot of people that's not a very far, but to go to a library – and the people that are using the libraries, just look at the people. You think the people that are using libraries are going to jump in their car and run an hour – I'm going to go for an hour. They're in small communities. The gas and everything else to do it – just think, 85 per cent are within 30 minutes. Oh my God, don't you realize how far that is. I can go from Flatrock to St. John's and back to Flatrock in 30 minutes.

He's talking 30 minutes doesn't seem like – and here we are, we have Bell Island losing their library. They have to get on a boat. I don't know how far the boat ride from – where's the closest library, Torbay?

AN HON. MEMBER: Torbay.

MR. K. PARSONS: Torbay is the closest library. The closest library to Bell Island is Torbay. The minister is saying 30 minutes away.

Then there's Fogo Island, they're losing their library. How long – I don't know how long. I was out there a couple of times. It's a beautiful spot. My mother is from Joe Batt's Arm, by the way, a beautiful island. How far away is that?

I listened to some Members. Some Members over there have six and seven libraries that they're losing. It's not about the distance of the library – and the minister gets on, oh, this is a new thing we're doing. Everybody is into this new distance thing, we can get it online. Most of the people that use the library need it just for the comfort of going to the library to get their research done, to have the peace and quiet to be able to do things, to take their child to a story time. It's an event to go to a library. It's something that the children look forward to.

We have seniors out there that want to go to – the library in Torbay, we had some issues because it got moved out of the municipal

building over across the way. We worked very hard, the group worked together and the towns of Flatrock and Torbay really came through. I didn't really realize what the usage was. They put a petition out in Torbay to save the library. Do you know how many names they had on that petition? There were 1,700 names.

The minister said he was in Corner Brook and he signed the card so he was only 10 per cent of the people, but people do use libraries. Down there they have this computer thing that they do. They register cards. I think it's six slots a day or seven slots a day. They're booked solid all the time because people are using it. People are using their libraries.

It's unbelievable that we would just say, the libraries, that's nothing. If you're within 30 minutes of a library you're okay. If a library is on the Salmonier Line from the Confederation Building to drive out there, that's okay, that's good enough. It's not good enough. It's not good enough for rural Newfoundland. It's not good enough for the 54 that are using it.

The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair asked me tonight, she said to me tonight, you're up all the time and you're criticizing. What would you do? I'll tell you what I'd do. The \$30 million contingency money that you have there, the slush fund you have put off to a side, I'd take a million dollars of that and I wouldn't close any libraries. That's what I'd do. She wanted to know what I'd do. That's what I'd do. I wouldn't close the libraries.

I'm going to watch tomorrow when the gentleman across the way from Exploits is going to get up in this House and he's going to present a petition. I really hope the minister will listen to your petition. I hope that he will. I saw other Members get up and do the same thing about the libraries.

I have one here now from Pouch Cove. The Pouch Cove library is one of the oldest ones around. It has been on the go for 70 years. It's down in Pouch Cove, and you wouldn't believe the volunteers. The volunteers that are in Pouch Cove, like I said a little earlier when I was up doing it; the town council of Pouch Cove puts money into their library because their library is in the same building. They only have X number

of hours a week that the library – but there were that many people in the community who took advantage of the library, the town council decided to put some funding into their library so they could open it after school because there were children wanting to use the library after school. There were seniors in the community wanting to use it.

Up in my office right now I have petitions that high from people in Pouch Cove who are saying save our library – save our library. Can you imagine, the minister says, oh, 30 minutes; all of them are within 30 minutes. A gentleman in Pouch Cove or a senior in Pouch Cove who is going to walk over the road, he's going to have to hitchhike to Torbay to go to a library that he always used.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about the winter?

MR. K. PARSONS: How about the winter? The other thing that people don't realize, our librarians are very – they are so dedicated. Librarians are really dedicated. They love their jobs and stuff like that. They really want to go into a library and there may be somebody there who needs a bit of help. That's what they do. They help.

It's like all of us I suppose. We're Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're known for – if we can lend a hand we'll lend a hand, but how good is that if somebody – because in today's age, like I said the other day, it could be somebody trying to figure out how to get the \$10 off their registration and go to Motor Registration. How do they navigate through the system? There is someone there to say, look, you do this and this, and they get it.

In Torbay it's the Mother Goose thing. My time is all gone again, but it's the Mother Goose. What they do, the grandparents take their grandchildren over and it's reading time. That's what's happening.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to get up again a couple more times and get to discuss half the stuff I have to discuss but I just wanted to touch base on libraries. I want to commend the Member for Exploits and say keep up the good work, keep your head up and everything will be okay.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise tonight and to take a few minutes to talk about a couple of things actually, but I think I'm going to start by responding to some remarks that the Member for Cape St. Francis made in one of his earlier speeches, one of the earlier ones when he was being a nice Member. Sorry, I apologize.

In an earlier speech, the Member for Cape St. Francis brought up a couple of points and one of the points he brought was the Special Assistance Grants. They were the small grants that government in the past was able to provide to small groups and communities. Unfortunately, due to the fiscal situation, it's something that at this time we are no longer able to do, but something that if ever in the future there's an ability to do, we will certainly look at it again.

One of the things we find a common ground on in this House very often is the fishery. The Member for Cape St. Francis tonight, and all our Members on my side who are involved in the fishery, it's something we conversate about a lot. The conditions of the crab stocks in this province today is an issue we hear every day, whether it's in 3Ps, 3K, or 3L – 3L is doing quite well.

Just so the House is aware, if you look at crab landings year over year, crab landings right now are on par with what they were last year. So even though there were slow starts to the season or some trouble spots, landings are on par with previous years.

One of the things in *Budget 2016*, Mr. Chair, was, as a government, even though we faced a stark fiscal reality, we were able to carve out \$2 million for a new seafood transition fund. This fund is really going to put a lens on the cod recovery, and we're going to look at new innovations in the cod fishery, whether it be with harvesters or processors. This fund, we're

hoping to get it rolled out in the coming days and enable us to take that \$2 million and help harvesters and processors, not only in the ground fish but with a lens on the ground fishery.

Another thing in *Budget 2016*, Mr. Chair, was an allocation of over \$450,000 for bay management. For the Members of the House or anybody wondering the role of bay management, one of the things with bay management that government does today is to help grow our aquaculture industry. We see great potential in cod stocks but, as well, we have very much a growing aquaculture industry in this province, and in 2016 this province will have its highest aquaculture tonnage ever. We had a bad year last year in aquaculture – sorry, in 2014, but the recovery has happened.

When you think about the fishery and its effects on the economy overall, if you look at some of the – I think it's in Bishop's Falls, the Styrofoam packaging plant. That Styrofoam making plant or forming plant supplies the aquaculture industry on the South Coast and the trucking through Central Newfoundland when it comes to aquaculture. So the aquaculture industry on the South Coast of the province and in Central Newfoundland is very much an important component to the economy.

Mr. Chair, I have about half of my time gone so I'm just going to change my channel a little bit. We talk about budgets – and I'm going to go back again. I'm going to go back to *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*.

In *Budget 2015*, there were some tax adjustments. There was a personal income tax adjustment, the HST adjustment, Residential Energy Rebate was discontinued and the Financial Corporations Tax was increased. These initiatives in the 2015-16 budget increased revenue for this province by \$254 million. Just keep that number in mind for one minute. It increased revenue in 2015-16 by \$250 million.

Without the measures that the previous administration took last year – the leader got up on Thursday afternoon and talked about the measures they took last year. So without those measures, our deficit this year would have been

over \$3 billion. With the minor tax adjustments last year, we took a deficit that would have been \$3 billion and brought it down to \$2.8 billion. Just think about it. Just think about the impacts of a deficit of over \$3 billion.

Like I said when I stood here last night and spoke about where we find ourselves, I'm a father of two teenage boys. I assure you, no different than my colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Works is a grandfather, I'm a father. I have no appetite to serve in public life to take deficits of \$3 billion and pass them on to my kids or anybody's kids in this House or in this province or their grandchildren or, hopefully, my future grandchildren. I have no desire to pass \$3 billion deficits on to those kids.

Some Member got up in this House tonight on this side and talked about it took us 66 years to get to a \$12 billion deficit in this province, and in the next five years, left unchecked, we were going to bring that debt to \$25 billion – left unchecked, \$25 billion. The interest on \$25 billion, ladies and gentlemen, would be \$2 billion a year.

AN HON. MEMBER: Every year.

MR. CROCKER: Every year; year over year over year. Just think about it. What will we have? We have a health care system in this province today that costs us \$3 billion a year to run. We're to a point already where we spend more on interest today than we do on education, and in five years' time we'll be spending two-thirds on interest of what we spend on health care. It's not sustainable.

So, Mr. Chair, when you look around at the choices we had to make as a government, there's nobody on this side of the House – I can assure you, I've sat through caucus meetings – who wanted to have to make the choices we made, but we made those choices for future generations because if we don't put this province on a stable fiscal footing, what's the sense to have a province that is not stable, that we can't borrow.

The Member for Cape St. Francis, just a few minutes ago, used the word slush fund, the \$30 million slush fund that this government set up. I tell you what I liken the slush fund to, you have a credit card with a \$1,000 credit limit. You

have a \$1,000 credit limit on a credit card and you have \$300 left on it. What do you do? You try and maintain a little bit of room. You try and maintain a little bit of borrowing capability so that if something comes up, if you pop a tire on your car, you have a little bit of money on that credit card. You have a little bit of space in your borrowing, you have a little bit of leeway. What happens if we have a major forest fire this year somewhere in this province and we didn't budget some room, some fiscal capacity? We would have had to go out and do a special warrant.

They call it a slush fund. This slush fund, we didn't take \$30 million and put in a bank account. It's money on a credit card. It's borrowing capacity if we need it. I liken it to a person. This is what I bring it back to. It's like you or I, again, with a credit card, with \$1,000 credit limit and we're leaving \$300 space on that credit card. So we didn't max out the credit card, because if we did max out the credit card and went and blew a tire, we would have had to go and get another credit card.

Many of the things that we do as a government comes back to a household. We all operate within budgets. It's very clear where we are as a province right now and it's not anywhere that any person in this House wants to be.

When you hear somebody call something a slush fund or use the \$30 million. We don't have \$30 million in a bank account. We have \$30 million worth of budgeting space left.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, I'll take my place. I'll probably get another opportunity within the next day or two.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs talk about the money I said recently about the Town of CBS as a result of insurance and the gas tax, the increase it had on their budget when they

factored it in. I know the minister is trying to refute that claim, and maybe he's right. We'll find out for sure, but those numbers were reported by the deputy mayor and also reported in the local paper.

If I'm not mistaken, the deputy mayor is the chair of the finance committee. So I have a feeling he does have an idea of what he's talking about. I'm sure the minister has some information to share but I'll wait until that time comes. I'll still stand by my \$400,000 figure until proven wrong.

Mr. Chair, we get up here in the House and we read emails and we talk issues and we listen to Members opposite. You banter back and forth which is part of the process, I guess. Everyone has a job to do. As Opposition, we're debating this bill here tonight and last night we were on the levy. The people out there are responding to us by email, by text. We're getting phone calls, you name it.

We know the main budget motion is passed but these two bills are part of the budget process. They are controversial bills, too. Again, I say the insurance tax is probably going to have a bigger impact on most people across the board than the levy will.

Sometimes it's challenging when you get up and you know the government opposite has the majority, and at the end of the day, whether you invoke closure or we – whatever happens, filibusters have a way of ending. It's one or two ways. It's either the Opposition lets passage go through or government invokes closure. It's a challenge, and you know that government can vote these bills in and more than likely from what we hear across the way, they probably will.

We can't lose sight of the fact that the general public out there want to have their voices heard. We've read a lot of emails into the record, we've told a lot of personal stories. A lot of those stories come out of those emails, whether we're reading an email verbatim or we're just citing the story, most of that stuff is coming to us firsthand from these people. Personally, I believe it's very important.

As my colleague from Cape St. Francis pointed out, Members opposite have read petitions from

their districts. This is challenging for everyone. This is challenging for us on this side of the House because probably in a different forum – I hear it on the streets on a day-to-day basis, and they don't blame me. I got elected in November. They don't blame me for what happened five years ago because I wasn't a Member of this House of Assembly, but they have concerns. There are people that have pointed the finger at your colleagues, your former government, and that's their right, as well as their right to point the finger at the government opposite today.

I got up a while ago and I went through a lot of this stuff here, investments that the previous administration made. I don't have to go through all of them, but when you read and look down through those investments, it's fine to say we're teetering on bankruptcy or we're in a crisis, and that's fair enough, I won't argue with that. Again, I say it puts a lot of fear into – it really, really has a bad effect on our economy and it stifles consumer confidence.

We use the figures; we've heard \$25 billion, we've heard \$29 billion, we've heard \$20 billion, but \$10 billion of that would have been equalization. That's no longer there. That's never factored in. They take the lump sum portion.

Look at the equalization amounts across the country. We don't get anything, and fair enough, that's the way the formula works. In 2019, apparently, we're eligible. It's a play on numbers, too, because it's not like you've had all these revenues. Before we got to the point that we could pay our own bills – not that we were filthy rich, we still had a debt, but we could afford to pay our bills and we got what was considered to be have status. There was some kind of misconstrued, and maybe the government of the day was probably at fault for misconstruing that, because it wasn't that we were flush with money and we had money for everything. We could pay our bills and we had extra money, but we still owed money.

The part that I find a bit offensive – and I can speak freely because I wasn't a Member prior to November 30, the Members opposite were here and they can attest to that – is when you outright say a waste. When you look at this – and I don't have to go down through all of this, a lot of

Members opposite know what's in this list. There were a lot of great investments made in the last 10, 12 years by this government. Whether anyone in this province wants to agree or disagree, the numbers don't lie.

I've said this several times and I'll touch on it again. Tax adjustments; income tax was reduced because we were in a situation you could afford. Sure you could have gone on and built up this heritage fund, or you could have paid down more debt. A lot of debt was being paid down. We were a province – for most people in the province their lifetime struggled. We had a lot of tough years financially. The province struggled financially for years and years. We finally found our way. What was so bad with rewarding or giving people the sense of hope and giving it back to them?

These tax adjustments put \$4 billion in the pockets of individuals. I know Members opposite get up over and over again and think that's a bad thing. I'll say it again, there are no apologizes coming from this side of the House and there are no apologizes coming from me, even though I wasn't a Member. I think that that was smart and I still think it is. Now we've gone back the other way because we're in this crisis and all of a sudden we did something wrong, and that's not right.

Again, I've heard other people get up and say our tax rates are on par with Atlantic Canada. They're on par but that's not great when we were the lowest at one time. Where do you set the bar? Why not leave them the lowest? What's so bad about that?

It's simple economics. I always say this, and I'll say it again here tonight, you don't have to be an economist. Everyone will tell you, the more money in your pocket – spending drives the economy. Spending will always drive the economy. It spurs investment. It spurs people hiring people. It brings new people in. Again, you don't have to have five degrees in economics to figure that one out.

You look at a waste of money, and I look at the schools we've built over the years. It's \$731 million in schools, 15 new schools open, 10 more schools being constructed or are in planning, 31 major extension projects, nine more

major renovation projects underway, and almost 2,000 in repairs. That's just in schools. We use education as the benchmark for where our debt payments are now, the cost for education, but there have been a lot of great investments in education to be able to say we have the education system we have.

I don't agree with the cuts that have been made across the board in education. That's the topic of talk and our colleagues are talking about it anyway, but when you're looking at the raw waste of money, I can't see how anyone can say that any of these schools or any investment in education is a waste of money. The elimination of school fees since 2006, that cost \$62 million; free textbooks, another \$22 million.

My colleague from Cape St. Francis, I know he mentioned it there some time in this debate we've been into, free textbooks. He was at a time when he had his children coming home and he wondered when they were young how do you do that. It was a huge burden lifted off a lot of single parents, a lot of low-income earners, a lot of people who were struggling to make ends meet, to have these free textbooks, to no longer have school fees, but also to have their child go into a school that they could be proud of, a new school or a rehabilitated school.

I know back in 2003 there were two or three schools in my district that were closed through mould and mildew. They were housed down in a parish hall; they were bused to another town. The schools were literally falling down. Parents knew they were sending their children to a good school. Textbooks were reduced, school fees were reduced. I make no apologies for that, and I don't think any Member who has ever been on this side of the House since 2003 will ever make apologies for that. If people say we wasted money, I beg to differ.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just listened to the previous speaker, the Member for Conception Bay South, talking about some of the correspondence and some of

the emails, and certainly we've heard a good many over the last few days. I've gotten a lot of those emails. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands talked about some of the emails that he cared not to read in this hon. House. I've gotten those emails as well, Mr. Chair.

All of a sudden there's a perception out there that Members of this House are cruel, they're insensitive. They don't know what it's like to work hard to make a living. It kind of throws you back. It makes you look back on what we did as individuals before we came in here, and all of a sudden overnight became these cruel, insensitive people. So I'd just like to say a few words about that.

In this hon. House, one word could make a difference in a political career. One word could make a difference if you're kicked out of the House. It's very delicate. If a Member across the way says shameful or he should be ashamed of himself or that's so insensitive, guess what, Mr. Chair? That gets out into the public and it steamrolls. We've been called a lot of things that have not been very nice and we ought to know better and we don't know what it's like.

Well, I'd like to spend a few minutes to talk about what it's like. I'd like to talk about growing up in a district that never had what everyone takes for granted. I want to talk about growing up in a district where we don't know what pavement is. We've never seen it. I'd like to talk about growing up in a district where we never got cable TV until 1985. I'd like to talk about growing up in a district that does not have any connection to the outside road. I'd like to talk about the district that's totally isolated.

I'd like to go back to my younger years, if I could, Mr. Chair. When I was nine years old, I went fishing with my grandfather. I fished with him for two weeks. The summer in Northern Labrador starts at daylight and it ends at dark. That's 20 hours a day. At nine years old, I fished with my grandfather for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks, he called me to come over and get my pay for the summer. This was in the day before loonies. He started to peel off \$1 bills. He got up to five and I was getting excited. He got up to 10. Mr. Chair, I had all the money in the world. He paid me \$14. At nine years old, back in the '70s, that was a lot of money.

I grew up, for a short period, in some hard times. I can remember when a can of corn beef hash was something to look forward to. It was something different. It was a treat. To hear the things that are said about us – and I'm sure the hon. Members across the way aren't the people who are behind this because everyone is an hon. Member but that perception gets out there.

I remember talking about some of the commodities that I've seen out here, or some of the services that people get out here in St. John's or in some of the larger centres. I remember telling one of my colleagues that we'd love to have what people take for granted. We would love to have what a lot of people take for granted.

Mr. Chair, we've seen cuts. I remember in 2006, I was just gone into small business, a quarter of million dollars in the hole and didn't know how I was going to do it. The budget came down in 2006. Did it impact me? Yes, it did. But what did we do? We buckled up and we said we're going to get through this because it's not going to be like this forever. So we did; we buckled down. We went without a lot of things. There were a lot of things I wanted to give my children that I couldn't. I couldn't give it to them because the resources weren't there, but we persevered and things got better. That's the upturn and the downturn in our economy, Mr. Chair. You live with it in good times and you live with it in bad times.

I always compare good times and hard times to a storm. As an Inuit hunter and fisherman, I've been caught out in my share of storms, Mr. Chair. I've been caught out in storms where I didn't think I was going to make it. I've been caught out in storms where the panic level was up to my chin and I didn't know what to do, and I was 14 years old. But you push on and you trust your own instincts, you grab every break you can, and you push forward. And I'm still here.

I've gone on a lot of search and rescue missions in my life, Mr. Chair. You talk about how hard this is, how hard it is to take the blame for a budget that you had to do in hard times. When you find your friends and you bring back 14 year-old kids off the ice that aren't alive, that's hard – that's hard.

To me, what I see here, this is nothing after going to a family and saying I'm sorry, but I couldn't bring back your family member alive. That's hard, and that's something that we live with. I think we live with it almost on a seasonal basis. All of a sudden, the perception gets out there that because you're here, you're in government or you're in Opposition, that you're in the House, you're a public figure, you're no longer a human being, you're no longer sensitive and nothing bothers you.

Mr. Chair, that is indeed not the case. There's nothing more that every hon. Member in this House would like to do is to give people what they want. But, Mr. Chair, it doesn't work in our own families. It doesn't work in our own municipal governments. It doesn't work in our own recreational departments. As a provincial government, we're no different. As the federal government, we're no different.

Right now, this province has fallen on hard times. We can sit here and we can bash the Opposition because they were in government, they're the reason we are where we are; but, at the end of the day, there are 40 Members in his hon. House that share one common problem: that this province, represented by all 40 Members in this hon. House, have a \$2.2 billion deficit. And it's a deficit we have in a time where resources are at the lowest, commodity pricing is at the lowest, and we've got bonding agencies that are at our door saying, look, if you don't do anything, we're going to drop your credit rating.

Now, Mr. Chair, the difference in the credit rating, I'd like to compare to some of the people in my district, is going to the Royal Bank for a loan or going to Avco or CitiFinancial for a loan – a difference of 60 per cent in one; 30 per cent in another. When you borrow at interest rates that are off the charts, well, guess what? Your debt goes up; it doesn't go down.

We've taken hard measures – and I've heard hon. Members stand up on this side and I've heard hon. Members stand up on that side. Well, Mr. Chair, we've taken measures to stave off bankruptcy. I asked a couple of our senior Members: What would happen to the province if we went into bankruptcy? There is any number of scenarios, neither of which was very good.

We could be governed by another entity that would come in and say, no, we're not going to raise your HST from 13 per cent to 15 per cent. We're going to get our money back. We're going to raise it to 25 per cent. You can forget about a levy reduction, a temporary levy. We're going to make this permanent, and we're going to make it kick in at \$10,000. These are some of the scenarios that are out there.

Mr. Chair, when you do due diligence and look at what we have, what we want, and what we could have, it changes your perception on how you look at the delivery of a tough budget. I could stand here all night and give all kinds of examples and get probably nowhere with it, but I just wanted to send a message out there that – and every hon. Member in this House has stood at one time or another and said, we're not doing this because we want to. We're not doing this because we're cruel and insensitive. We're not doing this because we don't care. We're doing this for one reason. We're doing this because we don't have a choice.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand in this House, as we have for the last 33-34 hours and debated a number of bills, particularly we started with the levy bill, but now we're on Bill 19, the insurance act, which outlines an increase of making home and auto insurance taxable at a 15 per cent rate to the taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We know there's no doubt, and we'll acknowledge the fact there are some challenges, and financially there has to be some monies generated; but we're feeling here there's a major impact on people to a point where it's going to be detrimental to their ability to be actually be able to function as they have in the past, particularly around the base things they need to provide for. That's a vehicle, a home, a bit of safety around that for insurance from a legal point of view and a safety point of view. But I'll get a chance to speak to that a little bit more and

a little more in depth of what that means from the amount of money going to be generated for the public purse, and particularly the impact it's going to have on people.

What I have been doing, because I was asked a question by some of my hon. friends across about where the money went that was generated through oil revenues when we were in government for a period of time, and I've had some constituents and I've had some people from the general public who have emailed me and asked that they've heard there was a bulk of money – there were billions of dollars in our coffers at the time the former administration was in, and I was there for a small period of time, but I wanted to outline to people that there was money there and where it went.

So I will just recap as I go down – each time I get to speak I take one of the headings and explain exactly what that meant to the economy and the reason, the rationale, behind why we did it.

There was about \$28 billion, we're thinking, give or take a couple of hundred million dollars, that were generated during the period that the oil industry was really at its peak, and we were generating more revenues than the standard what it would cost to operate. So, offsetting equalization, that was a \$10 billion loss from a federal equalization payment, but it was monies we had to put back into our general account to offset the costing. So there's \$10 billion.

Infrastructure was \$6 billion. That was to go to replace outdated schools, infrastructure roads, bridges, all the infrastructure needs that were part of the process to have a productive and competitive environment. Poverty reduction, we had talked about those who are most vulnerable, bringing them to a point where they would be more engaged in our society. We had gone from the worst when it came to not having programs and services for low income and people who were at risk, to having the best set of programs and services and inclusion program, and we wanted to continue that.

Now the fourth one was the tax reduction stimulus. That's probably the one that's got a lot of bantering around by Members of the Opposition and some of our critics out there

publicly. Basically, what that was, was the tax reduction over a period of time. No doubt, it was a \$4 billion tax reduction over a period of a number of years, and basically it was a tax reduction that benefited everybody. There were different categories and there were different amounts, but everybody benefited from that. There were tax reductions.

The principal behind that was that we wanted to continue stimulating the economy – the best way to do that is if people have more money in their pockets. If they look at their paycheque week to week and they see that there's more money there, more disposable income, they are spending that. They're going to be better engaged in our communities because they're going to be doing things. They're going to be buying – if it's RVs so that they can travel to our parks, they can travel to parts of the province they never had an opportunity to go to. They can get to meet new people, get to experience the culture in this province. So that was part and parcel of it.

It meant more money in people's pockets so they could renovate their homes, which meant they were hiring their neighbours or contractors to do work. So there were contractors then who were paying taxes and we were getting that tax money back. We had contractors then who were given across the board – there were tax decreases for people who could then hire other people, expand their businesses, buy new equipment, train their workers at different levels, bring in specialists in certain areas so they'd be more competitive.

So the enhancement here was about stimulating the economy, but it was putting money back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's the one thing about it. This tax stimulus was for those people who lived in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is not money we gave to somebody. This wasn't some offshore account or some multi-national corporation got to do it. This was basically and principally built on the principal that the taxpayers themselves who every day, when they look at their deductions on their cheque stub, would know what they pay. One week it was one amount. The next week, we put it to a point and over periods of time, we reduced it so they would be competitive. We wanted to be

competitive so that we could bring the citizens here, particularly when we had programs and services like Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy for young professionals and our young people here.

So part of that was if people were making the same amount of money in another province but were bringing home more because our tax regime was so high that it wasn't competitive, then it was hard to entice them to come back here, particularly when there were other things changing here that changed the cost of living. Our housing on the Northeast Avalon had dramatically increased. So what one time before would have been extremely affordable for somebody making a middle, modest income was now going to be a challenge. So we had to give some incentives there.

One of the key ways of doing that was through a tax stimulus. Any economist will tell you, if things are going good and you want to sustain your economy and you want to grow it, you want to ensure that local people who understand the local needs and the local services that can be developed and enhance it so that you get that money back because there are more taxes to be paid is give a tax break.

We looked at it. Do you know the best way to give a tax break? Give it to everybody. Everybody deserved it because everybody had worked hard and sacrificed for the last number of decades to get us to where we were. So we said what an opportunity to do it.

In principle, the money you give back as a tax regime, you get it back also. We're the government; we get it back either through the services fees, through employment tax, or in purchase tax. There's always a way government gets back 85 per cent of the money. I would doubt very little if any of this money went anywhere else other than in Newfoundland and Labrador. The disposable income that people had was used right here in Newfoundland and Labrador to support things that people normally couldn't have.

If you looked around, how many people then were able to buy some of the other amenities or toys they wanted to be able to provide recreation for themselves? How many other people did

different things and went around and invested in their children's education that probably wouldn't have happened before? How many other people enhanced their properties? How many other people did something they always wanted to do, have a cottage or a cabin somewhere else so they could get away and relax and improve their health care by being out in nature?

There are a number of things that were done by the money that was put in there, but ask the business community, particularly the small business community, they will tell you the tax breaks they got, they put every cent of it back into their business, to grow their business because they knew it was good economic times. They knew they wanted to take advantage of it. They knew they wanted to be competitive. They knew they wanted to be able to give back to communities. They knew one day they wanted to be solvent. They wanted to know they would have some security, when the economy did turn.

We're in a situation right now where the oil price has gone down, so some of these same companies, who when we gave them breaks, when we had the ability to do that, have invested and diversified so they can still stimulate their own employment abilities by being creative, and they've done that. So we don't have massive layoffs here because the small business community have been able to do that.

A part of what we've done – I noted three other categories prior to that that had an impact on the business community being viable in Newfoundland and Labrador but, particularly, the stimulus through the tax regime obviously made them competitive.

We've noted that, in my previous role as minister, meeting with Heavy Civil, meeting with the business community, meeting with the home builders, and all had attested to the fact that we were able to keep our tax rates competitive. In some cases, the best in Atlantic Canada which made us, not only a trendsetter and a leader, but made us a community and a province where people would invest.

We started, as you know, attracting people, nationally and internationally, who came here and invested their money. The small changes for them because they were first-time taxpayers

here, but we got the bulk of their money because they came with a straight investment or they bought into services within our communities here or they bought properties here. All which were taxable and we received the tax that went into our general account to offset all the other services we provide for our citizens, be it education, be it health care, be it recreation, be it infrastructure. So it was a win, win for everybody there.

That amounted to a \$4 billion investment over a period of just around a decade. What that did is to keep us on the map. While we're running through some hard times now, even with some of these tax increases now, we will still be competitive enough that we will be able to entice businesses to come here.

Had we not made those changes, had we been at the highest regime here now and this administration had then increased it, we would be putting ourselves out of the market. But now we're still competitive, so we have that ability to do it. While we did that, we have small businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador, and medium sized businesses, who now have an infrastructure in place and have the ability to stay solvent. They'll probably help grow the economy and be the stimulus for the next mode of getting over this hump in the road.

That was one part of what we invested there. If you add in the \$10 billion for our equalization changeover, the \$6 billion for our infrastructure needs – because it was touted that we were in hard shape around our education, our hospitals, our infrastructure, our water, sewer and bridges – the \$1.2 for our poverty reduction to give people pride, to give people an hand up and not a handout and the \$4 billion that we put into our tax reduction, we're up to \$25-plus billion already. These are things that are very valuable to people.

Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to go through some of the other things as the night goes on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to get a chance to take part in the debate once again this evening. Things seemed to have settled down a little bit. We're back to a calm, sensible debate which is a good thing. Other than whatever keeps going on over in that corner, Mr. Chair, I can't explain it.

I'm glad to have a chance to present some more feedback that we're receiving, almost in real time, from people around the province. In fact, on our PC Opposition NL Facebook page we've invited people this evening to post their comments and my colleagues and I will try and share them in the House of Assembly.

Do you know what? If we get overwhelmed with the volume, maybe the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands will even read some of them for us; you never know.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: And he's got his own from his own Facebook page, as do I. But I'll just give you a sampling of what's coming in. You'll probably hear more as the night goes on, but I'm also very interested in getting into the dozens and dozens of emails that have been sent to me in the last 24 hours as well.

Just to give you a sampling from the Facebook page: Deborah Wells-Smith writes: Ninety-two per cent want Premier to resign. Can't he hear that? Adam Pennell writes: How come they didn't cut spending on non-essential government projects or contracts; also, why aren't they taxing the rich more?

Susan Katerberg-Collins writes: Why will you not allow your MHAs to listen and vote how their constituents ask? Ron Traverse writes: I have no confidence in this government. My question is: What political background do they have? It seems they make decisions without looking at the big picture.

Jody Hibbs writes: In November, I voted Liberal for the first time. I didn't really believe what they said but the Liberals seemed like the winning party and did not seem to out to hurt anyone. All the news said finance was bad in the fall of the year, everybody knew it, but then the Liberals got in and showed they lied to the Newfoundland and Labrador people. Why

would the PC Party try and get elected saying they were putting up GST, HST, of course? I guess they knew something had to be done, but at least they were doing it in the fair way.

As a single grown man, I've been sick for a while and I barely get by from cheque to cheque. Because of what you choose to do to my medication bills, the levy, my access to services are gone. There was a better way and you all know it. I am sure that you all do not agree with all of the Liberals and I do not think that you want to be remembered the same as – and he mentions certain MHAs – but this won't go away. Do the right thing.

Sorry, I'm just skipping some of the ones that might be challenging from a parliamentary perspective, Mr. Chair.

Daphne Parsons-Saunders: This government has attacked the most vulnerable: seniors. The Premier talked about treating people with dignity. Well, I would like to know his meaning of dignity. By reducing the provincial drug plan, eliminating the 65-plus dental plan, eliminating the Home Heating Rebate and slashing home care, is this how you treat people with the dignity they deserve, Premier?

That's just a sampling of what is rolling in on the Facebook page this evening. I'm receiving lots of comments on my page. The PC Opposition NL page is receiving comments. We're encouraging people to email their MHAs and, on this side of the House, we're happy to share those comments that we're receiving.

So let me share some other comment we are getting. Here is one from my Facebook page, Mr. Chair: As a student, I literally feel trapped between pursuing a higher education or finding myself further in debt with an education I can't use in the province. I live on Kraft Dinner and toast and do not live a luxurious lifestyle.

When I am told I will not find a job here when I am done with my education, I feel like quitting my program and moving to another province where my education and experience will be appreciated. Newfoundland and Labrador youth should not suffer the consequences of decisions in which they had no part of. No youth should have to seriously consider furthering the

betterment of themselves or their family because they will not be able to afford to live.

Aside from the higher costs of simply living in the province, taking away scholarships, bursaries and reducing loans is going to drive smart, educated youth away and with them their money. Not to mention the clawing back of student loans from young adults. The repayment assistance program might as well not exist for anyone living in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Tell me, with the cost of living expenses already sky-high and increasing, how is one supposed to make a \$200 a month payment while making less than \$14 an hour?

Hearing these concerns from students feels like we're going back in time, because over the last decade we've come so far, we've come from having a mediocre student aid program to having, arguably, the best student financial assistance program in the country. We have some of the best tuition rates in the country at Memorial University. Lots of student leaders would acknowledge that we've come so far. So to see us turning back the clock in this budget, when we see that happening, it's understandable you would be getting these kinds of sentiments from students in our province.

Here's a note from somebody else on Facebook: I agree we are in tough times. I can understand that. I can handle the HST increase. I can even take an extra gas tax of a few cents, but I can't afford all of it at once. For gas to jump over 20-plus cents a litre, the increases to my insurance – which we're debating tonight – and to register my car on top of the tax hike, it's all too much, too soon.

How are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians able to support their homes in an already tough time? As a single parent trying to manage a household on my own, it's hard enough now. It just feels impossible.

Mr. Chair, I received an email around lunchtime today with somebody who had some suggestions on how to improve the health care system. I think people who have suggestions on how to make things better, that should play a role in this debate as well. I believe some of the solutions to some of our challenges in health care lie in the

system. There are people working in the system and there are people with extensive experience in the system who can help us solve some of the challenges.

I take some comfort in the fact that we have a Minister of Health and Community Services who has such a strong background in health care. I think that's going to be valuable. Having sat in the chair he now occupies, I know that many of the challenges in health care won't be solved overnight. We have to do a lot to achieve sustainability within the system. So any suggestions that people have, I think, should be welcomed. I will just share this person's perspective.

I know two ways government can save money: advise health care providers to take younger adults seriously when presenting with cancer symptoms and spend more money on diagnostics. Doing those two things may catch cancer at an earlier stage when cancer is cheaper to treat.

My 43-year-old husband started having serious symptoms of colon cancer in December 2014. When we were finally able to see a specialist in March, my husband was told you have time on your side. No urgent colonoscopy appointment was forthcoming. So after complaining to our GP in May, my husband finally got an appointment in June 2015, six months after symptoms began.

Unfortunately, at that time my husband was diagnosed with colon cancer which had spread to another organ. He has had surgery, 10 rounds of chemo so far, multiple CT scans and MRIs and many appointments with highly specialized doctors, all of which has cost an incredible amount of money to the health care system. We recently found out the cancer has further spread, so he currently has at least 10 more rounds of chemo facing him and an uncertain future.

My husband graduated from university with a Dean's Award and has been working in a very technical field since he graduated. Unfortunately, he has now missed many days of work due to his cancer treatments and recovery. The experience has been very costly to both the government and our family.

If he was diagnosed in February, there's a chance that his cancer may have been caught at an early stage. Treatment still would have required surgery and perhaps chemo but this ordeal would be finished now and he would be back to work contributing more to the economy and not continuing to cost the health care system additional money. My father had bowel cancer about 10 years ago and he only had to wait six weeks for a colonoscopy, even though he had the same symptoms as my husband. Why are adults with young families not taken seriously?

It's important to share all of these perspectives because no doubt the health care system is impacted by this budget as well. None of the challenges in the health care system are easy to solve but I hope we can all work together to achieve sustainability.

Mr. Chair, I see my time is up, so I look forward to participating in the debate again a little later this evening.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 19 again, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. Of course, we are talking about the tax on insurance. We also realize we are still not finished Bill 14, which is the levy tax.

AN HON. MEMBER: We'll do that Monday.

MR. LANE: The Member says we'll do that Monday. We'll probably be here till Monday. Anyway, who knows?

Carrying on along the line that the former speaker just did in relation to what I said last time I was up.

It's interesting, Mr. Chair, over the last 24 hours this has really turned into the people's debate in a very real way because of the use of technology, Internet, the use of Facebook and Twitter, social media, email and so on, we actually have people – and I've never seen this type of engagement. I have to be honest with

you, never have I, since I've been involved in politics, and even before, have I seen people be so engaged in what's going on in this House of Assembly as what we've seen in the last number of days. I think it speaks to the fact that this budget is having such a detrimental impact on so many people in this province.

It's like anything else, a lot of times you don't necessarily become engaged until it hits you personally, and this budget is certainly hitting everybody personally right between the eyes with a sledgehammer. That's what this budget is doing to many people. So now we continue to receive emails and Facebook messages and tweets and so on from people who actively want to be part of the discussion. They want to be part of this debate, and I think it's wonderful. I think it's great for democracy.

I've certainly used social media a lot, but I've also been somewhat sceptical of it and guarded with it because sometimes people can take things a bit too far. Some of the commentary that's made and some of the posts that are made, and the anonymity associated with twitter in particular, there is no doubt. I don't condone those types of things. I certainly don't condone anybody being nasty or portraying any kind of violence or anything like that. I certainly do not, but I do understand that people are frustrated. I understand that anger is here, and that's why we see those things happening.

Anyway, I have another message I received. I got a couple of messages. The first one I'm going to bring forward is a – this was a Facebook message that I received. There's a couple of things here I can't read, but I'll just say – the part where I can start says, the way the Liberals are governing is akin to tyranny. The way the provincial budget affects seniors on fixed incomes is akin to elder abuse. They can attack poverty without attacking our poor – then they go on to talk about Bill 35. Bill 35 shows what they are like. Then there is a very colourful commentary about the Premier which I won't read, because it wouldn't be parliamentary.

Then we move on again on Bill 35. Vaping has not been researched. No one has proven it is as bad as the government claims. Vaping is not perfect, but you should not feel guilty about doing it. Research in England indicates vaping is

95 per cent safer than smoking tobacco. I think they're making a mistake with this legislation. I smoked cigarettes from the age of 12 years old and I am now 75. I've tried many times to quit, finally I started vaping. I've been off cigarettes one year this week. I am now healthier than the Newfoundland economy.

That was a comment about Bill 35, the vaping legislation which got rammed through the House of Assembly yesterday, was it? I'm losing track of the days. Was it yesterday we rammed Bill 35 through or the day before?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Vaping. I know we tried to stop it, but the government rammed it through.

So that was interesting, to have a perspective on that particular bill that did get rammed through. Even though, certainly over on this side we tried to present the rational arguments why there should have been some amendments.

Unfortunately, as we see happen way too often, it almost feels like a futile exercise to bring forth any kind of amendments because it's almost a case of – and that's not unique to this government. I think it's just the system really. It was the same way before.

It is like: We're the government, we're doing it, too bad. We were elected for four years; we're going to do whatever we want. We don't want to hear what anybody has to say. We're in charge, end of story. It's too bad, but that's the way things work.

I have a text as well, and this is more pertinent to the budget I guess, and more pertinent to this bill which is going to be raising insurance by 15 per cent, Mr. Chair. So this person texted me and says: Some people may lose their home because we've been talking about the fact that – the affordability piece, all of these taxes and fees and so on. This person's perspective is – which I never really thought of but it does make sense to me. Some people may lose their homes due to fire or flood and not having the money to pay for insurance, and live under stress due to all the increases. There will be no vehicles on the road insured due to increases by this government budget. There's a much better way.

So what this person is saying is besides the fact that for those who can afford, or even those who can't afford are going to have to stretch things, are going to incur all these costs on home insurance tax and auto insurance tax. What this person is suggesting is that for some people, because they are on such a tight budget now, they just won't insure their house. They won't insure their vehicle. They'll say I can't afford it; I'm going to take my chances and I'll drive around with no insurance. Or I will have my house and I won't have my house insured.

We all know that there's a lot of people that don't have home insurance now. It is not unusual to hear about somebody who had a house fire out in some community and then the community are coming together to build them a new home or do fundraisers because the person didn't have insurance. That's unfortunately not uncommon now, so this is only going to make it worse if you are going to increase the cost for people to actually have insurance on their homes and on their cars. That's another perspective that I really didn't think about but this person did, and that's why it's great that people continue to provide us with their feedback.

He goes on to say that there is a better way. I think what he is alluding to is we should be looking into the possibility of public insurance as opposed to the insurance we have now and putting caps on claims. I know the former administration back in the Williams days was talking about that very thing and, for some reason, they decided not to go down that road. But there are provinces that actually have public insurance and they have caps on claims for minor injuries. If you have a fender-bender or whatever, the most you can sue someone for is \$5,000 or \$2,000 or whatever that amount is and it eliminates all this litigation. Of course if you have a serious injury, you can still get a lawyer and litigate, but for the minor ones it is cutting down on all the expenses associated to it and the insurance rates are much lower for consumers.

This person is saying that we should be looking at an alternate mechanism for insurance anyway which would make rates lower. I guess then if the rates are lower, then the tax, correspondingly, would be lower. I think that's a good suggestion as well.

The person also goes on to say that seniors are getting royally pounced on at every angle with this budget. The other point that this individual makes is around the education system. He makes a couple of points actually, but I only have time for one. What he asks – and I will just direct it to the Minister of Education. I'm not aware of this; maybe he is. What he says is that one of the top educated countries in the world is Finland apparently, according to him. I don't know if that's true. He said one of the top educated countries in the world is Finland where children are in school for three to four hours a day, four days a week, and we're doing the opposite. Why?

Now, I don't know if that's a fact, but I throw it out to the Minister of Education to have a look at Finland. According to this person, three to four hours a day in school, four days a week, and they have the most educated children in the world. I can't comment if that's true or not. That's what this individual is saying and it's worth looking at.

He further goes on to say if the Minister of Education returned an email and set up a meeting, then maybe he could see a much better way. He obviously has no interest in any other way but his own. That was the comment he made.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I certainly look forward to speaking again.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Again, it's a pleasure to get up and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. The Member for Lab West gave me this to read for him tonight so that I could say a few words on his behalf. I told the Member for Lab West that I'd gladly do it because that's the type of guy I

am. When I see a friend of mine in need, I will help the Member for Lab West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. K. PARSONS: I have no problem there. I will definitely read what he asked me to do here tonight for him. I know his colleagues wouldn't do it, but I will.

Madam Chair, we're in this debate again discussing the budget. It is Bill 19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: While Bill 19 is a money bill is what we call it here in the House of Assembly, it gives us the opportunity to say and do what I just did there about the Member and get away with it, basically. It's a time for us to talk about the budget.

As you know, the budget came down on April 14. There has been an unbelievable amount of discussion about the budget all over the province. We've had Members here who got up and spoke passionately about the budget. Each side is entitled to their opinion. I believe the opinion we're expressing is the majority of the province, actually. I believe the majority of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is very upset.

I know one of the Members said it earlier that this budget affects so many people. I really believe there's not one part of society that can look at this budget and say I came out of it good. That's a good thing for me. That's very unfortunate.

I'm not saying there didn't have to be – myself and you argued earlier and everything else, but there are some good things in the budget. There are some things that I believe the choices that were made in this budget are wrong. I believe when we talk about education and the choices that we're making in this budget – I'm just going to go through the highlights of some of these choices.

The minister is going to say that's up to the school board, but I look at five schools that just

before the budget came down got closed this year. I know that it is Holy Cross, Whitbourne Elementary, Sacred Heart All Grade school, Long Island Academy and Hermitage Academy. That's five schools that closed down – now there may be good reasons why some of them did, but I look at Whitbourne and I look at Holy Cross and there was a lot of people who are very, very upset when those schools closed.

The Minister of Education gets up all the time and he talks about teachers getting laid off and whatnot and he'll always says that you laid off so many last year. You did it last year. So that gave him the reason to do it this year. It's hypocritical really when you think about it. He is blaming us for laying off teachers last year, yet in his budget he is laying off so many teachers.

When we're doing what we're doing to education, when we're doing the cuts that we're doing in education, that's what I mean about choices. The choices that we're doing are education choices. I know the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave gets up and she's very passionate about Coley's Point. But Coley's Point in this budget – she's put in there that it got deferred. We didn't defer Coley's Point. Your government, your minister, decided that it is going to be three years' time before we look at Coley's Point. That was your decision.

You can get up and you can blame it on the former MHA, you can blame it on the former minister of Transportation and everything else, but that's a choice your government made to defer Coley's Point Primary. Not to blame over here and that's what happens, it's a blame, blame, blame. That's deferred for three years. I hope that you do fight for the next three years and I hope that you do get it. I really do.

Combined grades and multigrade classrooms: You may say, oh, we've been doing that for years and years and years in the province. I spoke to a teacher this weekend and the teacher said I'm going to do half a day training – and I think that's online – and then she does another half a day training. She doesn't feel that's going to make her adequate to be able to go into a classroom with two different grades, combined grades, in that classroom and do the job that she can do. She said the training is just not there.

Education is huge. I always say that the education is the backbone of our society. We have some educators in this Assembly here and we all realize the importance of education. Again, I heard the story, saw the picture on the front of *The Telegram* where a little girl was crying because she couldn't do Intensive Core French. Now, I don't know if it's true or not, but I did also hear that there were twins that were selected and one got picked to do it and the other one didn't.

If we're coming to our education system where you go in and children that were doing this French program, your name is picked out of a hat and we have children that – that's very sad. I did a petition for Mary Queen of Peace and that's one of the things parents talked about at Mary Queen of Peace, is that there are 14 children that are not going to be able to do this.

Now, 54 libraries are getting closed. I talked about that earlier, and I'm going to finish off on the libraries tonight, actually, and reduction to post-secondary scholarships. The other that really hits home is when you talk about we try to make our children read, we try to make society read, and you'll see parents reading to their children because it's a belief and it's a fact that the more you read to them, the better they'll understand and do reading support.

Why would we even think about putting taxes on books – the only province in the country to do it? What a backward step. It's unbelievable that we'd come to make a step like that. People asked me – you asked me earlier what would I do different. Out of that \$30 million contingency slush fund that's there, I'd take money out of that so I wouldn't tax books. I wouldn't tax the books. I'd take money out of that. Whatever the money is that it costs for us, the revenue we're going to get out of putting tax on books, I'd take the money out of that slush fund that's there, the slush fund that you got put there. I'd take the money out of that, because that'd be the right thing to do.

Closing the libraries, the cuts to our education system, most of these things can be stopped by just making smart choices, and the choices that we're making – when it comes to education, we should make the right choices. I believe the party over there, the government over there, if

you asked them the right choices to make on a couple of things I've just mentioned, I think they would; but I believe there's a few, Minister. The Finance Minister and probably the Premier and a few more of them just won't do it – I don't know why. They're not listening to the people of the province. They told the people of the province they'd listen, but they wouldn't listen.

Now, I haven't done this yet tonight, but I did receive one email tonight, and I have to do it because the person asked me to do it. It said, after listening to – I can't say the name of the speaker, but you'll know who it is – after speaking a few minutes ago, I'd appreciate it if you would, or your colleagues would, remind him – and the name is there – the connection between war and our library. The library of Greenspond, Fogo Island – Cape Freels District was built in the honour of the men from Greenspond who went overseas in the First and Second World War and did not return. There were 14 in the First World War and five in the Second World War. The library at Greenspond was built in their honour. He has the gall to close it now, and that shows the respect to those who paid the ultimate price. That's how much respect he shows for them.

I had to read that for person because he did – and I didn't say anything about it compared to war; it was another Member here in the House of Assembly. There's what a member from Greenspond sent to me tonight about libraries.

Again, this is my little speech about education. I believe that there are some cuts that are made in education and I seriously believe that there are different choices and the choices that we're making with the cuts in education are wrong. They are wrong when they are closing libraries, they are wrong when we're taxing books, and there are other ways to get the revenue to do it.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to get up again and speak on this budget implementation bill on insurance tax. As we say all the time, it's a money bill and it's a

part, overall, of letting the people's voices be heard, Madam Chair.

I just want to probably talk about the HST hike that the former government had planned to implement in January. The current government decided that it was a job killer and it wasn't the way to go, and shortly after they were elected went up to Ottawa and had a photo op –

AN HON. MEMBER: On the bench.

MR. PETTEN: On the bench. They all jammed up on the chesterfield. There were MPs on top of each other and the Premier was jammed in. It was a nice picture. They left enough room for the prime minister to sit down. They took a big photo op and it was posted. It was a nice picture.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was a nice picture.

MR. PETTEN: I thought so too, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: I'd say they all have copies of it.

MR. PETTEN: Oh, definitely. I'd say it's on walls.

The big news of the day was they were cancelling that increase. That was over. Lo and behold, what, two months later, less than that, second thoughts kicked in; maybe we can't do that.

AN HON. MEMBER: I'd say it was about two weeks.

MR. PETTEN: Yes, I think it was too. It was very close.

All of a sudden there was a new beginning. We can't do this anymore. Now, I don't know why they never thought of that when they ran up to Ottawa. I don't even know if they were sworn in as Cabinet when that photo op was taken. That's all it was, a photo-op. In doing that, though, you lost \$110 million.

When I look at these bills, this bill here, \$111 million, that's what Bill 19 is going to bring in: \$111 million. That is it. When you look at all these people who are struggling July 1 with their insurance being jacked up – and, as I say, it's

another form of almost the same impact as the levy that could have eliminated that need for this bill. You could have saved yourselves a lot of face but, no, it had to be this – I mean, probably if they're all going to jam on the couch like that, if seven stay elected, they probably need to get a bigger couch. It was a pretty sad picture when you have the Premier and the prime minister jammed up and everyone else on top of them.

Then lo and behold the picture is not worth much because everything they went up there for turned out to be a visit – they must have been up for lunch and visit Parliament. Well, they got to see the Parliament building and that's always nice. And I'd advise anyone in this House if you ever get a chance to go to Parliament Hill, you should go. So at least the Premier got that opportunity and the MPs are up there all the time anyway.

The point being, what was it for? It was a great photo op. That's all I can ever say it was. When I saw it, it was like that's nice, that's nice. We come back and realized that was the beginning, really, of the mistakes. We have seen ever so many mistakes since then, Madam Chair, and we'll see a lot more mistakes.

MR. K. PARSONS: We have seen a lot lately.

MR. PETTEN: Yes, we've seen one almost every day for the last week.

Now, when the media goes and asks our Premier – I said this earlier and I'll say it again. Yes, he's the leader of your party but he's the Premier of this province. I'm a resident of this province, as my colleagues are, so I guess he's our Premier. So when the media goes and asks our Premier a question, we want our Premier to answer the media because we'd like to know too. We don't find anything in here.

The individual ministers, the last couple of days, have been leading the charge. The Minister of Municipal Affairs pointed out with the *Hansard* book that he did answer a question yesterday. I think we misspoke on that – one of us did. That's fine. I mean, he is not speaking to the media and it's a story on the news.

All of these are missteps. So when we get up here and we speak, we are not creating this stuff.

I can take out by Blackberry now and flick on the VOCM website and talk away for – I get 10-minute intervals. I can get up every 10 minutes for the rest of the night. Now, we have a new one today. They forgot to notify the Association of Allied Health Professionals for their negotiations. They're extended for a year. They avoided the Armageddon of the fall budget number two. So I guess in a way they are fortunate. Really, you have to sit back and ask yourself, what in the name of God is happening? What has happened to us? Can you imagine in six months what's gone on in the province?

I know people on the opposite side might look and be taken aback, but realistically, move yourself away from everything and look at the news. Look at what you're reading every day. It's unbelievable. If people asked me, and I tend to be very level with honest answers, whether they are good – sometimes they aren't complimentary to our crowd, but I try to be as honest as I can. I've said, I never imagined in six months' time, ever imagined, dreamed in my lifetime, I'd be seeing and reading every day on a daily basis what I've seen. I just didn't fathom it – I didn't. I knew there'd be some bumps in the road, that's normal. I never envisioned this.

On April 14 we were dealt with this budget. When the budget came down we knew there was a lot of public outcry and we were dealing with it on a daily basis, but since then there has been one thing after another after another. I don't think there's a Member in this House who can deny what I'm saying. I'm not making it up; go on the website. I was just there scanning, actually catching up on the daily news. It just dominates the websites, and none of it is complimentary. It's not good news.

To loop it back, the reason I bring up the photo op, that was probably the last happy day you had, outside of the swearing in, was the photo op up in Ottawa; big smiles on everyone's faces. You reversed the HST and everyone was happy. Since then, it has been one misstep after the other. I guess the swearing in ceremony was a good thing. Other than that, I really struggle to find where the good news is coming from. If I'm missing good news, I'd like to know. Maybe we're all missing some good news. We sit down amongst ourselves and say, are we missing

something? Maybe we are. If we are, anyone is welcome to tell us what we missed.

Madam Chair, on the HST; people were prepared. It was announced in 2015 that January 1 it would be implemented. People were making plans – businesses were – for the implementation of it. Then it was pulled back. As I just said, now it's coming back again in July. Unfortunately, it cost us \$110 million.

Businesses are saying – I'm looking at here in the Newfoundland Home Builders' Association – the HST hike is a double whammy. This goes back to my point earlier when I was saying about new home builds. Our economy is slowing. They have been hit with everything else. The HST hike – regardless if it's going to have negative impacts. I believe a HST hike and some adjustments to our income taxes would have been the least intrusive manner to do it.

If you would have brought the HST in in January, you wouldn't have needed this bill we are debating here. Actually, you probably could have rid yourself of the levy as well.

I have to tie all this to – the point I want to make is they were pressuring us on the levy. We were going to filibuster the levy and the levy, the levy, the levy. It was wearing thin. I know it was wearing thin opposite.

Then the federal minister blows into town. She made a load of announcements, didn't she?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. PETTEN: All of a sudden she says, you don't have to repay your money today. No, no, you can pay it out in 2022. Not five cents did they give us. As my term is up, where I come from it's on the tick. Yes, you can take it on the tick. Well, they took it on the tick. Instead of paying any money back: no, no you can pay it out in 2022 when you get in surplus.

All of a sudden, the revelation was we can adjust the levy, but where's the money passing hands? There is no money passing hands. That was the out to save face. Then there's the great relationship with Ottawa and the minister came down and saved the day. Really, who saved what? It saved face maybe. There's no saving

the day. That wasn't creative. That wasn't innovative. Again, it shouldn't matter who was in power.

If a province is struggling, whether it be Saskatchewan, Alberta, BC or Newfoundland, that should be just a formality – I point out, I'm being stared down by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. That's fair game.

We're not anything different than any other in the Confederation of Canada. What the minister did was nothing special. Sure it's great, you don't have to pay it until 2022 but we never got the cash infusion we need as a province to help us stand up. Like I said, the 2 per cent on the HST, it's right here in this insurance bill. Had the photo op not happened, we wouldn't be debating this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand and continue talking about the 2016-2017 budget and the debates we're having here, particularly around some of the increases that will have a dramatic effect on our taxpayers in this province.

For those who are just listening in or viewing in right now, I've started, over the last five or six opportunities that I got up, to explain and answer a question that was asked to me by some of my fellow colleagues across the way, and some of my constituents and some other people from the general population, around the monies that were generated through our oil revenues over the period of time that we were in government, and where did that money go. And a legitimate question, no doubt. It was substantial about the money that was generated. People have a right to understand and know where it went and, hopefully, see the fruits of the hard labours that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians put, particularly in the oil industry, and the ability

that our administration had at the time to negotiate royalties that would be beneficial to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I have to explain that the rough amount of money we're talking is in the vicinity of \$28 billion over a period of time from around 2007 to 2014-15 was the general amount when the oil revenues were at its peak. They peaked out in 2012-2013 and started to go slightly down; they started to pick up in 2008.

What I've already outlined in some of the headings here – and I've gone through each heading and then I outline exactly what benefit that was to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so to get an understanding of exactly where we are. I talked about the offsetting equalization – and just quickly, that's to offset the fact when we started to bring in revenues from our oil industry and we hit a certain threshold, then obviously our equalization payments no longer were going to be received from Ottawa, so we had to sustain our own general account expenditures. And how we did that was taken from the revenues we were getting as part of our deals with the oil companies. So that amounted to \$10 billion.

Infrastructure: There was \$6 billion during the same eight-year period that we invested in things around schools, things around health care, roads, bridges; all the other things that were relevant to what was needed, people had told us over the years; things that we didn't have the revenues to be able to get to; things that were important about improving our infrastructure around safety for people and an ability to attract industry and business. Particularly around things, for example, like our tourism industry that generates a billion dollars a year, trying to enhance that; our fishing industry, which generates a billion dollars a year. So it was an opportunity here to invest in part of that process. So that was \$6 billion more that we used out of our \$28 billion oil revenues.

Poverty Reduction Strategy – and I noted to people who were listening at the time and my colleagues here in the House of Assembly, \$1.2 billion was used to invest in those who had some challenges, those who were extremely the working poor or those who are reliant on Income Support services and payments. So we wanted to

ensure they had supports and they had an opportunity to be productive citizens and be engaged in the employment ranks and find any other necessary supports. Be it employment-oriented supports or it may be training so that they become more employable; it may be family supports that would be necessary. So we did that and as a result of the process we put in place and the partnerships with the private sector – and I say the private sector. In most cases, the not-for-profit sector, those men and women who, every day, go in for minimum amounts of money and, in a lot of cases, no money, no remuneration, to ensure that people have a better quality of life and have an expertise in various field, be it social work, be it inclusion, be it special needs.

So anyway, we partnered with them with a \$1.2 billion investment, took a province that was the worst – it had the worst services to offer for people who had some special challenges and were living in poverty. We were the lowest in the country; we were the ones who were more reliant, particularly in that income bracket, on the state itself, and the state providing service for them. We've taken it from there to making it the best.

I also wanted to outline while we're the best right now that we have improved, market wise we've improved, there are still a lot of work to do here. There are still a lot of people who live in poverty. There are still a lot of people who have some challenges. There are still a lot of people who need specialized services, so we're continuing that process and we're encouraging the present administration not to forget where we've come from and where we've gotten to, and to continue so people don't fall backwards. So we keep their feet to the fire to ensure that they do that and they've outlined a couple of good things in this budget that will ensure that people don't fall behind. So we compliment them for that.

We noted today we actually supported some bills very quickly because we felt it was in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and will be something to ensure that seniors and low-income people still have a sustainable income as we go through some of the challenges in this budget.

We talked about the tax reduction stimulus; it was about giving every Newfoundlander and Labradorian money back in their pocket by reducing their taxes that they had to pay. That would also stimulate the economy and give people an opportunity to have some additional disposable income so then they could have a better quality of life, they could invest in things that they felt were important to them. Be it their children's education, be it their own social well-being, be it their own health well-being, being something that was a mental health hobby so that they could themselves feel more engaged. So whatever it may be, we gave them an opportunity to make those decisions. The government wasn't controlling that part of their tax revenue, so that was a positive that we moved there.

So the next heading – those four headings, that added up to \$21.2 billion of the \$28 billion royalty regime that we were entitled to and that we received.

The next one was the debt reduction. This is a \$3.6 billion investment. If anybody can remember – and we're still in a process where our debt payments are fairly significant. They were even more significant at one point. Our bond rating was teetering, almost collapsed because, at the end of the day, not only were we not generating a lot of revenues, we had a lot of debt, and particularly a lot of debt in our pension plans. If you can't sustain your pension plan – because you owe that money out; there's no way you can re-negotiate them.

Anybody who knows pension plans – I was very active with the union in the pension plan debate years ago. When I was minister of Service NL, obviously the registration of pensions was under my responsibility and I got more familiar with it. As we negotiated with the unions about securing the pension plans for the future and ensuring the tens of thousands of valued civil servants, those presently working in the civil service and those who were retired, that they had a pension plan that was sustainable, but particularly a pension plan that not only was sustainable for them and would be part and parcel of how it generates revenue in our own economy but wouldn't be an extreme burden on the present taxpayers, if you have few taxpayers paying in and more people

retiring that it would be a bigger burden, so we wanted to ensure that.

What we did over the course of the year, but particularly what we wanted to also secure, if our bond rating drops, so does our ability to borrow. Our ability to borrow is relevant to the fact of who will loan us money. People were taking a risk. They loan you money, but they loan it at higher interest rate, which would have meant that we would have had to pay more money. We were secure enough to take the money at the time, invest it into our pension plan and increase our bond rating.

Our bond rating, when we were the full administration, was at the highest level it had ever been. It put us in the same category as some of our sister provinces, that we were in a good place to borrow money. So if you wanted to do a special investment or a special initiative, you could borrow because it wasn't going to add dramatically to your debt load when it came to interest payments. We needed to secure that. What we managed to do, first of all, was bring down the debt load in those pension plans, was to build up a bit more security, so it kept our bond rating at a proper level. Also secured with the unions that there was some viability in their pension plans, so that was one of the key things that we needed to do.

As a result, it took us a little over a year to negotiate with the unions and get everybody on side to figure out how we make the pensions sustainable. We had gone into the room and said, look, we've done our part to try to – the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador were responsible for paying a bigger portion than the members who were paying into it. While at the time that's what was negotiated, it was part and parcel of everybody's expectation when you join the civil service, in principle, it wasn't exactly fair to the taxpayers, particularly the 100,000 of those who don't have a pension plan.

So we needed to find something that was equitable to everybody, financially was sustainable and, at the end of the day, would not jeopardize existing pensioners or past pensioners; and even particularly also would be an incentive for future people who would want to join the civil service and have a pension plan that would be sustainable.

What we did there, we sat with the unions. We put on the table here's what we've already invested. We've made them sustainable and now we need to develop a partnership. We developed a partnership that over the next 25 years our pension plans will not only become sustainable, but they'll become profitable. We set up a regime where there'll be a working organization made up of all the key stakeholders who will get to monitor how that money is invested and hopefully get to a point where it is generating its own wealth, so at the end of the day there will be more money than is needed to cover all the pension plans.

Then you can make a decision, do you want to, in some way, give some past pensioners some indexing? Is there something you want to do within the pension plan? Is there an amount of money that the taxpayers would be responsible for or inclusive to have access to, to put back in their general account, or is there something else we want to do with our pension plans or do the members have a chance to do that?

Madam Chair, it was an honour to speak again. I will get a chance to get up again and discuss the other points here.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to have a chance to come and speak once again to this debate this evening. I want to thank everybody who's following along. I don't know if we're able to figure out, through the Broadcast Centre, how many people are viewing the webcast at any given time. I doubt we're able to measure how many people are tuning in on the television broadcast, but I'm amazed at the level of interest in this debate. That's encouraging for those of us who have been participating for 34 hours, I believe, since we started at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, and lots still to talk about.

I had a note from somebody on Twitter this evening who said: I'm a teacher and I'd like to hear more discussion about education issues as part of your debate. That's fair, because we've

been raising lots of petitions about education. We've been asking questions almost on a daily basis about education. I've received numerous emails about education as well.

I just came across one now that is from several weeks ago. It was sent to a number of ministers. I received a copy of it as well. It says: Dear Liberal Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, you work for the people. The people are speaking. Are you listening? Why do we, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, find you in such an adversarial role towards the students and the teachers of the education system?

The students, teachers and staff will indeed all pay the ultimate price for the continued cuts you're choosing to implement. Teachers in our province are beyond spinning their wheels with the ill-resourced inclusion model and to add combined grades and to have increased class sizes for the second year in a row is taking several giant leaps backwards.

Students are directly ill-affected by these changes. Students are directly ill-affected by the ill-resourced inclusion model. Students are directly ill-affected by the insufficient guidance counsellor allocation formula. Students are directly ill-affected by the Intensive Core French lottery. Students are directly ill-affected by the lies and deception that you've been demonstrating.

Teachers in our province are faced with violent students, physically disabilities, mental disabilities, mental health issues, minor to severe behavioural issues, minor to severe learning disabilities, students who are bullies, are bullied or are bystanders, students with diagnosed and suspected undiagnosed exceptionalities, gifted students, students with little to no support from home, students without breakfast or lunch, students who are struggling with variables and barriers, students who do not have self-esteem or self-worth, students that have attempted suicide, students that are involved with self-harm, students that are afraid, students without school supplies, students that do not come to school, students that verbally abuse staff and students, students that succeed and students that do not.

The list goes on, and somehow being grossly ill-resourced and increasing cap sizes will not affect

the achievement of our students? How can you say and believe this? Would you say and believe this if you were in Opposition? According to your stance of advocacy from this time last year, the answer seems clear.

As a specialist teacher, I do not have the luxury of working with instructional resource teachers in my classroom. I have colleagues that teach from a moveable cart as opposed to a dedicated classroom. I have colleagues that teach in unacceptable teaching spaces. I have colleagues that use sick leave to deal with the stress of delivering the prescribed curriculum in situations that, quite frankly, set the teacher and students up for failure. I have colleagues that do not work within the confines of cap size. I have colleagues that spin their wheels each and every day to make the inclusion model work to the best of their ability as a lone adult in the classroom. Every teacher has their own story. You are killing our teachers, you are damaging our students. Defeated.

This teacher lives in St. John's West and teaches here in St. John's.

I've received countless emails from teachers within my own community of Mount Pearl, and I represent a small portion of St. John's as well. I received a lot of representation from parents who are concerned about full-day kindergarten proceeding. They're concerned around class cap sizes. They're concerned around combined multigrade classrooms that are going to take place. They're concerned with overcrowding at one school while another school has six empty classrooms.

No matter how many times we've raised the issues and written letters and met with the school board and brought the concerns here to the House of Assembly and presented petitions, sadly, Mr. Chair, it seems to be falling on deaf ears. That's disheartening for us, but it's even more disheartening for those that are bringing those concerns to us.

I see I have a few minutes left. During the debate last night we received a fair bit of correspondence from people who are concerned about the levy. Now, we have two bills before the House – or two resolutions, two bills that are in this Committee stage. Right now we're

formally debating the insurance tax related bill, but we still have to finish debate on the levy bill as well.

This message came in 9 o'clock, roughly, last night. This lady writes: I'm currently listening to the Member for Labrador telling the story of his son and family having to go back to Edmonton because he couldn't sell his house. I am from St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. I have a starter home up for sale for one full year this month. I've lowered it to \$174,900. He mentioned a \$700,000 home. Give me a break, I am insulted. My home is marked to the average person and my realtor is telling me that people are just afraid of losing their jobs in the fall and are holding on to their money. Thank you, Mr. Premier, thank you, Finance Minister, you will be the cause of me having great hardship.

I keep looking up, Mr. Chair, because I want to see how much time I have left.

Here's another short one that came in around the same time last night. Mr. Premier, since the majority of the Newfoundland and Labrador people have made it clear that they would like you and your entire Cabinet to resign, and since you have decided to contract work to silence the voices of those who have called for your resignation in the most democratic way possible, I would like to ask you, Mr. Premier, do you intend to obey the wishes of the majority of people in this province and resign? Yes or no? I am listening.

That actually comes from a constituent of mine in Mount Pearl North. Another note from last night – and I have to say, the decorum has been pretty good tonight, Mr. Chair. I don't know if you deserve the credit for that or not. Your colleague, Madam Chair, has done a good job as well. So maybe you both deserve the credit. Members opposite are being fairly co-operative.

MR. K. PARSONS: One Member over there is not allowed to speak.

MR. KENT: There is one Member over there who's not allowed to speak because of earlier behaviour today. I recognize that. How does that feel?

AN HON. MEMBER: Sadly, it's difficult.

MR. KENT: It is difficult, yes.

AN HON. MEMBER: He should know.

MR. KENT: He should know.

Mr. Chair, it's tough when you have Statler and Waldorf behind you, but I'm doing the best I can here.

Last night this individual, who was watching the debate, said: I'm watching the debate online and I am appalled by the ministers acting like kindergarten students while the teacher steps out of the room. We, at home, can hear the disrespect by speaking so loudly while someone is on the floor; be professional.

In a long debate, we all need to have some light moments and have a little bit of levity, but it's important to maintain some decorum and be able to hear one another when we are in debate. So I commend Members for being fairly respectful of what's happening this evening. That's a good thing.

Another one on the levy before I run out of time here: I would like to understand the equality of the Liberal imposed tax levy. I am a single individual in my 30s and have worked hard to get a good job with a fairly good income. I use one person's government services and pay an extreme amount of taxes. Now I will have to pay an additional \$900 a year for a levy. However, under the new proposed levy, a family of four with combined household income if both make less than 50 K – that is the equivalent to my income – do not have to pay the same levy even though they utilize the government services of four people and cost the government more than little old me.

This seems completely unexplainable to me. As a young person with a job that allows me to work remotely from anywhere in the world, I'm struggling to find reasons to stay in this province. The cost of living for a single person is astronomical, even making the salary I'm currently making, and now the cost of living is increasing. I do not understand how it is right to tax some and not all. Any explanation or insight you can provide me with would be very much appreciated.

I see my time is up, Mr. Chair. I look forward to continued debate.

Thank you.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise and speak once again to Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. Of course, we're talking about the insurance hike.

Mr. Chair, I want to, first of all, thank all of the people who continue to send messages, emails, texts and Facebook messages, suggestions on the budget and so on. We're continuing to get them coming in here. This really has become the people's debate. I think it's awesome. I really think it's awesome. I also want to thank the Rock Vapor community. I just got a note that they have some coffee, and I appreciate that.

MR. KENT: Can you plug Avalon Vapor in my district as well?

MR. LANE: The Member for Mount Pearl North asked that I plug Avalon Vapor in his district. The vapor community has dropped off some coffee. So I say to the Member if you want to go out and get some there at the front desk. We really appreciate it and I thank them publicly for that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I don't think they were giving you any coffee over there.

Anyway, I want to continue on with a couple of messages that I received now, a couple of new ones. The first one was the text message I received from an individual. I had asked questions that have been presented in this text message the last time I spoke. The last question was to the Minister of Education about the education system in Finland, which kids go three to four hours a day, four days a week and apparently they have the most educated children in the world.

So I just pass that along again in case they didn't hear me the last time. I can't confirm or deny this. I'm just going by the research that this gentleman says he has done. I'm sure the Minister of Education probably knows all about this and he's well engaged in those issues.

The other one he wanted me to bring up again because he had sent me this message last night – he thanked me for asking the question and sort of directing it to the Minister of Finance, but a couple of times he said she was up and others were up and he never heard his address. I would say to that individual that this is not Question Period so there's really no – if we present questions and ideas, while it would great to hear ministers respond to them, they are not obligated to; but we can only hope that they're listening, making notes and maybe these are things they would consider.

Once again, he did want me to raise the issue of the Labrador link study in terms of the expenditure this year of \$750,000, but not so much about the expenditure of the \$750,000 – although that is significant because if you look \$750,000 almost saves all of the libraries that are going to be closed. I think they're saving \$1 million by shutting down 50-something libraries and we're going to spend \$750,000 on a study. So that is a valid point.

The issue that he raises – and I raised it last night but he wanted me to raise it again – is the fact that let's say we do the study this year and, as a result, they say yes, this is feasible; it's feasible to do a Labrador link – and I hope it happens. To be honest with you, I don't think it's a bad thing. I think it's a good thing if it can be done and it's feasible. I know the people in Labrador would want to see it and it would benefit the province as well, I think. I'm not an expert on it, but I have no objection to it, none at all.

The question that he asked about Labrador link study is: Let's say they do the study this year and, for argument's sake, it comes back and says yes, it's feasible, it's a good idea, and then they say it going to cost \$1 billion to build it – maybe it will be \$2 billion or maybe it will be \$3 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Whatever the amount might be. Just say, for argument's sake, they do the study and it comes back yes, it's a good idea.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate your protection.

Let's assume they do the study and it comes back that yes, this is a good idea. It can be done. It's feasible and all that stuff. Let's say that happens. Well, then they come back with a price tag. Let's say that \$1 billion. Maybe it will be \$5 billion. Maybe it will be a half a billion. I don't know what it'll be. Let's say it was feasible and there was a price tag, his question is: Where is the money coming from to build it?

So you do it this year, you do a study and if it's \$1 billion – we don't have \$1 billion. Therefore, we're saying we're going to try and reach surplus in seven years. How do we reach surplus in seven years if we're going to add \$1 billion to the expenses or \$2 billion or whatever it is, if it was feasible?

I guess the point he's making is that until we're in a financial position to not only do the study but are in a financial position to act upon the study, if it were to say that it's reasonable and could be done, then why do it now? That's the point he's making. If you did the study and it was a good idea and it was feasible, if we don't have the money to act upon that study, what's the point of doing it until we're in a position to do it?

So we're going to do a study and then we say yes, that's a good idea. It's feasible, but we're going to wait at least seven to 10 years before we can do it because we don't have any money for the next seven years. We won't have surplus for another seven years according to the Minister of Finance.

MR. LETTO: Private sector.

MR. LANE: I'm hearing the Member for Lab West saying private sector. Hey, if that's an option, perfect. I'm asking a question that the man is asking. That's the question he's asking. I'm just putting it out there.

The other one I have is a Facebook message. This one is plea to the government. It's quite simple. It literally is a plea. It says: Please don't agree on the insurance tax increase. Some of us poor people can't afford it; already paying \$250 a month in insurance on my vehicle.

That's a valid point because even though we've been talking about levies, income tax increases – although the income tax increase will be, for most people, offset by the federal breaks we're getting this year, but we're talking about levies, increased cost of gas and all the stuff. If you're something who's on low income, you're someone who's, say, making minimum wage or whatever the case might be, or it might be one minimum wage earner or two minimum wage earners, or maybe they're making a little above minimum wage, and they have a small car, for argument's sake. Well, like in the case of this person here, they're saying it's costing them \$250 a month now to pay the insurance, because it's a young person – costing me \$250 a month to pay the insurance on my car now.

That person's only making a minimum wage job or just above a minimum wage job. So now you're going to tack another 15 per cent on that. That's another \$40 a month. That's like \$40 a month more that this person is going to have to pay on their insurance, plus gas is going up and registration and everything else.

I know it's one thing to talk about – just forget about the levy for a second. Let's say the person doesn't have to pay any levy. Well this person wouldn't have to pay a levy, but if they're only making minimum wage and they're only barely surviving, then \$40 a month on the insurance is huge. That's huge to that person. Then you have the gas and everything on top of that.

These are the things we all need to be cognizant of. It might not mean a lot to some people. Forty bucks a month is pocket change to a lot of people, but if you're somebody who's literally living paycheque to paycheque, literally struggling to just pay the rent and pay for your

vehicle and your insurance, whatever, and you've got zero expendable income, by the time you get a few groceries you're just surviving. That's all you're doing. Well then 40 bucks on insurance on your car a month, that's huge. That is huge. Then you throw the gas on top of that, and you're literally taking someone who is under the poverty line or on the poverty line or just above the poverty line and you're – that's enough to drive them into despair. It literally is.

I know we might all look and say, well, \$40 here and \$50 there and another few dollars there, but that's fine for us to say. I can say that. It's not a big deal to me. I can say that. I make a good income, as we all do here. I can, but I'm telling you, there are a lot of people, regular hard-working people who can't afford it. So I throw that out there and I think it's a very important point.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Again, it's a privilege to get up at almost 12 o'clock in the night here in the House of Assembly debating over Bill 19 and to be representing the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis.

What we're doing here tonight now, we're into Bill 19. It's a budget – for the taxes on insurance. I think it was 2008 our government brought it into the budget. In 2008, we decided to eliminate taxes on insurance in the province for your home insurance, your auto insurance and recreational vehicle insurance.

At that time, like I said, it was applauded by the whole province. Everybody was very pleased because it saved people money and put money back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It gave them an opportunity to spend on things that could improve their homes. It gave them more money to put back into the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. People had extra money in their pockets and the little things they could do, whether it was a

renovation with a House, whether it was to have a nice meal with a family, whether it was to go on a trip. The opposite effect of that is happening with this bill.

What we're seeing in the budget in general – and each time that we get up and we talk about different things in this budget, it's the one thing that everybody says. It's so much. There's so much in this budget. There are so many cuts; there are so many tax increases. What happened was government went and took every bit of revenue they had coming in and every bit of revenue they thought that they could get money out of and they went line for line.

What they did, they said okay, they looked at taxes on insurance and they said that's money for us. We can get revenue out of that, so let's put it back on. Let's put back 15 per cent on the auto insurance. Let's put 15 per cent back on home insurance.

Like I started off with my conversation, when we took it off in 2008, it gave people that little extra to be able to go. What it does, when you put money back into the economy, the economy grows. Small business finds a big increase. When they see people that are spending money they spend money, they hire people. You'll see the whole trickling effect through the economy, that people are spending money – this person's making money, and then the employment rate goes up.

Now, if you looked at this budget, the Minister of Finance is predicting that in four years' time we're going to see a 15 per cent increase in the unemployment rate. So what are we doing? Why are we doing these cuts? Why are we taking this money out of the economy?

I'm not saying that we can't – you hear Members on the other side, oh, if we left it alone, if we never touched it. We're not saying if you never touched it. If you had to leave alone the HST when we did what we did, if you had to leave alone the HST you would have saved yourself \$100 million there. That was \$100 million you could have saved there if you didn't have to make – because you said you were going to do something and then you turned and did the 360 around with that, you would have saved yourselves \$100 million there. If you didn't

bring in full-day kindergarten you could save money there.

The \$30 million slush fund that we never had since 2001, no slush funds – no, that's true, Mr. Chair. There was no slush fund. In 2001 was the last time there was a slush fund. Then you look at the money that was taken – so take away those things and you wouldn't be long adding up a few things. There are some things we could look at.

We understand there had to be an increase in taxes, and people don't mind that. They didn't mind that tax, but if you talk to the average Joe and the average person in Newfoundland and Labrador and they look at this budget, they just look at it and say, listen, it's way too much. It's way too much too fast. You're trying to do it all overnight on the backs of hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's why I'm here tonight, and that's why I'm willing to stay here until I don't know when. I'll stay here as long as I have to. I'll get up every time and I'll stay here.

People may say it might not make a difference. Well, I'll tell you, maybe it will make a difference. Maybe they'll finally listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They'll listen to constituents that I hope are calling them. I hope the constituents are emailing them. I hope the constituents go on Facebook. Don't be nasty or anything, be nice. Just go on and express your concerns. Express your concerns to your MHA. Tell them, look, this is how your budget is going to affect me. These are the reasons why I don't want you to do what you're doing.

I know the budget has passed. We know the budget has passed, but listen, there's no one too big or too proud to just say, listen, okay, maybe that's a good idea. Maybe we should do that. Maybe we shouldn't do that. Maybe we shouldn't tax books. Maybe we shouldn't close libraries. Have a look. We'll come here in the House of Assembly and if you say you're going to do something and we agree with it, I'll gladly support it, as long as it's for the betterment.

I really want to touch base this time when I get up. I was listening to VOCM this morning. Fred Hutton was on. He had a guy on who was

talking about taxes in all of Canada. He talked about what's happening. They may laugh on the other side – they're laughing now on the other side. Here's what he talked about. He talked about confidence and he talked about investment. He said what do you need – the worst thing you could do is increase taxes. He said people won't want to live there anymore. He talked about young professionals, people that are graduating from our university.

Our graduates are the best in the world. They have the opportunity to go anywhere in the world, anywhere in Canada they can go. We have doctors coming out, we have nurses. My niece there last week – I was so proud of her, a beautiful, young girl – graduated as a nurse. Congratulations, Jennifer. She's a beautiful, young girl. She's going to make a fantastic nurse.

These people are graduating. We have engineers, we have teachers, and they're going to have a choice to make. Do they want to stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador where it's the most expensive place in all of Canada to drive a vehicle? There's no other place now in Canada that's more expensive. To drive a vehicle now we've gone – I don't know where we were to, we were probably in the middle of the pack but, boy, we're down at the bottom of the pack now after this budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: After this budget, that's a fact, Minister of Fisheries. Those are the facts, Minister of Fisheries.

The highest place in all of Canada, the most expensive place in all of Canada to drive a vehicle is here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that's a fact. Our insurance is high; your gas tax went up 16 cents. We're looking for young people that are educated to stay here at home. I don't think so.

Then if you look at small business – in rural Newfoundland in particular, small business is the heart and soul of our communities. You know, Mr. Chair; you're a businessman. You're in business and you know what it's like to run a business in rural Newfoundland, lots of experience at it. Your business was a little bit

big, but you know the small businesses that fed to you and you worked with all these businesses. In these small communities our businesses, they're the heart and soul of our communities.

I'm from a small community. Now it's not that far outside of Flatrock. The guy that owns the gas bar in Flatrock – a good friend of mine by the way and a good guy – he employs probably 10 people from the community. If you go to rural Newfoundland and look at small business and see what they do for their communities, it's unbelievable. Not only that, not only do they employ, they support.

I tell you right now when you've got a card game or there's a special event that needs to be done or somebody needs something, our business people are right there all the time. This budget is going to affect small business because it's taking money away from the small business. What it's going to do, instead of hiring the person, they're going to have to lay somebody off because the money is not coming in. You know that. You know because you're a businessman and you know the effects that will have on businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I really believe that – I don't know if you just don't care or you just won't listen. It's a sad day for this business community in Newfoundland and Labrador. This budget is a sad day.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Like I said, it's good to get up again. As I point out, Members opposite, I guess they feel like the people watching are gone to bed now so they've sat back into –

MR. K. PARSONS: No, they are all up watching.

MR. PETTEN: Yes, they're gone back into their shells now. They've sat down and they'll let us carry the load. That's fair game. Instead of playing to the camera, maybe they should –

MR. K. PARSONS: The Member for Lab West would get up.

MR. PETTEN: What?

MR. K. PARSONS: The Member for Lab West would get up.

MR. PETTEN: The Member for Lab West, he's not allowed to get up. That's true. That happened to colleagues on our side of the House last week. We didn't appreciate it. I know Members here didn't appreciate it, but the Speaker rules the House and makes that call. We all respect that obviously, Mr. Chair.

Other than that Member, the rest of them could easily get up, but that's fine. It's strange, every few hours when the camera switches or the time switches, they're fighting with each other. There earlier tonight there were two getting up at a time. It was good. It gives us a little breather, but we're good with that.

We like to share. They like to have a bit of camera. We're not really doing it for the camera; it's more doing it because –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: I have a few emails there –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: I have a few emails here I'd like to read.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask all hon. Members to recognize the hon. Member who's been asked to speak.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As you can tell, we're getting into the wee hours here again now. Unfortunately, it seems like every time I get up everything digresses. I've

gotten tweets making accusations and everything. I'm just trying to wade through this.

On that note, I go back to my comments. Yeah, we're all here for a reason. It is Parliament; we're here doing a filibuster. As we say often, we're representing the people's interest. Government is representing what they feel is right. We'll debate our sides of the argument.

I would be nice to see some more people in the backbenches, MHAs, rural MHAs, get up and pass along their commentary. We've had a few get up tonight. It's nice to hear actually. We have a lot of regular ministers that get up and speak passionately. It's nice to hear all the Members. I'd like to hear all Members get up. I know my colleague makes that reference every time, except for our friend from – a friend who's not allowed today, but hopefully we'll hear from him tomorrow. We're in today.

Mr. Chair, I just want to read a couple of more emails into the record. I have a lot of them; I'll never get them all read in. There are a couple there that I'd like to just have on record.

I would say first and – that was just the greetings. I'm writing you in regard to my concerns also with this increase of 15 per cent put back on insurance – ironically, it's the topic we're on today in Bill 19. My family will have no other choice but to claim bankruptcy. I am an emotional wreck since then.

I am an LPN; I make \$48,000 a year before taxes. My husband makes enough to put us at the \$100,000 a year before taxes. We have a six-year-old son. Between my property tax pretty well doubling in the last year and car insurance, we'll have no other choice but to cut spending on food or have a roof over our heads.

Unfortunately, I'm not like some; I have 21 years of public service. I can't pack up and move. There are too many years to throw away. Now, in saying that, I sit here with tears running down my face.

I don't know if I said it last night, it was an email that I couldn't remember. I remembered reading it. It was an email where the lady said she was crying as she wrote it, and this was the one.

So I have tears running down my face wondering what on earth I'm going to do. I know you will be voting against the budget, but there is enough to vote against this so it doesn't have to pass – and we all know it passed. We need this stopped. It's going to kill every single middle class and senior there is in this province. Help us, I beg you like I've not begged for anything before. Help us keep our homes and help us not have to resort to Kraft Dinner and cans of soup for our children. Oh, dear God, I'm scared to death.

Well, I don't know, Mr. Chair, you were in the Chair last night, but I remember vividly, and that was one of the emails that stuck with me, and I think I said it last night and Members may remember I recalled there was someone – I used that in a lot of examples. When they wrote the email they said – that was the email. Again, that's their words typed out; it's raw. The way they were feeling that moment, that's what they sent.

That's the reason we're here on this 24-hour marathon – 48-hour marathon we're pushing now. Because those people's voices need to be heard. By emailing me or any other MHAs in this House, we all mean well and we're all there doing our job and representing our district and the constituents of that district, but do their voices really get heard, or do their stories really get told? We all try, but unfortunately we can't. There is only so much each of us can do.

I'm glad I found that email, because that was one that when I read it, it stuck with me. That was a very heartfelt email and I thought it deserved to be read into the record. So, for one, I'm glad I could do it for that lady. It just speaks of the raw emotion that people feel. Those people still feel – that hasn't left those people.

Mr. Chair, I'll read another, now. This is a fairly lengthy one – do I have enough time, yes – but it touches on education cuts and the feelings on education. That's a very important issue and I have a lot of concerns in my district, and I presented a petition yesterday in the House regarding the change to education.

It goes: My husband and I have two young children and my first concern is the effect the proposed changes are going to have on the

education system. Our youngest will begin school in September entering the full-day kindergarten program. One of the five kindergarten classes in their school has 28 students, if not more, with two teachers in the room under a co-teaching model. Even with an extra teacher, 28 children at this age in one classroom is far too many to give students the attention they require to be successful.

I know that school; that used to be the half-day kindergarten class. That's where maybe 10, 11, is it, when they had the half-day kindergarten. Now they're putting 28 in that class. There's been a lot of kick up about that. Actually, I believe the Minister of Education went up for Literacy Day at that school and read. I did bring it to his attention and people are still speaking out against it. I get it. When my children went there, it was half-day kindergarten. They were small rooms; we'll call the old-fashioned kindergarten class. Twenty-eight kids in those rooms are a lot, even if you put two teachers in there. So I understand their concerns.

This lady is a former kindergarten teacher so she should know. In her experience, the most effective years were when the numbers were the lowest. When children are younger, the lower the ratio, the better; it's more advantageous at the younger ages. When children are older, you can get away with larger class sizes. It's studied; it's a proven fact.

My time is starting to run down, so I might not get all this email read. This lady also mentions the decision to introduce caps was based on research that supports this in the first place – sorry, Mr. Chair, it's getting late now; the words are getting harder to read. She says this decision for cap sizes is based on research. Having multigrades and those larger class sizes is not conducive to learning for our younger children.

School bus changes have already taken effect in my district. I know my colleagues have run into that issue too. That kind of went smoothly a few years ago. The multigrade, the Intensive Core French, the full-day kindergarten and being prepared for it – there's no one against full-day kindergarten in this House. This former government brought in full-day kindergarten. If you're not prepared for it, you need to maybe pause and reflect in a year. We've tried that with

a private Member's motion which was defeated. The intent was not to stop it forever, stop it for now until we're ready to proceed.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, it's an honour again to stand tonight and talk to Bill 19, the bill on the tax on insurance. As people may have noted, the last eight hours we've been here to talk about exactly this issue and the effects the budget is going to have.

Very eloquently and very open the debate that we've had here, particularly from the Members on this side, from my colleagues here, the Member for Cape St. Francis, the Member for Conception Bay South, the Member for Mount Pearl North and the Independent Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands. All outlined concerns that people have, that people have emailed to them or they sent through Twitter or they made phone calls to them, about the impact this budget is going to have.

One of the impacts it's going to have is around the insurance tax bill. While it may not seem like a lot when you talk about 15 per cent on one or two or three or five or 10 policies that people may have, when you add it into all the other fee increases that people are going to face, it's going to have a dramatic impact.

That's been relevant. You're hearing it from people from all over the province, from all kinds of economic backgrounds, from all kinds of social backgrounds who have challenges in different areas. Some areas are going to hit them harder than others, yet the underlining, continuous theme here is this is going to be detrimental to them being able to do the base things they always did.

Some extreme cases where they're going to have to make decisions: Is Newfoundland and Labrador the place where they are going to continue to stay and raise their children? If it's about the costing, if it's about the quality of education, if it's going to be access to services,

these are all challenges that people have and they're legitimate.

They're ones they're asking us to express to the Members opposite so that you have an opportunity to reflect on exactly what's being proposed in the business of a budget. As the people know, it's about putting together things that, in most cases, should be a balance, a balance where you have to generate your revenues to offset your expenditures; but, at the same time, provide services for the people, so at the end of the day you keep the economy moving forward. You particularly don't add dramatic hardships on people.

Unfortunately, in this case, as we're hearing from the citizens all over this province, that's what this budget is doing. It's putting undo hardships on a number of people, people from all classes, all age categories, all geographic locations. Unfortunately, Mr. Chair, we feel, on this side in the Opposition, this is going to be to the detriment of this province. We need to find a better way, a better balance to ensure that doesn't happen.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to keep in the theme of what I started eight hours ago of talking about or answering the question that was asked to me by some Members opposite and some members of the general public and even some of my own constituents, about the monies, the oil revenues that were generated, the royalties while we were in office. I say, we, I wasn't there for a lot of it, but the PC administration. I've gone through and I understand and I can appreciate where the money went. I think it was money well spent.

No doubt we could have used more money. No doubt it would be nice to have a pot of money there to address some of the issues we have here, but there were immediate issues at the time from a safety point of view, from an economic point of view, from a stimulus point of view that needed to be done.

So we've come to an agreement that we're talking about \$28 billion was the money we had to play with for a period of time, to invest, to make sure we got the best bang for our dollar and the citizens received the services they deserved.

So different areas we went into was equalization. I've explained that \$10 billion we would normally have gotten in this period from the federal government through equalization, we now have to pick up and put in the general account to cover day-to-day operations from salaries to patching potholes to buying drugs for people, to all the services that we need to provide for our citizens.

Then there was infrastructure of \$6 billion. That was to address issues around decaying infrastructure, old schools that were mouldy, hospitals and clinics that need to be done, bridges and roads. All these type of investments here to ensure we had the right infrastructure so that we can build the economy and we could also give people proper access and provide proper services to them in a proper and conducive environment.

Then we talked poverty reduction, to ensure those who had the most challenges, those who are in a poverty reliant state would have supports, and we would help them get off that reliance. We went from the worst in the country to the best. We invested \$1.2 billion.

Tax reduction stimulus, that was about putting money back in people's pockets. The average citizen here and the business community could then invest it and they could be the stewards of our economic growth, and it worked wonderfully. We stimulated the economy. We managed to move things forward. We had other companies come and invest. We had local companies here expand their businesses. We kept people employed. That was a \$4 billion giveback to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador, and put us in a competitive tax regime in this country.

Then we had the debt reduction, \$3.6 billion. That was to stabilize our pension plans, which there are tens of thousands of people reliant on those pension plans, but it was also to ensure that our bond rating didn't drop. The best way to do that was to ensure we invested in our pension plans to add more security as we worked out a deal with the unions and the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador for sustainability, and we've done that. For over the next 25 years this will be a sustainable fund. It will be able to do what it was set up to do, give people security

and entice people to work in the civil service. That was another \$3.6 billion.

So what we're up to now, out of the \$28 billion I talked about, is \$24.8 billion that I've outlined exactly where the money went. If anybody travels around this province or anybody works in a certain sector, they can see and they can nod and say, yes, now I understand how that works. It's hard to dispute where this money went because it's all documented. It's part and parcel of the budget lines over the last number of years. It's part and parcel of what the Auditor General has put in his reports.

The next area here is tuition and student aid reform, \$350 million. People may remember, 15, 18 years ago we were in real trouble when it came to our financial situation around our post-secondary education. Debt load for students was the highest in the country. There were challenges around the cost of students, particularly those coming from rural areas into the urban centres. Their debt loads were extreme. Our salary bases in Newfoundland and Labrador were so low that it would take people decades to get out of debt just from their student loans. It didn't give them the ability to invest in other things and keep the economy going by buying cars and building houses, or doing things that were necessary to keep the economy going.

What we were finding, what was happening was that students were leaving the province. They were taking the skill set that we helped trained them to get and they were taking that and bringing it somewhere else. So we were the losers here. Not only did we lose our well-equipped, well-trained, well-educated young men and women, but the province was losing because we didn't have another tax base to build upon. We didn't have the numbers here to ensure that the next generation of individuals would have supports to be able to take care of what was needed in our society.

We had to find a way to do it. One of the key ways that was noted was if we could reduce the debt loads, if we could make it more attractive here. Plus, we realized our facilities are large enough that they have the capacity to expand. If our population is only to a point where it can only go to a certain level, well, how do we expand it and how we make it a business entity

where it's profitable? Well, international students and students from other parts of this country. If we reduced our costing, it would make it more attractive, but at the same time, these students would drive the economy.

We subsidized, to a degree, a better level of education because the debt load was down, more students would access it. We made an actual business plan to it by making it affordable and attractive enough that national and international students came to Newfoundland and Labrador. What we're finding is that there is a percentage of those, after they're educated, who stay here.

Not only did we prevent our brain drain from our own educated people leaving here, we sustained not bringing people in which boosts the economy. Now we're getting other people to stay here which enhances our population growth, but also adds another level of intelligent, well-trained, well-equipped people who are familiar with our geography, our culture and our social makeup to ensure that our economy moves forward.

We did that, but at the same time, we invested in our post-secondary education institutions. We added to the infrastructure what needed to be done. We brought them up to an international world level. We made things attractive so other institutions would come here and want to invest in what we're doing. Or, as we saw in Qatar, they contracted us to go over there and do these types of services.

What we're finding over there now, a lot of the original graduates who, a number of years ago, because we had our tuition freezes and we had our debt reduction and we had our rollbacks in tuition, made it affordable. So when they graduated, they stayed here with that skill set and then they were employable through the college system and had the ability, then, to bring that same skill set to another jurisdiction.

That jurisdiction is also generating tens of millions of dollars of profit for Newfoundland and Labrador and for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because those who go over there, their tax base is still here. They come back here with the monies they've earned over there and they spend it in our local economy, which means

we all win from that. So here's another \$350 million that we invested.

Mr. Chair, we're up to \$25.3 billion of the \$28 billion already. It shows every one of these are something that stimulates our economy, something that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador not only wanted but needed and it things that outline how we move our economy forward. Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to speak to this again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to have an opportunity to speak once again. I'm waving to my colleagues because it's time for a late-night shift change. We're taking turns getting a couple of hours sleep here and there so we can keep the debate going. It's a good team building exercise actually, Mr. Chair.

I have a few more –

AN HON. MEMBER: We have to do this more often.

MR. KENT: We might do it a little more often, I say to whatever Member is suggesting that.

Now I have a few more messages I want to share from constituents and people who live, not in my district, but around the province as well. This is from an individual who does live in my district. She wrote at 1 a.m. – well it's now yesterday morning, Tuesday morning: I currently rent in your district. I am voicing my concerns about this filibuster that is happening right now in the House. I'm someone who lost my job due to this budget. I worked as a security guard at NLCHI, the Centre for Health Information. Due to the cuts in the budget, they were told to make more cuts causing me to lose my job.

My husband has been having trouble finding a job due to a health condition and I supported us both. Not only does my husband have a health condition, he has been having trouble finding help all through our health care system. The doctor has been trying to help but he has fallen

through the cracks and when found again, re-added to a list that he never seems to reach the top of.

I don't think that our current Liberal government realizes what damage they are doing to the people of this province. An example I could give that could still – and some has happened to me, but all fees raised for everything causing ordinary people like me to choose between having a car to be able to get to work or have heat and lights, along with food for my table.

People are not going to be able to afford to do these things because they shouldn't have to choose between these things. I would end up losing my job because I can't afford a car to get to work, which will cause me to end up on EI, then when that runs out, to be on assistance. That will cost government more money in the long run because more people need help.

I think the current government, they were voted in by the people of the province and made promises during the election that caused them to become power hungry, forget that they got there by the people of this province. The Members should not vote for the party that they are a Member of, but for the members in their district who put them in government. They are supposed to be there to represent the people of their district, not do what the party wants to have happen. They should be given a choice about what the Member believes is good for their district and not the party.

I'm sorry if I seem to be rambling and not making real sense, but it's getting late for me. Stay strong and filibuster on. That's not a bad slogan. Maybe we'll get t-shirts printed as the week goes on; although, we wouldn't be allowed to wear them in this hon. House.

MR. K. PARSONS: Don't get posters made up. They'll take them down.

MR. KENT: No, we won't put up posters. There's enough of that going on.

You can sense the level of frustration in some of these messages that are coming from people around the province.

I have one here from another resident of Mount Pearl. She has some thoughts on the budget generally and also some thoughts on education. Considering the budget and all that it means and the timing around when things kick in, I predict a tough Christmas this year for a lot of families in Newfoundland and Labrador and expect that it will creep up on people who don't crunch the numbers and budget according or who are already stretched too thin.

Extra gas taxes have kicked in, plus extra HST to come and an added 15 per cent tax on insurance that wasn't there before, extra fees on all sorts of government services, extra income tax, a levy, et cetera, et cetera. Things are going to add up an extra tens of dollars here and dozens of dollars there. Soon families will wonder why they're short \$100 here or \$1,000 there. Then by the time October, November or December rolls around, people are going to realize they isn't enough to go around and I expect organizations who help those in need during the holidays will be feeling a heavier burden to provide supports this year. It's another example where community organizations will be expected to pick up the slack.

I know that it's an odd thought for June, considering the bigger picture of what the budget means, but it's what comes to mind when I think of the realities to families of these decisions and how they will play out. It's the stress parents and amazing kids with kid-sized wishes and beliefs that I think of when I think of the strain this budget will have on families.

So much else stands out as missed steps in this process, but it's the faces of these people and their challenges that play in my head the most. From families who are just getting by to our students, to our sick and elderly, this budget is going to hit the most vulnerable the hardest. That's a common sentiment.

School councils are made up of passionate, motivated and knowledgeable school council reps. These people are in our schools and on the ground supporting our students and teachers. We are desperate to stop the negative impacts this budget has on our students and teachers. The most vulnerable have the most at stake. Class sizes, multigrading, team teaching and lack of

planning and resourcing for inclusive classrooms are just the tip of the iceberg.

We all fully support full-day kindergarten, but not to the detriment of the rest of the students. We also can't continue to expect our teachers to be all things to every student without the resources they need. They are expected to be teacher to all needs, abilities and exceptionalities, nurse, mental health provider, advocate, babysitter, monitor, traffic cop, et cetera, and each negative decision adds to this list. We need to give our teachers our support.

There will be a straw that breaks the system. Government needs to understand the impacts may not be obvious today or in the foreseeable future to every individual family, but we have a collective responsibility. It's about our future. It takes a village to raise a child, and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need to rally behind our kids and show them we are rooting for them and support their success.

Difficult decisions are needed, but not those that will mean our K to 12 students will receive a subpar education or worse, slip through the cracks that I fear. Difficult decisions are needed, but not those that will mean our students receive a subpar education. Or worse, slip through the cracks that I fear will become massive crevices. Please listen to parents, listen to teachers and listen to students. Don't just hear but really listen.

Here's another one on a different topic: About eight years ago I helped bring the company I work for to Newfoundland and Labrador to open a brand new office. Our office brought up to 13 well-paying jobs, with the hopes to grow even larger.

With the recent budget announcement, I have regretted that decision. Now with the price of oil being so low and the slowing of the economy, all employees have been forced to take a 10 per cent pay cut just so our company can stay competitive. Now with the raising of taxes, Deficit Reduction Levy and so forth, many of us may be forced to leave Newfoundland and Labrador as it is no longer feasible to live there.

All of our employees represent the middle-class Newfoundlander and Labradorian. We drive our

cars to work, take our kids to soccer and pay a mortgage. We are the typical people who drive the economy, but this budget, this tax reduction levy will only prevent us from spending, prevent us from being able to kick start the economy again.

I know the province is in hardship and I understand taxes have to be raised to help reduce the debt, but this Deficit Reduction Levy and this budget have gone too far. Hopefully this email does not fall on deaf ears of government.

Another one from Monday evening: When will government rip off the Band-Aid and tell us what's coming in the fall budget? Wage rollbacks and concessions, how can we afford to pay all the new taxes and fees, as well as the Liberal levy, with less salary?

I don't have a whole lot left over at months end and I am a single female with a mortgage. Now, I wonder why I even moved back to Newfoundland and Labrador after having been gone for 11 years. How bleak is the future going to be under the current government? I will leave out the names that are mentioned of individual Members.

Mr. Chair, people are very concerned and they're frustrated. I see I only have 30 seconds left, so I'll pick a small one. What is the plan to remove the levy? Why should a fixed levy be applied at all when a junk food tax that follows the same GST decision against food be applied? Why is a levy a better idea than that?

People do have suggestions. They do have ideas and they know there were other choices that could have been made. We're urging government to reconsider some of these choices, which is why we're continuing to provide a voice for so many people in our province through this debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to further opportunities to debate.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

I'm not sure of the number of times I've been up so far tonight, but it's a good few. It's great to get up – and I always say the same thing – to represent the District of Cape St. Francis and the residents of Cape St. Francis because it's a beautiful district with beautiful people.

We're debating here tonight a budget bill. It's Bill 19. It's tax on insurance. It's tax on home insurance. It's tax on your quad or your boat or your recreational vehicle. It's a money grab from hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's all I can really say.

When I look at the budget overall, that's probably the best way to describe the budget. I said here before earlier tonight, this budget I believe – it was called this also – was a lazy budget. It was a lazy budget. No thought went into it. It was just let's just get everything out there. What did they say? Everything is on the table. So they threw it all on the table and they said let's go at it. Where can we get money out of? What can we get the money out of? There were 300 fees that were increased in this budget, from a marriage licence to your driver's registration.

Some of that stuff probably could be increased with the revenues we're in, but they went through the whole gamut. They went through every way that you could go. Not only that, then they came up with 50 more. They said, okay, this is something that we're not paying – the people of Newfoundland are not paying enough, so let's get them 50 more that they have to pay. That's how the budget was done.

This budget was done in a way to look at Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and say for the last five or six years you lived high on the hog; you did great. You did so good everything was great and you'd live well. We went from where we saw people in the highest levels of poverty in all of Canada in 2003, to 2014, 2013 where we were the lowest.

Our education system is one of the finest education systems in the country by far, cap sizes on classes, our teachers – I spoke to a teacher that was in the classroom for 28 years. I

remember going down to St. Francis of Assisi. She said: Do you know what, Kevin? To be a teacher today is an absolute privilege. It's a privilege to be a teacher.

I know they call them SMART boards or whiteboards; I'm not sure the name, but I call them SMART boards.

AN HON. MEMBER: SMART boards.

MR. K. PARSONS: What are they called? SMART boards.

They were in the classrooms there. I was amazed because I know the old teachers used to have to throw the chalk thing at me a scattered time to get me to be good in class. I said they have none of that there so no one can throw it at them.

How much we have come from in our education system. What we've done in our education, it's amazing – you got hit in the head a couple of times too, I know, Mr. Chair. So did I.

I talked to that teacher who was 28 years teaching children in our education system. She told me the resources that the teachers had were second to none, and opportunities for our children, she had never seen the like. She said just how fortunate they were.

That's a beautiful, little school. It's down in Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove, one of the nicest communities you ever want to go to. Fine people; they're really good people in that area. There are good people all over Cape St. Francis by the way. They're good people there.

I have to really say I've never seen a group of people that support their school so well. They have an auction every year and you go to it. There are years that they made like \$90,000 at their auction and they put it all back into the school.

It's a great school; it's a beautiful, little school. We've done huge investments in that school. The last number of years there was over a million dollars invested in the school: new windows, new siding, new roof. We got the parking lot paved and we made it wheelchair accessible to the playground. Those are some of

the investments that we've made in education. I think they're great investments.

This budget is changing a lot of those things. It's increasing the cap size. It's doing combined classes. There are two or three busing routes. Children are going to have to be on the go a lot earlier in the mornings because of the busing routes that are there. These are little things that you may think maybe they're little, but they're huge to the people that are in the education system, I guarantee you that. They're huge.

Maybe expectations of our education system and what people thought, maybe we built them up too high. I don't think so. I heard the minister say the other day that 75 per cent of the school councils that he spoke to – 75 per cent of them, now that's his figure; I'd say it's higher – are suggesting that full-day kindergarten doesn't go ahead. They'd rather see –

MR. KIRBY: No, the other way around; 75 per cent said go ahead with it.

MR. K. PARSONS: Go ahead? I disagree with you on that one. I guarantee you it's 100 per cent down my way that said the other way around.

MR. KIRBY: Well, whatever.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yeah, and this is what it's doing, so I dispute your figure. I tell you right now I have a petition here from the school council at Mary Queen of Peace. They suggest to delay the implementation of full-day kindergarten to a time the province's financial circumstances improve and restore the programs, teacher allocations and cap size to 2014 levels. That's what I've heard. I'm sure that if you talked to most of your colleagues over there, that's what they've heard.

I don't know where you are, but that's beside the point. If you talk to people in this province and you went and asked them do they believe that full-day kindergarten should come in this time, they would tell you, no. They'd rather see the cap sizes stay where they're to. They'd rather see no combined teaching. Talking to our teachers, they say they're not ready. I spoke to a teacher and she's going to get half a day training online and then there's a one-day consult that

she's going to get. That's what we're going to do to our education system. It is shameful.

The ministers just won't listen to anyone. I know people that have come in and had meetings with them and they say what a waste of time it was. He does not listen to anybody. And he won't. He knows it all. He knows more than our parents. He knows more than the educators in the system, I suppose. Will not listen to the teachers – the head over the teachers, what did he say about the full-day kindergarten? Does he think it should be brought in? No, I don't think –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: The school councils, they don't think? But the minister just said 75 per cent. Well, I'd like to see that –

MS. PERRY: Table it.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yeah, I'd like to see him table that. That would be a nice thing for him to table.

Again, look what this budget's doing; look what it's doing to our education system. We changing the routes on busing when children are going to be out – 56 days of the year they're going to be picked up. They'll be picked up.

MR. KIRBY: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Oh, I got a little nerve struck with the minister over there now. He's chirping over there now. Listen to him. He's chirping. That's good. I like to see when the little Minister of Education goes and does his chirping.

MR. KIRBY: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Good. He's chirping over there now. That's nice to hear. I struck a nerve. That's good. I like to strike that nerve. That's good. It's really nice to hear.

I hope the parents and I hope the teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador can strike the same nerve, because maybe he will listen. Maybe he will listen to them.

MS. PERRY: He won't listen.

MR. K. PARSONS: He won't listen, and it's sad. We live in a society where we're not too big to be able to listen to someone and listen to their suggestions. We should never be that way. We should be, if it's a union or it's teachers, or it's parents, or whoever it is, we should be able to say, well, maybe they're saying the right thing. Maybe I'm not right; maybe there is a better way. What's wrong with that? What's wrong with taking the suggestions from the Opposition parties and having a second look? No, he'll never have a second look.

It wasn't out of the gate and full-day kindergarten was going ahead. Now, they weren't out of the gate either and they had the HST – they were all up on the couch in Ottawa and they had the HST cancelled. Then, two weeks later when they realized, oh well, we shouldn't have gone up on that couch and they came back and then they said, okay, uh-oh, that's a \$100 million mistake we made. Maybe that would have saved our education. Maybe that would have saved the cuts they are doing to education –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have the opportunity to stand once again and speak to Bill 19. Mr. Chair, before I get to what I was going to speak about, I have a couple of more messages from people that they want read out. I just want to pick up where the Member for Cape St. Francis left off, just for a second, and say that certainly I can't speak for the whole province, but I can speak for my area. I can tell you that I have had meetings with school councils in my area and they share the same concerns over full-day kindergarten.

Everybody I've spoken to there is in favour of it, in terms of school councils and teachers and so on I've talked to. They're in favour of it, but there's concern that (a) they're not ready and (b)

they wouldn't be in favour of it if it means that, on the other end, they're going to have resources cut for children with special needs and multigrading and team teaching and the Intensive Core French lottery, some people are referring it to – not at the expense of that.

So, again, I can't speak for everyone. If the minister says that 75 per cent of the schools and the school councils are in favour of it and that's his number, well, I can't dispute the number. I can only say that the school councils I've talked to in my district, we must be in the 25 per cent – like the Member for Cape St. Francis. That's all I can say about that.

Mr. Chair, I have a couple of more messages now that people asked me to read out. This gentleman says: First of all, thanks for bringing our voice into the House. There's just so much that needs to be said, it's difficult to be concise. I hope this isn't too long. You may share my name if you feel inclined; I've no qualms standing by my statements.

We need to reframe the budget debate, shift the focus of our arguments. Instead of debating how to divide our pool of resources, why don't we brainstorm how to plug the leaks in that pool or add more to it? Rising tides raise all ships. Imported goods are exported dollars. Foreign corporate profits are exported dollars. With the recent Viking settlement discovery, our tourism industry could explode, which would be imported dollars, if we played our cards right. Viable alternatives exist.

We know tough times are necessary and we're ready to take the hit for our kids. *Budget 2016* is the opposite of what we were told; short-term gain for long-term destruction. It's not too late. Please swallow your pride, go to the drawing board and earn your seat. It's never too late to stand by your principles and it's never too late to put this province on the mend.

So that was one message I received there. That was on Facebook. This one here was also on Facebook: I see people picking food out of garbage cans in downtown St. John's daily. I wonder how many more will be joining them after this budget. It's time for a reality check and to really look at how people are suffering these days.

There are some people that might say that's an extreme commentary, but that's this individual's commentary. I think it does speak to the fact that we do have people that are low income. Not necessarily people that are in receipt of government services, per se, but people that are minimum-wage earners that are just barely surviving as it is.

If they have to pay that extra 2 per cent on everything and then they've also got to pay on gas and if they have a vehicle, a lot of people – I've had people in my district, I'm sure everyone has, that they are minimum-wage earners. They're barely surviving. They have a second-hand car and they're trying to keep it on the road as best they can and the insurance and the gas and all that is just literally going to drive them under. I think that's what speaks to what this gentleman is saying.

I have another one. This one is coming from rural Newfoundland. This came on Facebook. It says: There was a medical emergency in François. I believe that's the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune's District maybe. There was a medical emergency in François on the South Coast a few days ago. Due to budget cuts to transportation to our last precious outposts, people here had a great deal of difficulty finding a helicopter to come and perform a medevac. The nearest chopper was in Corner Brook and now a helicopter in Conne River is on the cutting block.

I don't know if that's true. Maybe the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune can speak to that when she gets up. That's what this individual is saying that the Conne River helicopter is on the cutting block because of the budget.

The lives of people in rural and remote parts of Newfoundland matter. They matter more than a few dollars and cents. Please read this in the House to trigger some empathy within the Liberal government. We won't resettle and they won't let government drive them out. That was a message that was just received a few minutes ago from somebody in François or at least in that area.

I have many more, but the last one I wrote down – again, I don't know if this one here, if the

person is trying to be humorous or if this is serious, but I'll read it. It's not offensive.

It says: Found out today that McDonald's have raised prices for their chicken nuggets meal. That's what the person said. The person said: Found out today – jeez, it's funny – that they raised the price for a McNuggets meal. One of the first effects I've seen on food.

I don't know if that's someone trying to be funny. I suppose it sounds kind of funny, but that's what the person asked me to read. I guess it does speak to the fact of the concern about food prices and food going up.

MR. LETTO: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: The Member for Lab West, I didn't write this. I can show it to you on my phone here. This is a message sent to me by a person. I didn't write this. I'm not making it up, honest to God. I swear I'm not.

If you're offended by the fact that I'm actually reading messages that people are sending, it's democracy; we're not saying anything offensive and we're certainly not using names. We're not identifying people; we're not doing anything like that. We're avoiding that at all costs. But that's what they said. I see some humour in it. The person didn't have laugh out loud after it or anything, so I'm assuming they're serious. The point they were trying to make is that the cost of that item has gone up and I guess they're saying associated to fuel prices and insurance costs.

It makes sense because if you have a business and now you have to pay more for insurance and 2 per cent on all your supplies for your business, you have to pay more on insurance and then if fuel is part of it, you have to pay for that and everything else. If it's all going up, then the cost of your products have to go up. That would make sense they're going to pass it on. I'm assuming that's maybe what happened here, if that's even true. Or maybe someone is just trying to be funny because of the name of the restaurant. I don't know, but I put it out there.

Mr. Chair, I've only got a minute left. The actual bill that we are speaking to here is the insurance premiums. Of course that's part of the overall tax increase that we're seeing. Of course we

know we're also still in the debate over the levy. I guess for the next number of hours, who knows, maybe days, we'll be continuing to share messages that we're receiving. Some of them are quite serious, some others, maybe there's some humour to it. I don't know. The last one sounded kind of funny, I suppose, at first.

At the end of the day, it's real messages that we're getting from real people. I'd certainly be happy to share the emails and Facebook messages with any Member who wants to see them if anybody thinks for some reason that they're being made up because they're not. I can assure you of that.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Chair. I will take my seat for now.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour and a privilege yet again to rise in this hon. House and speak to this motion here tonight on the floor of the House. Tonight we're debating the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums. I'll have lots of opportunity to speak to that over the course of the next few hours.

I want to pick up on what my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, was just speaking about in terms of health care in rural remote Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair. I spoke about it earlier today as well. I'm gravely concerned about the future of health care in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It's an essential service and one that I think just because we don't live in urban Newfoundland, certainly doesn't mean we're not entitled to decent quality of health care.

My colleague spoke of a very unfortunate incident that we had last week in François whereby an emergency helicopter was required. There was an accident in town; a young girl had been in a serious accident. The call to medical emergency services was made, as it always has been for decades, Mr. Chair.

What they found was that the helicopter from Conne River, which is on the Southwest Coast, was not able to be deployed. We're still trying to

get to the bottom of it, and I have to say I thank the minister. He is looking into it for me. We're waiting to get an update as to where that sits at the moment.

The message that came back to us was that the Conne River helicopter was no longer going to be available for search and rescue for the Southwest Coast. That is a grave, grave, grave concern, Mr. Chair, for the people of these isolated communities. The weather and geography of our coast is such that it could be foggy in Bay d'Espoir and it could be beautiful up in Pasadena or vice versa.

What happened last week was exactly that. They called the chopper from Gander, which was the first one they were able to call. That one couldn't come because of the weather. So they tried to get the chopper from Pasadena. She couldn't come because of the weather.

It was only because there was a dire situation at hand and all of this was just unravelling, by the grace of God we were able to get the chopper from Conne River deployed and this young girl was brought to St. John's for medical care. We fear what is going to happen in the future if this chopper is actually slated for closure, Mr. Chair. We certainly hope and trust that the Liberal government will not go through with that cut because someone's life – there is no price tag you can put on a person's life. No price is too much to save the life of any person under our care in this province.

I'm going to talk as well, Mr. Chair – some of the cuts that were made as a result of the directive to find savings were made with respect to clinic closures. The clinic in Hermitage has closed. I'm receiving a number of emails tonight. They had a meeting last night, 108 people came out to that meeting. It was quite a significant turnout. You never see that kind of turnout at such meetings. Most of them were seniors, very, very, very worried about having to drive 45 minutes to Harbour Breton now because they can't even get something so simple as blood work done in Hermitage.

They've lived without a doctor, Mr. Chair, now for quite some time because their services have already been downgraded. What they were availing of was visitation from a nurse

practitioner from the neighbouring community of Harbour Breton twice per week. Many of them are heart patients, many of them are battling cancer and are required to do blood work on a regular basis.

What has actually happened, what we've seen happen as a result of losing the nurse practitioner who – for the nurse practitioner, one person, to travel to Hermitage versus a thousand people having to drive from Hermitage to Harbour Breton is really no comparison, Mr. Chair. The service was working quite well for the people. They were very disappointed of course to have lost their doctor, but this was working. It was a solution that was keeping everyone happy.

What happened with the cut last week, there is still visitation. Now there was visitation twice per month to my isolated communities. When I say isolated, I mean these communities are only accessible by boat or by chopper, Mr. Chair.

We all lived through the days of forced resettlement with Joey. Forced resettlement is something that I don't think anybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador ever wants to see again. Some people are feeling like this is a form of forced resettlement because they are losing the basic services.

What happened? These visitations got cut from twice per month to once per month. The seniors of Hermitage have to hire somebody – it's going to cost them \$50 bucks to get to Harbour Breton and back – to drive them to Harbour Breton or jump on the ferry for \$2. Harbour Breton is a 45-minute drive down and a 45-minute drive back.

What had happened last week when the nurse was going to Gaultois? Twenty seniors from Hermitage jumped on the ferry. It cost them \$2, and 20 minutes later they were in Gaultois. It creates a problem, though, for the people of Gaultois because they're only getting one visitation once a month. The 200 people in Gaultois are only availing of this service for just one day. Now they have the addition of 20 or so seniors from Hermitage going to Gaultois to get their blood work. It is incredulous to see this happening in today's day and age.

Mr. Chair, I also want to speak about regionalization. I'm worried about the Liberal definition of regionalization because I don't know what it means. I truly hope it doesn't mean we're going to be going backwards.

I'm going to take another example now. In my area I have three sub-regions really – Bay d'Espoir. In my district there's about a population of 8,000. The Bay d'Espoir area has 4,000, the Connaigre area has about 3,000 and the Fortune Bay north shore has about 1,000.

Fortune Bay north shore has its clinic in Mose Ambrose. They feed into the emergency clinic at Harbour Breton. The reason they fed into the Hermitage clinic at Harbour Breton is in the days of the old coastal boat, that was the transportation route. The Harbour Breton hospital was along the coast and it made sense for people to go there.

Today, we have a road network. The coastal ferries are long gone and Harbour Breton is actually going backwards. In the '90s, when the new hospital for the area – the old cottage hospital had been there for decades. When the new hospital was constructed it was built based on the premise that because of the geography of the area and because from Pool's Cove turnoff to Bay d'Espoir, a section known as the high country, is often not traversable. You can't get over it in the wintertime. There is no snow clearing past 6 o'clock in the evening. It was agreed, because you probably wouldn't get to Grand Falls from down over the coast, this centre could service people of the coast but it most certainly can't service the people of Bay d'Espoir, Mr. Chair.

To give you an analogy, it would be like someone in Ferryland needing to go to a doctor. You send him to Trepassey first, and then you turn around and send him back to St. John's. Now, that's not happening. It would never happen under a PC government. I pray to God that it will never happen under a Liberal government as well because it just doesn't make sense. I'd go all the way to the chief cardiologist of Canada if something like that was ever imposed upon us, Mr. Chair, because it would be outrageous. And I trust it won't happen.

Let's get back to the issues of François, Gaultois, Rencontre East, McCallum, all these people – yes, they live in rural, isolated communities and yes, they are deserving of medical care as each and every other single Newfoundlander is deserving of medical care. They're not asking for a doctor. They're not asking to have a clinic from 9-5 Monday to Friday. They're asking for visitation from a nurse practitioner once or twice a month. It's not a lot to ask, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a significant downgrade from even 10 years ago, but it's something that works and something that is acceptable to the people of the province. So I certainly look forward to working with the Central Health facility, working with the minister to at least restore some of these basic services that we have. And in the long run, we do want to see improvements. We are cognizant, however, of fiscal restraints, so we won't be asking for Cadillacs, but we will be advocating on a very regular basis for renewal of the services that we have lost.

So with that, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat and look forward to continued debate as the night goes on.

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

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

I'm so happy to stand to speak to this bill. Now I understand just a little while ago that the Minister of Education had a bit of crisis in the House and that he had a bit of a rant, and I was apparently the target of his rant. I'm hearing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: I'm hearing from people all over about what an inappropriate rant it was and how people were surprised, because they were really concerned for him. They were concerned for his emotional well-being because he seemed to be in a crisis when he went on this incredible rant in the House.

Now, apparently the basis of this rant was he felt that I had said something about war and libraries. Well, Mr. Chair, I can guarantee you that I did not. It's not terminology that I would use. I understand that he wondered how could I talk about war and libraries in the same breath when I haven't been to war or I haven't lost anybody in war, or I don't understand about war and the nerve of me.

I'd like to talk a little bit about my own family's experience and perhaps that will help the Minister of Education to calm down a bit, because I do understand he was in quite a crisis about this. I don't want him to suffer any more pain; particularly I don't want him to suffer any more pain under misconceptions, because again, I'm somebody who does not use war terminology.

I was diagnosed with breast cancer about 15 years ago, and people often talk about cancer and they say the war on cancer. Well, I've never, ever used that terminology because I believe that terminology about war and battle doesn't really do much for us.

So in the honour roll a few days ago when an hon. Member across the floor was going through the honour roll for the Rs, there was an Edward Rodgers who was mentioned, and that is my great uncle. He lost his life in Beaumont-Hamel.

My father grew up in a family that was very economically disadvantaged. In 1949 my father lived downtown with his lovely mother Beatrice and they were very, very poor. They didn't have a stable place to live. They kind of lived from pillar to post. When my father was 11, his father had passed away. His father was a stevedore, worked on the docks here in St. John's. My father, Leo, was the last child in his family. There had been five children. It was just him and his mother. They did lose the house they did own, so they lived from then on from pillar to post.

She took in laundry. Both her and my father cleaned the floors of the Paramount Theatre and the West End Liquor Store at night. They took in laundry. My father worked washing cars as well.

When he turned 13, he stopped going to school. He was a student at Holy Cross and he was a

target, he was bullied by one of the Christian Brothers, and so dad stopped going to school when he was 13 years old. However, his mother didn't know that. Every morning he would set off to school. She thought he was going to school, but in fact a few months of this and finally somebody from the school came to where she was living and said Leo's not in school, what's going on? She found out that, in fact, he was terrified to go to school. That was at the tender young age of 13. So he lost his education because of bullying and because of violence in the school system.

At the tender young age of 16 – in 1949 my father was 16; he said he was 17. Again, he was very poor. His mother was very poor. He was the first group of Newfoundland men to join as Canadians, the Canadian Army, after Confederation. That was in 1949.

A few years ago, I was speaking with a veteran. I was telling him this story. He said: What was your father's army number? I said my father's army number was SN1007. I always used to tease because dad's number was 1007 like he was 007 – a double-knot spy. In fact, Mr. Chair, the veteran told me that because my father's number was 1007, it meant the he was the seventh Newfoundlander and Labradorian to join the Canadian Army.

My father was a career soldier. My father served in Korea. My father was sent to Korea to sweep for mines. When my father came back from Korea, he wasn't quite the same. My father never tolerated bullying. My father never tolerated aggression. My father never tolerated any kind of violence in any way, shape or form.

I grew up on army bases. I'm very familiar with the military. We were proud Newfoundlanders as we moved, as well, our family from pillar to post. We lived in Montreal, in Toronto.

What's really interesting is my mother – when my sister was born, my sister was a year older than me, my family was living in Victoria, BC. My mom and dad were stationed there. Mom came back to Newfoundland and had my sister, Anneliese, in Corner Brook. Then dad decided to get out of the army. However, when he came back home, that was 1955, they couldn't find work. My mother was pregnant with me and

they were living in Corner Brook. They would go between Corner Brook and St. John's and they couldn't find work. So when my mother became pregnant with me, my father joined the army again.

My father was stationed in Japan, I believe, before I was born. I was six months old before my father even met me because he was away serving in the army.

When he came back from overseas then we moved to Montreal where my mother had two infants, lived on the fourth floor of a walk-up apartment building in Park Extension in Montreal. It was an area in Montreal that was very working class, extremely working class, and a lot of immigrants. So there was my mom from Port Saunders with two infants. My father was on recovery in the army, so he was often away. He was working on large vehicles.

My mother had two infants all by herself while dad was away working. If she wanted to go out, she would have to somehow figure out how she would get one of us down the four floors of the building, then she'd have to go back up and get the other of us and go down. She had no family or friends. So we had an interesting life, and we knew about military life.

I grew up – again, we left Montreal, then we moved to Toronto. We moved to Winnipeg. We were in Germany for a number of years. We came back to Canada. I am so familiar with military. I'm familiar with also the effects of military on family lives. I come from a line of family members who've served in wars. My father was also a peacekeeper. He was a UN Peacekeeper, and he was so proud of that.

How often dad would sit us down and talk to us about the importance of peace. He also said that peace was not simply the absence of war. That peace, Mr. Chair, was about making sure that everybody had what they needed. Peace was about human rights. Peace was about making sure people had the food they needed in order to thrive and to survive. Peace was about making sure people had proper education. Peace was about making sure all the social safety nets that many people who lost their lives in war, that all those safety nets were available to all people,

regardless of race, of class, sexual orientation, of economic status.

So we knew; I grew up in a family that knew what extreme poverty was. I grew up in a family that knew the personal effects of war and aggression. I also grew up in a family that knew how important times of peace are globally, in our communities, in our households, in our countries, and in our cities. So I'm proud of that heritage, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order!

MS. ROGERS: I'm very happy to stand and set the record straight.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

Good morning everyone. It's 1:18 a.m. We're almost 24 hours now since this part of the debate started – sorry, 12 hours since the debate started at 1:30 yesterday afternoon. Twelve hours, 24 hours, 36 hours –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Yeah, that's right. They're just hours. It's just time.

While this is Wednesday morning, in the parliamentary calendar it's still Tuesday. In the parliamentary calendar the day you start on is the day it stays until you adjourn and then start a new day in the House. So it's still Tuesday in the House of Assembly even though it's Wednesday morning for everybody outside the four walls of this Chamber.

Tonight we're discussing another budget bill, another piece of legislation to enable the decisions that the Liberal government has made for this year's budget where we've seen the levy for version one and version two. We've seen increases in personal income taxes. We've seen increases in gas tax, which just became effective last week. A fair bit of discussion around the

province, all over the province, on the gas tax last week. People are not really feeling and understanding the impacts of the increase in gas tax until they go fill up their vehicle, since the 2nd of June when the gas tax came in which was last Thursday.

People are now seeing that. They'll see increased deductions from their paycheques on personal income tax. The full HST increase takes effect in July. All of these impacts on people. Of course, the increase in fees and new fees – an increase in fees, about 300 of them are all slowly starting to impact on people.

Of course the next big one is the tax on insurance, which we're talking about tonight, which will take place in July. In the beginning of July, people's insurance policies will increase by 15 per cent because this government has chosen to put taxes back on people's insurance, their home and auto insurance. That includes recreational vehicles. If you have a motorcycle or a second car or any other type of vehicle that you have insurance on, and also your home. We encourage everybody to have insurance on their home.

I was out to Bay de Verde after the fire last month and I met a gentleman out there who was a landlord and owned some properties.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm having a problem hearing the Member speak.

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

I'll try and get a little closer and speak a little louder. Or maybe they'll be a little quieter over there, but thank you, Mr. Chair.

I spoke to a gentleman in Bay de Verde and he owns a number of rental properties. I know many people who have rental properties and put a fair bit of effort in their rental properties. Over a period of time they grow their inventory. Quite often people will grow it over a number of years, grow it very slowly, pay some down, remortgage them and use their investment equity to purchase more.

I know one friend of mine who retired – the first time he retired I think he was 38, because he had bought his first rental property when he was 18 or 19 years old and had a couple units in a home, type of thing. He bought some more and over the 20-year period was able to retire and work full time at his business.

He went back to work actually. He started his own business in construction and development in Conception Bay South after that was done. He works very, very hard and has done very well with it. Anybody who hears me talking tonight who knows him and knows me will know who I'm talking about. He's done very well.

This gentleman I spoke to down in Conception Bay a few weeks ago, he brought up specifically insurance on property because he has a number of rental properties. What he said to me was, for the first time in a decade he has vacancies that he can't fill. He has rental properties, a rental apartment or a unit of some type that he now can't rent. He said this is very worrisome for him because he knows the direction the economy is now going.

Our province is not unique to the economy going in the direction it is. We've seen throughout Canada, particularly impacted by oil producing provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan who's finding the same type of problem as Newfoundland and Labrador, but he's saying now he has vacancies. When he has vacancies he still has a mortgage to pay and he still has bills to pay on those vacancies. He's wrestling with, do I now lower my rental rate to try and fill my vacancies to ensure I have an income or do I hold where they are and allow the vacancies to increase? He's doing the math on that.

One of the aspects that he talked to me about at great length, which was really the basis of our discussion, was how the impact of insurance is going to impact him. In all his rentals, he's in a \$30,000 range for insurance. If you think about \$30,000, that's a \$4,500 extra cost for his insurance on his rental properties.

Now someone may say, well, that could be just one or two rental properties, depending on the value of it and what he charges. So if he has one rental property rented for a year, it might pay his

\$4,500. Well, maybe it's more than that, depending on the cost of it. If he has a vacancy now, or he has two or three or four that are vacant, plus he has to pay the HST on the insurance, he's saying this is not going to work for me.

The other option of course is to liquidate your property, but the problem with that is property values are now dropping. The market has softened significantly. It's becoming what's known as a buyer's market. It's a better time to buy now than it was six months ago or a year ago or two years ago. So his assets, his property is now losing value. He said to me: What do I do? I only have a limited number of options. I can decrease my rental rates. Once he starts that he knows all of his tenants are going to be looking for lower rates as he's providing – or that he'll have to do to try and occupy his vacant units. He said if I keep them where it is, I'm going to have vacancies. He can go to the bank and try and remortgage and extend his credit, lower his cost that way.

He's got staff hired that work for him that do maintenance on his properties. Those costs are going to increase. He's got his own vehicles for his business that is now going to cost him more to operate because of increased insurance costs, because of increased fuel costs.

Of course, his employees who work for him – this is all the conversation I had with him – also have increased costs. If they rent, now they're looking at maybe their rental is going to be higher. They have insurance on their own vehicles. They have additional gas costs, increased income tax. So they're looking to him to say pay me more because I can't afford to work for you anymore. I have to find a higher paying job to pay my own bills. He's saying if I pay them more, now I have less revenue.

None of that works. None of that is going to work. He's throwing up his hands saying what do I do. I'm stuck and I'm jammed up by decisions of this budget.

I couldn't be more sincere in expressing what his concerns were and sharing what his concerns are. He's not unique. A businessman, entrepreneur trying to create employment, trying to drive the economy, and now he is facing

difficult and challenging times that he's going to have to try and deal with, either liquidate assets, rental properties that now have a decreasing value and are harder to sell.

On the Avalon right now, I think there are about 3,500 property listings. I stand to be corrected. I'll double check the number and maybe when I get up a little bit later, I can talk about it some more. I think the number as well that I heard recently from a real estate agent is that 500 of those listings have never been looked at. Nobody has gone in to look at those listings, have never been viewed or visited.

Now again, Mr. Chair, I apologize because this was a conversation with a person who's involved somewhat in the industry and shared these numbers. I stand to be corrected on them. I haven't done any fact checking on them. I make it quite clear that this is information being provided to me and there is a risk it may be inaccurate.

The conversation with the gentleman was so intriguing to me because you could see the sincerity in his eyes; you could hear the sincerity in his voice. He's a family man, of course. He's an older man. He's a mature, older adult who's more in the retirement years than anything else. These are his investments for the rest of his life and for his family and so on and he's left with this struggle.

Mr. Chair, that's one story I wanted to share with you. Tonight on our Opposition Newfoundland and Labrador Facebook page that we have posted up on Facebook, people are sharing with us their stories. They're asking us to share in the House of Assembly.

I brought a number of them here with me tonight. We're compiling them as the night goes on. We'll be standing here in the House and sharing them with the Members opposite because people feel that their message is not being heard by some Members of the Liberal Party who have not been listening to what the people have to say.

We're going to be using our time through the night to share some of those stories that the people of the province are asking us to share in the House, so Members and people listening at

home can have the opportunity to hear what other people of the province have to say about this budget and about the decisions that the government is making. I look forward to that chance to speak again later.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to get up once again and speak to Bill 19. This is the insurance tax bill. I just want to pick up a little bit on what the Member for Paradise, the Leader of the Official Opposition just said. He makes very good points, or the person who he's spoken to makes very good points. I've heard it from business people, small-business people and so on in my district and people that I know as well, and it's absolutely true.

One of the things that, to some degree, has been lost in the whole debate – and I'm glad it's coming out now – is the trickle-down effect that these measures are going to have. Not only are people going to pay more in terms of the levy, HST, gas, insurance and all of the various fees to register your car or your driver's licence – or if you decide to go to Butter Pot Park or something, you pay more for a day pass. If you get a moose licence you have to pay more for that. The list goes on and on and on. It's like everywhere you turn around you're getting slammed with taxation and fees, and of course the 2 per cent on everything you buy.

In addition to that there's another, I'm going to call it, the hidden tax, for lack of a better term, and that is the additional cost of goods and services that people are going to have to pay because of that trickle-down effect that the Member for Topsail – Paradise just referenced that time. Not only am I, as an individual, going to have to pay more for gas and insurance, so are businesses.

If I own a business and I have to insure my property or if I have a bunch of vehicles – if I had a lawn care company for argument's sake,

like the Weed Man or something, I have my truck with the Weed Man on it and I have like a fleet of trucks, maybe eight or 10 trucks and all the equipment and whatever, well, I have to pay insurance on all those vehicles. So that means my business's insurance is going to go up; the fuel for those trucks is going to go up. All of the, I don't know, rakes, hoses, fertilizer and all that stuff that business is buying and supplies, whatever, that's all going up.

Do you know what that means, Mr. Chair? If all those costs are going up, what do you think the business owner is going to do? Do you think the business owner is going to suck all that up and say, that's all right, I'm going to absorb all those costs? We all know that's not going to happen. In a lot of cases, they can't because their business wouldn't survive. In a lot of businesses the profit margins are not very high anyway in a lot of cases. In some cases they are and good for them, but there are a lot of businesses out there that their profit margins aren't high.

If they want to maintain a decent profit margin, which is why people go into business to begin with, which is understandable – I mean profit is not a dirty word. That's why you do it. There's a lot of value that comes out of people who have businesses in terms of employment and paying taxes into the system. It's all good, but people also expect to make a decent return on their investment of time and capital that they put into a business. If all of these expenses are going to go up as a result of this budget, then they're going to pass it on. They're going to have to. They're going to have to pass all these additional costs on to the consumer.

So now not only as a citizen am I going to be hit with the levy, the HST, the gas tax, the insurance tax and every fee I can think of, I'm also going to get hit by increased costs to every service I avail of or products that I buy, besides the tax because the businesses are going to be forced to raise the price of their products or raise the price of their services. Then I'm going to be paying tax on the high – now I'm going to be paying tax on the higher costs.

If something costs me \$100 today, widget X – we'll call it a widget or a service, whatever, and it cost me \$100 a day, now all of a sudden that business is forced to charge me \$120 or \$130.

I'm paying now tax on the \$130, not the \$100. So I'm paying \$30 more for the product or service and then I'm paying tax on the higher amount. As a consumer, I'm getting nailed, on top of all the taxes.

That's a very, very important point and I'm glad that the Member for Topsail – Paradise, in speaking with his constituent or acquaintance or whoever it was he referenced there, raised that. I think it's been alluded to before, but I think that's something that hasn't really come to the forefront because we've been focusing on the actual taxation measures and the impact the taxes are going to have on us as individuals. The part that we haven't been focusing on that I think we really need to focus on as well is that we have another hidden tax beyond that, and that is the increased costs of goods and services that we're going to have to pay as a result of businesses being charged these taxes and having to pass them on to us. That's a huge one.

When people are talking about the fact that they did their calculation and they said as a result of the HST, the gas, the insurance and all that it's going to cost me an extra – some people said it's going to cost me an extra \$2,000, some \$3,000, some people said \$5,000 or \$6,000, it depends on your income and your circumstance. One of the things that's not being factored into that whole equation, which needs to be factored and added on, is the fact that all the goods and services and everything that you purchase, that's going up. That's another additional cost.

I think that's a very, very important point that people need to get their head around. To be quite honest with you, it's not something that – certainly when I've been talking to people and we've been sort of doing some calculations and stuff like that, that's not one that I factored into it. The more I think about it and really size it up, that is a significant one. That is a real significant one. That's a point that should not be lost in this debate.

Regardless of the type of business that someone has, pretty much every business that's out there is going to have insurance. Many of them, like I said, are going to have vehicles or whatever involved in the business that gas is going to be a factor. Many of them are buying supplies and now they're going to have to pay that extra 2 per

cent on the HST on their business supplies. It's a real compounding thing. It's all compounding and we need to look at that compounded number. Who knows what other things are there because that's just something – maybe a lot of people already thought about this and factored it in, but not people I've talked to. It's not something I considered, so I'm wondering how many other things, as we delve into the debate, how many other hidden taxes, I wonder, are there besides that, that maybe we're just not thinking about right now. That's a biggie, no doubt about it.

I have a couple of messages I'm going to read now continuing on with it. I have one because I only have time probably for one. This is a lady who sent me a message on Facebook. She wanted to get it in there. She said: The budget is a heavy burden on middle-class people with children, people without children, people with vehicles, elderly, school kids, education and I could go on and on.

I have to agree with her. There's no doubt about it that this is going to be a real burden. I know – and I've said this and many times it's been said – and we all know that we're in a tough financial situation as a province, but we're making it tougher. We're making it tougher on people.

As we said, it's pointless to save the – it's a very noble cause to say we're going to save the province from financial ruin. I'm not sure that we're that bad, to be honest with you. I know we're in bad shape, but I kind of think that might be even a little bit exaggerated. I'm not saying we're not in tough shape, but there's no point in saving the province from financial ruin and at the same time financially ruining everybody that lives in the province. That's a point that needs to be made.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to speaking again.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferrysland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise tonight to have a few words in the debate related to Bill 19. A

number of hours now we've gone through on this particular bill related to tax on insurance.

As you know, prior to this sitting today where we dealt with other legislation, prior to that this morning, last night, yesterday afternoon we were on Bill 14, the levy, another component of *Budget 2016* which adjourned debate earlier today as we move from Monday in terms of House of Assembly day into Tuesday. Today, we adjourned the debate on the levy and went into regular proceedings for today. For those at home, after we did particular legislation today, the motion was called for Bill 19, the tax on insurance. That's the one we're debating here today. We certainly still have the levy. The levy was adjourned. That's still out there. I certainly look forward to when that comes back to the House and to continue debate on that particular motion as well.

This one is related to, as I said, the tax on insurance. This is related to a money bill and part of the budget. We're free to talk about a wide range of issues related to the budget. In terms of the filibuster and what we've been doing here, there has been so much information communicated to us as Members. All Members of the House I'm sure with regard to issues with the budget, concerns, ideas, how we move forward, all of those components to it is certainly a balanced approach because we know we often disagree.

As elected officials, there are ideas that we have individually or there are ideas ideologically we have, ideas related to party platform that we often discuss with constituents and people. Oftentimes we disagree, but at the end of the day, we express that and we show our way forward, but respectfully. Certainly, respectfully, we listen and we debate. It's important we do listen because when someone has concerns, it's important you do listen and hear them out. At the end of the day, you may find a consensus or you may not, but it's important as elected officials that we do listen, we do engage, we do discuss and we're open to new ideas because that's what learning is all about.

Life is certainly an experience of learning and you never stop learning. You continue to learn by engaging with people, engaging in discussions, reading and open to new ideas.

Certainly, myself as an elected official, getting in close to 10 years, I have many experiences with many people I represent and those that I don't in terms of various activities and ideas you get and how we move forward.

You use that in your daily activity in regard to being an elected official, whether you're in government as a minister or whether you're in Opposition promoting public policy, dissecting public policy, making sure we do things in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Here we are debating the budget. Anything in a budget, the best way to describe it and look at it is, how does it affect people? What's the intent? What's the direction? Is there a sound plan? Is the result, at the end of the day, from a budget that it's going to put us in a better place?

With some of this and what we've seen over the past number of weeks and number of months, there are huge questions in regard to all of that. Many see there is no plan. There is no direction here that is balanced or gives a good approach to some of the challenges we're facing.

That's a concern because any government that comes in they need to make choices. We hear on the other side, we had to do this and we had to do that. Well, you had to do something, no doubt. Everybody knows that, but the issue is the choices you make and collectively and cumulatively what they mean for the people of our province, and what it means as we move forward over the next number of years.

We get a lot of inquiries from people. I had a note here I wanted to share in regard to an email I received from a young man. He indicated to me he wasn't from my district. He just wanted to share with me his thoughts in regard to the Liberal's budget. He said he wasn't a constituent of mine, but did have some thoughts on the actions of the Premier and the Minister of Finance and government in regard to the budget that came out. He said he was graduating from high school. He's from a low-income family. In September he'll be moving to Winnipeg to attend university.

Some synopsis or some ideas in regard to the Liberal budget, a quick brush of what he thought

of it. He said under the Liberal budget I will no longer be eligible for provincial student grants. This will be a heavy financial burden on myself and my family, as I will be forced to take on more debt than I previously had expected to do.

So that's directly affecting a young Newfoundlander and Labradorian when they're starting out at a very important time in their lives in regard to post-secondary education and building opportunities for them here in this particular province.

I know, as being part of the previous administration, we continue to freeze tuition at Memorial, and also transferred over a period of time to grants as opposed to loans. That's under the student loan program, the provincial portion. That was significant money to invest, but we thought it was very significant to do that because that allows to give our youth a start. At graduation time they have less debt to pay back. They're more inclined to begin a life with their first job of investing in a home or other things that begins when they start their families. So that's very important. That's the logic, obviously, behind that.

He also goes on to say the budget will increase the class size cap for grades four to 12. This worries me because my sister who will start grade seven in the fall is already in a class of 28. What can she expect through junior high?

That goes through the whole – while he's looking at post-secondary, his concern is for a sibling and how it's going to affect them in some education changes and budget cuts in regard to the classroom and that his young sister, what experience she has in that classroom in regard to the learning environment. We all know the learning environment for anybody is extremely important and we have to make sure that's conducive to learning.

He goes on to say: The budget will eliminate the Home Heating Rebate Program, something my family has relied on in years past as we already struggle to make ends meet.

So it's important to go back to remember that this is an individual who admits he comes from a low-income family, and certainly very attentive to expenditures in their family and how they can

make ends meet. He talked about the Home Heating Rebate and that not being there for the family.

The budget would eliminate government funding to the Jumpstart program, something that our family has relied on to put my sister through Girl Guides of Canada program. Something she is so passionate about and something we simply cannot afford.

That's something, in terms of recreation or other activities, that we maybe haven't talked a lot about, but is extremely important in regard to families and youth and access to programming, recreational activities and activities outside of the home, outside of the classroom that builds the character and the confidence of our youth. These programs – I'm quite familiar with this one – are extremely important.

When we look at tomorrow – well I guess a stronger tomorrow, as we heard about, we need to make sure that our youth get every opportunity. That means both from a physical perspective and from an academic perspective. Programs like this that you're cutting funding for makes no sense. It's needed and it provides great assistance to our youth.

This gentleman goes on to talk about the 15 per cent HST. He clearly says he was opposed to it when our government had announced it. So that's what I'm talking about in terms of various views. We respect that. It's another reason why he said he voted for the Liberals, but he said this will put financial strain on our already financially strained family.

We talked a number of times about the total of all of these taxes and fees and everything we've done. That's the issue here; it's so much, so quick, so soon. In this particular case – and he outlines it – it has a devastating effect collectively on what it's going to do to this average family and what they need to live.

He goes on to say this budget will raise the gas tax to 16.5 cents per litre – which we're already seeing – something my family will be sure to feel first hand. That's something that you need. Whether you're employed or just daily activities to get services, that is really something that is

devastating to the pocketbook and the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Again, it's one of those that collectively is really just ripping money out of people's pockets at a time where we have a slowing economy or a transitioning economy related to some of the resource-based industries. We need people to have dollars in their pockets to be able to spend, to continue to sustain the economy and continue to move the economy.

The last one he mentioned is he refers to it as the baby bonus that was made available by our administration some years ago in regard to young families, assisting them in regard to the birth of a child and the significant dollars put into that. He's concerned about that. So he's concerned about a whole range of issues that collectively really negatively impacts us.

I'm looking forward, as the debate goes on over the next number of days, to coming back and discussing more areas which is devastating to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Before I get into my debate tonight, I'd like to start off by thanking the gentleman who dropped off some pizza for us over here on this side of the House tonight.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: For this side of the House. We also had someone drop off some coffee and donuts. So we greatly appreciate it. Thank you so much.

I have to say, Mr. Chair, it's the encouragement and the support we get from the people that keeps us going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: It gives us high energy to keep up the good fight, Mr. Chair, because we speak on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and

Labrador that this government seems to have completely forgotten all about since November 30.

Tonight, we find us here in the House debating Bill 19, as my hon. colleague just spoke about. It's the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums. This time I'm going to talk about how that impacts the private sector in our province and what I think are going to be severe repercussions and more job losses as a result of this devastating austere Liberal budget.

I spoke this afternoon; I had a conversation with a gentleman who operates a courier service. He's not long back to Newfoundland, came back to re-establish his life here. This is where he's from and this is where he wants to be, but he doesn't know if he can continue to survive because as a courier operator of course his gas has just increased significantly. His insurance rates are going to be going through the roof because you're going to see this 15 per cent additional tax on insurance, but the other thing this budget did was impose a new tax on insurance companies.

What do people think is really going to happen with that? That's going to translate into higher fees because the insurance company is going to have to recoup their money somewhere. So they're going to probably, in all likelihood, increase their rates.

We're going to see an increase in the price of insurance. Then we're going to see, on top of that, an additional 15 per cent tax, Mr. Chair. Then they're going to go and they're going to register their vehicle and they're going to have an increase in fees for that. Every single fee they go to pay, they're going to see pretty much an increase and they're going to have 50 new ones they never even had this time last year.

As my hon. colleague from Ferryland just spoke about, what are the hidden taxes? What are the hidden cuts in this budget that we're still uncovering and that we still don't know about?

The fear that we are losing helicopter services was a new one that popped out of nowhere last week. How many more surprises are we going to be getting like that as the full details of this budget are unveiled throughout the course of the

next few months, Mr. Chair. We all are bracing ourselves for budget number two come the fall. None of us really knows what budget number two contains.

I have to say, Mr. Chair, that it's very frustrating because Members opposite get up and pontificate about a spending problem, yet they increased spending by \$400 million to the bottom line. There's a word we're not allowed to use in this House so I won't use it, but it reminds me – you're speaking out of both sides of your mouth is what's happening. If you really think spending is a problem then why are you continuing to increase spending, really.

It's really hard to understand, but certainly this entire budget is hard to understand, Mr. Chair, because the Liberals campaigned on a promise of no taxes and no cuts. Lo and behold, here we are today seeing cut after cut, tax after tax after tax after tax after tax, unlike anything we've ever seen.

It's absolutely devastating to see all the progress we've made as a people and as a province over the last 10 years become unravelled in one fell swoop. I think the damage, the long-term repercussions of this budget, I think it's going to take us years to rebuild. I really do.

All of that being said, Newfoundlanders are strong, we're vibrant and we're resilient. We will resist this budget. The people will speak in the next election and we will restore prosperity back to Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair. So hang in there. We're certainly ready to keep up the good fight.

I thank all of you out there as fellow citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, for the support and encouragement that you give us. It's because we care that we're here in this House of Assembly all night last night, all night tonight, as long as it takes, Mr. Chair, to get the Liberal government to listen to the voice of the people.

We have numerous emails, and many of them yet to be read into the record, Mr. Chair. They tell real life stories of people who are genuinely impacted. We're not making this stuff up. This is the people's voice direct from the people's hearts. We're bringing them to the floor of the people's House in hopes that at some point

somewhere the Liberal administration will listen to the people that they represent, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to go back now and speak about the insurance bill and how it's going to impact the businesses across the province, things like courier services, taxi drivers. Really, any type of service where vehicles are required, that's going to translate into increased costs.

As my colleague for Mount Pearl – Southlands talked about just a few minutes ago, all of these taxes are going to translate – because the businesses have to recoup these additional costs somewhere, they're going to translate into higher costs of goods and services. Our groceries; food in Newfoundland and Labrador has never been cheap.

I have a brother who lives in Ontario. When he comes home to Newfoundland in the summertime he marvels at how much we pay here for food. We're already disadvantaged by the fact that we're an island community and we have to pay freight on everything that's imported into the province. Now with this additional hike in gas, of course what's going to happen, that's going to translate into additional costs for our food once again, Mr. Chair.

In a time when we're trying to encourage healthy populations, healthy eating, which in the long term will reduce health care costs, we're actually going backwards. We are preventing people from being able to actually eat healthier because they will have no choice but to buy whatever is on sale, Mr. Chair. It's absolutely terrible this day and age to see that happening.

I'm very pleased that we can go out and be able to catch a fish for ourselves now this summer, but the increased price of gas – on the one hand we have more availability of days, but on the other hand it's now going to cost us a heck of a lot more to go out and try and catch that cod to feed our families, Mr. Chair. It's all very, very devastating indeed.

In a time of downturn like we're seeing globally because of the price of oil, it's not just Newfoundland and Labrador that is enduring this challenge, it is all of Canada, it is all of North America and it is all of the globe. Everyone else deals with it by introducing a

stimulus package. Even their federal cousins are introducing a stimulus package.

What happens in Newfoundland and Labrador? We get an austerity budget. I'm not even going to say that it's right of centre. I think it's extreme right of centre. I don't even think the Reform Party in a time of fiscal restraint would bring in something as severe and austere as this budget that we have here. It is absolutely extreme. We should be seeing stimulus.

Just look at what Trudeau is doing. Take a lesson. Take a page out of Trudeau's book in terms of stimulating the economy.

I love to hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs talk about the money he's going to be getting from the federal government, that he's going to be able to invest in water and sewer and projects that are going to help Newfoundland and Labrador because his federal cousins got it right. In a time of economic downturn, you need to stimulate the economy.

By investing in the infrastructure, you create the jobs in the short term so that in the long term you've created that environment where the private sector can take over and create the long-term sustainable jobs, Mr. Chair. That is the environment we're looking for in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the environment we need in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Before I sit down – I'm running out of time. Once again, thank you to the people. Thank you for your support and encouragement, and together, hopefully, we will make this Liberal government stand up and listen to your voice and to what you, as a people, are asking for.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm happy again to stand. I'm continuing to hear from people who are so concerned about the emotional outpouring from the minister

responsible for Education and how vehement he was. People were really concerned for his health because apparently he was in quite emotional distress when he got up and tried to attribute something to me that I never said. The thing is, unfortunately, I wasn't in the House to be able to hear this. I had stepped out of the House for a few hours, to get a few hours' sleep, because as you know we've been at this now for pretty well, close to 48 hours.

Mr. Chair, we're doing this filibuster because we believe it is so important. The people across the province feel they have not been listened to. They feel they have been, in some ways, duped. People voted for this government. They voted for this government in good faith. They voted for this government based on some very clear, unambiguous promises. Those promises have been broken, one after another after another after another, and the people are angry.

Many people are surprised. They are astounded this has happened and in such a short period of time, because of promises this government made of no job cuts, no raises in the HST. What was the other really strong, third one? Very clear third promise? That will come back to me, Mr. Chair.

The people are quite upset, so it's important that we do this. This is a democratic tool that we're using, a tool in our democratic process that allows us to ensure the voice of the people comes to the House. All of us are elected to represent the people who have elected us in our districts, so that's what we're doing here this evening.

For some people, they figure, well really, what's going on here and what are you talking about. People are telling us that they're really concerned about the budget. We have a certain amount of latitude. Because this is a money bill that we are debating, we have a certain amount of latitude which allows us to speak to the issues that are raised by our constituents.

That's really important because sometimes because of the very strict and prescribed rules of how we conduct our business here in the House, sometimes it's hard to be able to carve out space to be able to speak about some of the issues that are directly affecting the lives of the people in

our province, the lives of people in our districts. To be able to use this time to really address those very concrete issues is very important.

I would like to get back to the rant by the Minister of Education against me. I'm not quite sure why he did that and I'm not sure why he would do that when I wasn't in the House either. I would think that if he wanted to be able to teach me something or correct me that he would have done it while I was in the House, rather than when I wasn't here.

I would assume that any of us, if we have anything to say to one another or about one another, that we would have the courtesy to do that directly to that person, whether it be in this House or outside this House. Unfortunately, I wasn't here to see that, but people keep telling me about how really amazing it was and astounding the level of aggression, the level of emotion.

People were really concerned about how over the top it seemed to be. I'm looking forward to watching it online. I'm sure I'll be able to get it online and see for myself. I look forward to that to hear what exactly the Minister of Education was trying to say to me or about me in my absence. I have been here for most of these past 48 hours, so there was ample time for him to be able to do that when I was in the House.

My understanding is that his concern was again about my lack of respect for people who have served in the military. I was very happy to be able to talk about my own family situation. My father was a career soldier and I grew up on army bases.

I am so lucky, Mr. Chair, because Branch 1 of the Canadian Legion is in the District of St. John's Centre – St. John's Centre, smack dab in the heart of the city and Branch 1, smack dab right in the heart of St. John's Centre. It is an incredible place.

Last week, on June 2, I stood and for my private Member's statement I talked about the Legion, Branch 1, in my district. I attend a lot of functions there, not because I'm obliged to but because I want to. I have a great relationship with a number of the veterans who are there. I also have a great relationship with a number of

the people who are actively serving in the military now, whether it's in the air force, the army or the navy. I am a proud member of the Legion and I happily attend their functions.

Many people know and I know that the hon. Member for Bonavista had also talked about the Legionnaires from all over the country are going to be meeting here in St. John's. That's for the 46th Dominion Convention. It's going to be at the Convention Centre. I'm really looking forward to attending parts of that.

Our Legion, Branch 1, is going to be hosting a few events for this convention. So there will be members of the Legion, some military folks, some civilian folks who will be coming from all over Canada.

The thing about the Legion, Branch 1, in St. John's Centre is that it has become a home for many seniors. They work really hard to provide services for seniors in St. John's Centre. There are also a number of people who are members who don't live in St. John's Centre, but are members of this particular Legion.

Our Legion provides a lot of activities. They're very committed to the well-being of veterans. I've had a number of veterans in my district who have called me because they have problems with housing, because they have problems with home care, because they're living in extreme poverty, because they're living in loneliness and isolation, often as a result of poverty, not having the money for transportation, not having the money to do certain kinds of activities. I'm able to call our Legion and they provide all kinds of supports. They do home visiting. They make sure people have enough to eat.

I remember there was one family, a couple, and the gentleman was a veteran of the Korean War. He and his wife had moved into an apartment building. Their pension was very meagre. The apartment building had bed bugs. So his mattress was full of bed bugs.

They didn't have the money. They were using a can of raid and spraying their mattress for bed bugs. It was making them really sick because they didn't have the money (a) to hire an exterminator; and then (b) they didn't the money

to buy a new mattress. Also the bed bugs had spread to their chesterfield.

I was able to call the Legion. Members of the Legion reached out. They went and helped them. They actually helped them move and they got them new furniture. The Legion does a lot of good work.

The other things that the members of our Legion do are provide crucial support and resources to our veterans, those who are currently serving our country in ways. They're very deeply caring and they do very direct work.

The president is John Grenning. It's very interesting because John's cousin, Charlie, was the previous president. Charlie passed away this past year. That left a big hole because Charlie was an incredible volunteer at the Legion and did a lot of good work.

It takes a lot of volunteer work to keep the Legion going because the Legion does a number of wonderful things. They host a seniors' night twice a month. Again, they know the isolation and loneliness that so many seniors experience, often because of poverty.

The Ladies Auxiliary is led by Pat Harding. She's an extraordinary woman. They cook up meals for people. They have dart nights. They have card nights. They have bingos. They raise money and the money that they raise is not just to keep the Legion going, but to reach out and to help seniors who are part of the Legion.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to get up again. What I'd like to do the next time I get up is talk about seniors and how this budget is impacting seniors. The people at the Legion know how the budget is impacting seniors.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand once again and speak to Bill 19. Continuing on with our theme of public participation in this debate, I have a couple of more text messages from a gentleman I want to

read into the record. This one is directed toward the Minister of Education.

What he says is that a child gifted with the ability to learn with ease in a multi-level classroom will be drastically drawn backwards. An example, a child in grade three, in a three-to-four class, will learn not only the grade three, but also learn most, if not all, of the grade four. What is that child to do in grade four? Think about the impact and loss of interest that child will go through.

I guess he's talking about an exceptional child who's doing the multigrade will pick up on the grade four as well as the grade three material and then when they get to grade four, they already know most of it and they'll lose interest and so on. So that's an interesting perspective.

The other comment he makes about education, he says: Since when did education become about anything but giving the children the best education we can? Our education system is a sub-standard daycare and it's time to change our education system so it works to give children the best education we can. There is a better way, and all-day kindergarten is the opposite of what our education system needs. Can someone look at the best education systems around the world, top-ranked systems and educated kids?

Invite the Minister of Education to contact the Minister of Education in Finland – why try to do the opposite of what the world's smartest kids system do, and report back to the House with his findings? We need to think outside the old cardboard box that we have lived in for decades.

So, again, the point he his making is that according to this gentleman, at least, he seems to have done some research. I can't confirm the research; this is just what he's providing. He's saying that Finland has the smartest students and, therefore, why wouldn't we be looking at the education system of other school systems if they're working better and the results are better. We talk all the time about the results, like the poor math scores and other things, and it should be about results. So if there are other countries and places in the world that are getting better results, then the point is whether it's Finland or wherever it's too, if there are places that are getting better outcomes, then why would we not

be studying the system in which these outcomes are occurring and potentially changing our system to coincide with that.

I think that's the point he's making and it's a good point. I can't argue if it's one way or the other if it's the best system, I haven't seen it, but it is a good point he makes.

The other point he wanted to make – I guess he heard. He had made the comment about the Labrador link and the fact that even if we spent \$750,000 and did the study and it said that it was a good idea – and then, okay, let's say it's a good idea. Now, if they say it's going to cost us a billion dollars or whatever it would cost, where are we getting the money to pay for it?

The point is what's the point in doing a study if, at the end of the day, the study comes back it's a good idea, but we have no money to do it. Wouldn't you not wait until you're at a point where before we do a study we know that we have some money to actually implement a plan, as opposed to taking the study and putting it on the shelf for another five or 10 years before we have money to do anything. By that time you'll need to do a new study because the technology would have changed, the cost would have changed. It's a valid point.

When I raised that earlier at his request, the Member for Lab West said, let the private sector do it. I'm assuming he heard that because he says here he just wanted me to pass along: The private sector, laugh out loud. Do you think someone with the money to build a bridge or tunnel would do it here? Let's get realistic, a private company would have to charge more than anyone could afford to recoup the cost. Why hasn't a private company done the study? Because the past government already did a study, did they look at it? Or does the government have a minimum amount they have to get into that engineering company. Tell them to not insult my intelligence.

Anyway that was his commentary. I guess he's saying that a private company is not going to do it, so that's really not an option in his view. I'm only reading the comments that I'm getting.

I have many other comments and emails. I'm going to get to them as we proceed throughout

the night. We've got four minutes to go here now. Seeing as how we're talking about the insurance and the 15 per cent on insurance, I think it's important to stick to that for now anyway.

Mr. Chair, 15 per cent on insurance may not seem like a lot to some people. We can talk about and we have talked about the cumulative effect of all of the taxation fees on people. There's no doubt it's going to be huge, but even for somebody who is low income and they're not going to be into all these cumulative fees, per se, because they wouldn't have to pay a levy and so on, but if you have someone who is on a very low income and perhaps they have a second-hand vehicle, whatever – I know that Members here in the House, all Members, have people. Despite the fact that I have, in my district, a significant number of people who are in the upper end of the pay scale, they're not what people would consider rich but they are in that upper end. A lot of teachers and nurses and RNC officers, RCMP, all those type of things, professionals, I have a lot of those, but I also have people who are the lower end of the pay scale.

Actually, my district has more co-op housing – I don't have a lot of social housing. The only social housing, I think, I would have would be the apartment building there, Pearlgate Apartments have people, and of course there are some rent supplements, which we all have. I don't have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units in my district.

Now, the Member for Mount Pearl North has a bunch, but I don't. I do have a lot of co-op –

MR. P. DAVIS: I have six.

MR. LANE: The Member for Paradise has six he says.

I know I have a lot of co-op housing. The vast majority of them are working people but many of them have lower incomes. A lot of them might work at minimum wage or a lot of them are better than minimum wage, but they're not high wages. They're just getting by. A lot of them can't afford to actually own their home or they choose not to have their own home. That happens too, but they're just getting by.

A lot of these people wouldn't have to pay the levy because of their income. That's good. But if they're only just getting by now and only making ends meet, only keeping the wolf away from the door, I think is a good Newfoundland expression, then these extra costs, if they have that second-hand car because they can't afford a new one, now that extra insurance cost, that extra 15 per cent, means a lot to them. The gas means a lot to them. The driver's licence going up means a lot to them and the registration. Everything means a lot to them.

I've heard some Members talk oh, it's only \$10 a month or \$20 a month. It's only a gym pass. I think one Member was talking last night about someone had to pay the levy and it worked out to the cost of a gym pass.

Well, there are some people who don't have a gym pass. They can't afford a gym pass. That extra \$20 here and \$10 there – I read a couple of emails last night about someone who was talking about \$10 here and \$5 here. That is literally for some people – I know everyone doesn't necessarily get that, but for some people that is a struggle.

If you go out to the store and someone is selling some tickets in the mall or something, \$5, no big deal. Here's \$5 worth of tickets, here's five bucks for this. Someone is having a car wash, here's 10 bucks for the car wash. Or you buy a hot dog at a fundraiser, here's \$5 for a hot dog. There are some people that just don't have that \$5, they don't have that \$10. Every cent is critical to them.

This is going to have a devastating impact on some people. It's important that we keep that in mind.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

Thank you for recognizing me because it's a big struggle to get up here some days and some nights. Everyone wants to get up and have their chance. You have to jump up out of your seat and race everyone else up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. P. DAVIS: What are you laughing at over there? Do you want to get up? I'll sit down if you want to get up.

I don't know what hour this is now. I'm sure someone is keeping track. I thought someone said earlier 37 hours. I remind everybody that's listening at home to go into our Facebook page. If they have a note they want delivered here in the House, we'll be glad to pass it on, Opposition Newfoundland and Labrador. We're getting lots of people who are putting notes and sending us messages.

I've got one here I'm going to read right now that was sent to us, a direct message from a citizen of the province. It says: We started a small business last year – and she names the business. I won't name the business, but it's a small seafood business. My husband hasn't been able to take a salary so we're relying on just my salary to get by. I'm a public servant.

There's so much uncertainty as it is when you have a small business. With the economy the way it is, people have less disposable income to buy our products. We're struggling. The price of salmon is going sky high with the cost of transportation. We have so much invested in this so we can't give up and our products are awesome – and I'm sure they are.

We are struggling to become known. We don't sleep, worrying about making ends meet. What happens if I lose my job? We have children we need to feed and clothe and who want to play sports. Do you know how expensive that is? I think most people can understand that. Do I discourage my children?

We're middle class, but there is very little left after the bills are paid. We don't own anything fancy. While I realize that our province is in trouble, why not spread the plan over a longer time frame. How in the name of God are we going to do it? That's the message earlier today from a lady who wanted that shared here in the House.

I've got another message here from our Facebook page. It says: I make just over \$50,000, great money – not. I have two kids. Not

so long ago this province encouraged the growth of the population. Now I have a levy, I have taxes on books. I have gas prices gone up. I guess I won't rush to bring my child to sports; I can't afford the gas to bring him around. This system is so messed up. I could go on and on.

I'm married, I get no help. My husband is currently laid off because with the markets the way they have been, there have been major cutbacks. Just think right now I have a mortgage, I have light bills. I'm trying to get myself out of debt from school and, yes, \$50,000 may seem like a lot but, clearly, it isn't. Even \$75,000 isn't a lot anymore.

My kids drink a carton of milk a day. That alone is \$4 a day. That isn't counting the daycare I need to have my oldest in. I can't afford for the second one. Lucky I have a family, but I don't want to place two of them on them.

My insurance just increased. The cost to register my car just increased. Sometimes I just want to sit and cry. It's a scary world out there right now. Sometimes I look at my two boys, I'm scared for them. If this is what we are faced with now, what will happen?

You closed all the libraries. At least there were a lot of free things I could take my kids to there. I'm so mad at the Liberals. I'm so happy I can say I didn't vote for them. Obviously, that's an upset citizen of the province.

Another one here says: I don't think the Liberal Party is competent enough to give the leadership to our province, seriously. They have implemented a budget, but not a strategic plan. They have not considered the negative implications this budget will have on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Put people before politics. That's a posting that was posted earlier tonight as well.

Mr. Chair, I just want to comment on that one for a minute. That's a comment that we hear quite often from people in the province, and I've heard from people. Members opposite – the Minister of Finance likes to use the use word "ratepayers" and "tax filers," that's the word. She sometimes will refer to tax filers and how many tax filers there are in the province.

Someone said to me the other day, you know, I'm one of those tax filers, but I'd much rather the government look at me as a person, as a parent, as a community person, as an individual, not just as a tax filer or a taxpayer or a ratepayer, which quite often we hear those types of terms from the government opposite. The person I most recently spoke to about this who raised this matter with me said it's so impersonal, it's so cold. It's like you're looking at a spreadsheet which you, quite often, will do with a business.

They said leading and managing government is not about that. Leading a government is about people. It's about caring about people. It's about understanding people's needs, about the desires they have to give their children and their families a chance to give them a quality of life for them to grow into people who have an opportunity.

We know some of the things that were mentioned here about sports programs and extracurricular activities that young people are quite often involved in, that parents are finding hard now to be involved in. Some sporting activities are fairly costly for families, but it provides children an opportunity to grow and develop themselves as a person and make them a better person. It gives them better social activity, helps them participate better with their friends and their peers, improves their own ability to learn, to grow and develop themselves.

When you have a government who refers to them as tax filers, ratepayers, then people just find it – they're insulted by it. They say, we voted for you as people. We elected you as people, not just to look at us as a spreadsheet, but to look at us for what value we bring to our families and our communities. It was a pretty serious conversation I had. I actually thought about it for some time after, and the absolute importance of the point the person was making, because that's what leadership in government is about. It's about people and it's about citizens, and it's about doing what is best for the community.

I know Members opposite, oh, we had hard decisions to make. We're in tough times and we had to do difficult things. Well, people are saying don't do them just based on the bottom line of the province and the finances of the

province. Do them on what's going to keep people here and still provide some opportunity.

Government still has to support the community-based organizations. I know they're doing some of that. I know they're doing some of that, but you still have to support people. Even the impacts of the decisions and how you transmit them, how you broadcast them, how you communicate them, has an impact on people.

I remember a few days before the budget, the Finance Minister said it's a difficult budget, it's a tough budget and it's going to impact virtually every person in the province. Well, you could almost feel the energy come out of the province when that message started to spread. People just kind of pfft, because the last few years we've been going around, we had a spring in our step as a province, as a people. We're feeling good about ourselves. We're proud of where we came from. We're proud of who we are. We're proud of our province. We're proud of the opportunities that are bound for us. We're proud of our future and raising our families and our children here, and people felt good about it.

It seemed like all of a sudden when the minister started to deliver these messages of doom and gloom and negative and how bad and difficult things are going to be, people just went like this, oh my, what's ahead of us? I don't feel good anymore. I don't feel like getting out of bed in the morning because I don't look forward to the day anymore. What's going to happen to my business, what's going to happen to my family, what's going to happen to my children.

When these education decisions came people were feeling, oh, full-day kindergarten is – and I agree, full-day kindergarten is a good thing, but when we found out it was steal from one to pay the other, then people kind of shook their head and said, no, no that's not what we should do. We shouldn't collapse really good, proven, valuable programs children want to participate in to do something new that's also good. We shouldn't do that. We shouldn't steal from one to pay the other. People are perplexed by that; me too.

When you hear stories like in my district, two students in a school – the new Octagon Pond school which is under construction in Paradise,

and two of the students who will go to that school, only two cannot participate in Intensive Core French.

I read in the House here a week or so ago, a couple weeks ago I shared a message I had from one of the parents of those two children. A family whose older child, high achieving, is now gone away. He's going to high school in the United States on sports scholarships, doing well. It's academic, sport combination of a high school in a private school in the States, very fortunate to be able to do that. The mom is very well educated. The father is a private business owner. They work and strive hard for their children to excel.

Now, their second child, their daughter, they wanted her to do Intensive Core French. The daughter wants to do Intensive Core French. A hard-working student, a young girl, high achiever – these are tomorrow's leaders. These are the future leaders of the province. Cut out from under her – she's one of the two students in the school who now can't do Intensive Core French.

It doesn't make any sense to me when you have children who are working hard, families who are focused with their children, they're doing well, they've got a great future ahead of them and we do things, not by academic progress by who can handle a change and do Intensive Core French better, who's best able or are going to take advantage of having this diversity of programs, none of that decision was made; it was pulled out of a hat.

Here we have probably one of the higher capable students – lots of students are very capable, but this one certainly is – who now cannot do that program.

Mr. Chair, I look forward to the chance to discuss this again later during debate tonight.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

As the night goes on, I feel myself getting more and more energy. I'm marvelling at how many people are out there. This is so important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The people are still watching this, Mr. Chair. As we're speaking here in the Chamber tonight, in the people's House, they're continuing to send us emails.

That really speaks to the significance of what is really happening here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador today. Again, I will say it is unprecedented in terms of the total displeasure and dissatisfaction of the electorate with what has been delivered in *Budget 2016*.

I'm going to read for you, if I may, this most recent email that I just received. It touches my heart, Mr. Chair. A young girl has been – and even young children are traumatized by this budget. From losing their ability to be able to participate in Intensive Core French to things like the services they're receiving in health care at the Health Sciences Centre. It is amazing at how bothered some of our children are by some of these cuts, and they're hearing the conversations about what this budget is going to mean and they're feeling the pain themselves.

This young lady took it upon herself to do a video. She's after receiving 4,000 hits so far. Her video is all about the Liberal government and taking away stickers and lollipops from children, and she wonders what's next. When you take blood from them, are you going to ask them to be bringing their own Band-Aids to the hospital? That's what she's asking.

What's really astounding here is the comment was made to me, and just by a person who is listening here tonight: Liberals, remember these children, because these are the future voters and you have taken something away from them and they will not forget. So not only are you upsetting the electorate of today, you're upsetting the future electorate. The young people today have been so traumatized by the measures of this budget that they will not grow up to be Liberals, Mr. Chair, because they have no confidence in what a Liberal government will deliver for the people, and they are so disillusioned and so upset.

As a young child, with this instilled within them, I think our future is strong and we will have some great leadership. I have no doubt in my mind that this young lady is a future politician in the making and will represent us quite well as she grows up.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to continue on now with reading some of the emails that have been sent to us. This one is from a constituent who just quite simply states: vote it down. The power does exist within the Liberal caucus to vote this down. If the Liberal caucus truly wants to stand by their leadership, which I fail to understand why you would allow two or three people to ruin your future as an entire party, but if that's something that matters more to you than the people of the province, then at the very least you could, in your caucus room as a group of 11 or 12, demand that the changes be made to ensure that your support exists. But no, we haven't seen any of that, Mr. Chair – we haven't seen it.

It's very disappointing. People are still hoping that some of you will be willing to stand up and be counted and speak with your constituents and the people who brought you to the people's House. I will continue on, Mr. Chair, and raise some more commentary as presented to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: There is an awful lot of heckling happening here in the House. I'm finding it hard to hear myself speak. I represent the people and the Members opposite won't keep me quiet, Mr. Chair. I'm here to represent the people and that's what I'm going to do.

This message comes from another one of our fine citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is a message to the Liberal government: You raised taxes. The buck passes to the people. A service raises a cost because the tax has been raised. A product gets raised because a tax gets raised. All around, everything raises because a tax was raised, but the wage does not raise to meet the demand of the tax.

Dwight – well, I can't say names in the House, but they refer to the Premier – you are going to drive everything up and force myself and the rest of the province to pay out more money than

what is coming in. Explain to me, Sir, how this will benefit the province and its people.

Mr. Chair, none of us know how this province is going to benefit the people. Yes, we know that we are in a time of high debt and we know that the oil price has dropped. We also know that it's an interim situation and we need to get through the rough time and come out on the other end with something that replaces oil as a renewable resource that will generate money for all time.

Mr. Chair, hydroelectricity is that opportunity. Hydroelectricity will generate wealth and prosperity for the people of this province as long as the water flows. The Liberal government, with one failure on their hands in the Churchill already, has a second project at risk. It's very worrisome. I truly hope that their leadership will ensure success this time around.

Now, let's go on to –

AN HON. MEMBER: You believe what you're saying.

MS. PERRY: Indeed I do – indeed I do, I say to Members opposite. We believe in the potential of this province to generate prosperity for the people. We believe it's there in our natural resources, indeed we do. We have confidence in the people of our province. I trust, because I have no other choice but to trust, and I pray that the Liberals will stop playing politics, get down to business and make things work.

Anyway, back to the voice of the people.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. PERRY: I do have confidence in that, Mr. Chair, and I hope it comes true.

This is from a gentleman who says: Don't treat us like we don't understand. We know cuts need to be made. Make cuts in bureaucracy, administration and management of government services before affecting our most vulnerable. This budget is about priorities and the Liberals have them all wrong. We need a new government that exercises creativity and leadership.

I couldn't agree with this person more, Mr. Chair, in terms of needing a new government that exercises creativity and leadership. I want to talk about that again because what we see in times of austerity like this and with this Liberal government, are cuts to the front-line services, cuts to health care, cuts to education, cuts to the very basic services that our people deserve and expect.

We don't see them addressing any bloating and we don't see them stopping trips to Nashville. They're still going off to Nashville. I'm sure the economy is not going to collapse if they miss a trip to Nashville, but the economy is going to collapse with all the taxes they're imposing, Mr. Chair.

This is a comment and I read, Mr. Chair, from paper. These are not my words; these are the words of someone who is sending us an email: Stop lying, we know how clueless you are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Time to resign. We will never trust you.

Mr. Chair, let's speak about that, trust. In politics, trust is essential. If you're going to have any credibility whatsoever you must have trust. Most governments are in power for about a decade or so before they start to lose a lot of trust. We have seen in six months a complete erosion of trust, not only by the supporters of parties opposite, but by supporters of the Liberals. The trust is gone. There is no trust.

That's a serious, serious problem, Mr. Chair, for the voters of Newfoundland and Labrador. Whatever they are promised they can't believe because there is no trust. If we're going to see trust restored by the electorate, a lot of significant things are going to have to happen and turn around.

I'm going to say again, because I'm running out of time, we don't have to bring in this levy. We can stop or defer full-day kindergarten. We can defer that contingency fund, put it back in libraries, put it back in clinics, put it back in

education. The people of this province want and deserve better.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm happy once again to stand and to speak to this bill. I would like to read a message that I received on social media. I started this when we first started the filibuster, inviting people, of course, to send their comments, their ideas, some potential solutions, their concerns about the budget, their concerns about anything in terms of the province. People have sent all kinds of messages, and I know the Minister of Education was complaining about those of us standing and reading emails and saying that they were old emails.

Well, Mr. Chair, the wonderful thing about what we are doing here this evening is that through the magic of social media it makes it possible for people to participate, the average citizen to participate in real-time in this debate. Because what we are reading are emails that are coming that are current. They can respond to anything that has been said in the House, or they may be listening in the House and something will pique an idea. So it's great.

Actually, what we are reading, in some situations, are in real-time, that people are sending us within the last few minutes. So it's an exciting thing.

This is from a gentleman, a Newfoundlander – he's from the Island – who is living away. He said: Dear Gerry, I just caught your post on Facebook and thought I would drop you a line to express my concerns. I appreciate the numbers are what they are – I guess he's talking about the budget there and the deficit and the debt. He's saying, I appreciate the numbers are what they are.

The thing about that, Mr. Chair, is that people all over the province, everyone in this House knows

and can appreciate the difficult financial situation we're in. We understand the challenges. Nobody is naïve here. Nobody is ignoring that reality.

I appreciate the numbers are what they are; however, I do not agree with the Liberal's 2016 budget. What perhaps perplexes me the most is the announced closures of Newfoundland and Labrador libraries. Libraries are not only places where people go to get books, but are also hubs of creativity, reflection and overall gathering spaces; spaces which need to be preserved and protected, no matter the technological advances which may come about.

Just the other day Newfoundland author, Michael Crummey, dedicated the recent award he had won for his novel *Sweetland* to a Newfoundland library, unequivocally sending the message that libraries still matter. I mentioned this in the House, I believe it was yesterday. The time seems to be blurring a little bit for all of us, Mr. Chair. It really, really does, but we're all working really hard.

Michael Crummey's book, *Sweetland*, is an incredible book. It's such a profound book. It's a book about resettlement. Michael has written a lot about rural Newfoundland. Many of his books are almost historic memoirs. It's a wonderful book.

This is not the first award he has won for this book. The award he won was – he received \$1,500. It was a cash award. It was the Newfoundland and Labrador Book Awards. They were presented at a joint presentation of the Literary Arts Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador. Those are both great organizations that really facilitate writing in Newfoundland and Labrador. They support established writers, but they also have programs to help and mentor new and emerging writers. We know how popular our writers are internationally, on the global scale.

Michael won \$1,500. Mr. Chair, we know how our artists – most of our artists – live on shoestring budgets. They don't have a lot of discretionary money. Michael – and I'm sure you know our artists are not making a lot of money – donated his award to the Buchans

Library. The Buchans Library is one of the libraries that are slated to be closed. I believe this is one of the strongest testaments to what people feel about our libraries and the importance that the libraries play in our communities in our province.

He said: Newfoundland author Michael Crummey dedicated the recent award he won for his novel *Sweetland* to a Newfoundland library – again, the Buchans Library – unequivocally sending a message that libraries still matter. I cannot – this is an email from Anthony Tooton, who's also a renowned filmmaker in the province who's currently living away. I cannot for the life of me understand how or why the Newfoundland Liberals believe that the closure of many of the Island's libraries will, in any way, lead us toward a more prosperous future. Is that not what a budget should be all about?

He knows that really our budget should be about propelling us forward; it should be about leading us to prosperity. What he's saying is I can't imagine how closing a library would align with that. In fact, closing libraries impoverishes our communities.

From what I know, the monetary savings to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador from said library closures will be marginal; however, what we stand to actually lose further is quite substantial. I find that very interesting. It's almost a cost-benefit analysis. What we're actually going to save financially doesn't measure up to what we are losing socially, what we are losing in terms of educational resources and resources for seniors, what our libraries stand for. I really think that's kind of interesting, that cost-benefit analysis. The amount of money we save does not align with what we're actually losing by these library closures.

He goes on to say: I am baffled and I believe a more vigilant and forward-thinking government would see the substantial fissures the announced closures will have. The cracks, the breaks – really, what are the probably unintended consequences, but really direct consequences on our social fabric, on our communities, particularly our rural communities. All these library closures are happening in rural communities.

I asked the question yesterday in the House about the number of libraries that are being closed on islands: Fogo Island, Change Islands, St. Brendan's – islands. So it's not that people can just get in their car or on their bicycles or wheel their chairs to a community library; it's a trip to get there.

We know that a lot of children go to libraries after school. Sometimes they go there to do their homework; sometimes they go there to check out books. It's a safe place. Libraries are safe places for our children. It's not just the building that is safe, but it's also a place for them to gather. What better could we give our children than to fan the desire to read, to fan their curiosity, their intellectual curiosity, their imaginations? The world of books opens up so much to them. We are impoverished. The amount – and I like the way Anthony says that. Really, the amount of money that we're saving doesn't align with the great cost in terms of the losses by closing our libraries.

He said: There are numerous other issues I have with the recently announced budget, but I felt I should highlight this. He said: Feel free to use my name and point of view in support of the above if you like and if it helps. Take care and I hope all is well. Anthony.

I do believe messages like this do help because it puts things back in perspective where they belong, that it's not just about the line by line by line. All the emails that we're getting from people who are pointing out problems with the budget, they say they're aware of the fiscal challenges that face us. They're not naïve, they're not ignorant, they know. They also know the decisions that are made should be about strengthening our community, strengthening our people, strengthening our province so we can weather this storm.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to rise again and speak to Bill 19. There are very interesting comments from my colleague in regard to people's personal experience with this budget and what it means to them. I think that's fundamental in terms of the discussion and debate on this which looks at tax on insurance, but also is an enabling piece of legislation, which there is a number, for this particular *Budget 2016*.

The levy is one that we've spoken on earlier. There's no better way to describe, discuss and debate it than to reflect on people's interpretation and what it actually means to them in their daily lives in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's very important that we have that discussion and share people's thoughts and views.

This is certainly the people's House and it's a great forum to do that. We're following through on this debate to make sure we do that, to make sure the views we're hearing for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are expressed, they're expressed to government and they're expressed through this medium and through all people of Newfoundland and Labrador, as I said, through the people's House.

Earlier in debate I referenced an individual that had sent me a note, not from my district, but just had overall concerns in regard to some of the actions that were taken in this budget. He had indicated that he was a new graduate from high school who was going on to post-secondary and that he came from a low-income family.

Some of the concerns he expressed were related to changes to the provincial student grants program, the class-size cap for grades four to 12, thinking about a sibling of his in their family and what effects that would have. Certainly eliminated the Home Heating Rebate program and what that means as direct dollars out of people's pockets that affects them tremendously. Especially low-income family –

AN HON. MEMBER: Seniors.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Seniors – dollars are very short – and fixed income – very significant in terms of what that will mean. We talk about government needs to make choices. Well, in a particular case like that where it's fixed income,

those individuals got to make some serious choices. They just have a certain amount of income every month and they've got to decide which added on increase and added on costs – what do they choose? They've got a lot of choices to make because of this budget and what we've seen from it.

Also, we talked about the elimination of government funding to the Jumpstart program – not only the Jumpstart program, other recreational programs too. We know that healthy youth, from a physical point of view, need to be engaged early in various activities, understanding how important physical activity is and develop that way of life early on in their lives so that they will be committed throughout their entire lives in terms of healthy living, healthy eating, healthy activity. It is very important for the whole well-being of our population. That extends into a whole range of areas – even health care, in terms of some of the indicators we have now, which oftentimes are not pointing in the right direction in regard to our demographics in terms of diabetes, certainly for youth, overweight, all of those indicators that are not good for an overall population. It's obviously tied to our health care and our costs. It's all interrelated.

So that's why activity like this is supported and cuts to such programs like this are devastating. It's not only the short term, it's the long term, and you have to be visionary. You have to make those investments that are for today and for the weeks and months and years ahead and decades ahead. That's what's so important. So you can't be shortsighted here. An investment today, while you may amend the budget and on one side it may look better today, well, in the long term it's not going to make the ledger look very good because an investment in today, for tomorrow, for a better future. So he talked about that.

As well, he talked about the gas tax increase – 16.5 cents – and what that would mean. That hits directly to families and to their ability to do what they need to do. He sums up – I think which is very good, in terms of some of the commentary he has – he says: This is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to our family. I dread to think about family's future. Luckily for me, I have a way out. Unfortunately for my mother

and my sister, they do not. They must live with the consequences of this budget.

He goes on to express an opinion in regard to the federal budget and the new prime minister. We were delighted when the federal budget came out and found out that Prime Minister Trudeau showed us that he cares about families, that he cares about the lower class, and he cares about the students and youth.

We had much of the same hope for the Premier and the Liberal Party. We had confidence in the provincial Liberal Party when we voted for them; however, we now feel more disappointed.

I trust that you follow your conscience – this is directed to me – and see that this is a horrible budget for lower-class families and students. I implore you to vote against the budget. That's just one example of a Newfoundlander and Labradorian sharing an experience related to their particular family.

That gives a synopsis. That gives the best understanding of the implications of any particular budget when you hear from people on the ground in the communities in Newfoundland and Labrador because they know best. We're elected officials and we come in here and we talk about policy and all those types of things, but it's the people out on the ground driving our communities, driving our regions. They're the ones that know best. I guess what we're doing in this forum here is sharing their experience and sharing their interpretation of what's happening.

As we go through this process, it's very important that we recognize that – and we've said this over and over again – there are certainly decisions that need to be made. Choices need to be made for the short term and long term, but they need to be balanced and need to be respectful of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian in all regions and parts of our province.

I want to share too; this was someone from my district who puts in perspective two people with good paying jobs, raising a family. They have a new home, have a mortgage. Sometimes it appears that those people can pay more and can pay a lot more, but that's not always the case.

This lady indicates she's a registered nurse. Her husband is an aircraft maintenance engineer employed as well. They moved back here from Nova Scotia seven years ago, raising two kids in my district, a new area in the Witless Bay-Bay Bulls area that's seen tremendous growth, tremendous activity. From their perspective they have decent jobs, but they live on a very tight budget recognizing that a couple of young kids, one of them involved with things, a new home, have some recreation and that type of thing in their lives, but still it's a challenge.

From their perspective, when they look at this array of increases and taxes and what this budget does, it hits them directly. It's very unnerving for them and how they're going to make do. They've done an assessment on what they've seen. They're looking at somewhere around \$3,000 to \$3,200 a year that the changes in this budget are going to mean to them. That's net dollars. It's right out of their pockets.

They have to decide how to deal with that because you have a process to pay your monthly bills to avail of different activities. That's significant. They basically said we don't have, at this stage of the game, \$3,200 a year to make what's required and the implications of this budget. She even speculates, what does this mean to seniors and those with minimum-wage jobs and what they're feeling. As I said, this is powerful stuff. This is Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. These are people that are on the ground that build our communities and that are part of our communities. These are the people we need to start listening to.

It also goes on to say the entire province is going to suffer from this. There is no room in this new budget to help stimulate the economy. It's just going to lead to a downward spiral and no one will be able to afford anything. It's a very straightforward statement. I don't think you could say it any better than that. I'll repeat it: There is no room in this new budget to help stimulate the economy. It's just going to lead to a downward spiral and no one will be able to afford anything.

The person goes on to say: I agree, as we've all said, some changes did have to be made. Increasing HST was inevitable and necessary. Yet, this government lost out on anywhere from

\$80 million to \$100 million due to we're not really sure. They cancelled it for some reason, forcing every member of the province to basically pay a cover charge – referenced the levy – for living here. Taking every single thing we do is not the way to do it.

That's from, as I said, two people with fairly good occupations, good professions. They've done their assessment of what's been done and they have huge concerns with what's in this budget and what's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. HUTCHINGS: I hear some heckling on the other side. If someone over there wants to stand up and speak to this, I certainly encourage him to do so. There's lots of time, we're going to be here for the next couple of days. There's lots of time to get up and speak to it if he wished. I certainly encourage him to do that. I'm talking about people on the ground in Newfoundland and Labrador that I represent and I'm going to speak for them.

Mr. Chair, this budget and what it's done in terms of the taxes, the tax regime and what we're hearing for Newfoundland and Labrador is not reflective of today or the future we want to build in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's certainly time for the government to start listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and make some changes, at least to the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians today and in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

I thought my colleague up there in the back corner was going to get up and –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: It's their same name. Anyway, I won't get into names either.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A little bit earlier I was reading some of the messages. I was just going through some more because we're still receiving messages from people in the province.

I picked this one up; it was emailed to me a short time ago. I'll reference this one now, even though some of the other ones have been here for some time. This one just came in a short time ago so I thought I'd share it. It's addressed to me: I'm writing you to help with material for your filibuster – I appreciate that, that's what we asked people to do so we can share their information.

Then this person goes on to say: I hope you enjoyed the coffee and Timbits from last night – and we did. This person sent in some snacks to us, which we shared with Members around the House – and I thank you for all that you do. I'm a medical student and terrified of what the next few months will mean for me under the Liberal budget.

Firstly, my tuition is not frozen, and our faculty forewarned us that the tuition could increase to rival that of other universities – which could be in the \$18,000-\$25,000 range is what they fear within the next couple of years. Secondly, the cost of textbooks is worrisome, an extra \$87 in tax if we're to wait until July 1 to purchase them.

It's interesting about purchasing them, because I talked to someone the other day who filled up their car with gas. They said it wasn't empty but it cost them \$9 more based on the amount they bought. I spoke to him the next morning, sat with him in Tim Hortons the next day in Conception Bay South, where sometimes you'll find me early mornings, he came in and he said, I saved \$9 yesterday. I lined up for about 20 minutes to fill up my tank and I saved \$9. I woke up this morning, I was getting ready to come down here and I realized I saved \$9 once. Every other time after now I'll have to pay the \$9, but he said for the 20 minutes I saved \$9 once.

That's right, because this person here is talking about the cost in textbooks, \$87 extra if they wait to buy them after July 1. They'll save that

\$87 once, because the next time they buy textbooks they're going to have to pay it.

This is in addition to an increase in gas, housing and car insurance. When I finish school I'm not going to be able to afford to live here, and this saddens me because I'd love to work as a physician here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What's most problematic to me is how this budget impacts health care of people all across the province. It's particularly crippling to seniors and patients with chronic diseases. I've seen many cases of individuals having to do without because they just can't afford their drugs. As a future physician, what can I do for them?

In medical school they teach us a lot about how to diagnose and care for patients and their families. They also teach us that if we treat the symptoms without going after the root cause of the problem we can end up doing more damage than good. This is what the government is doing by going after revenue without planning for economic stimulus, treating symptoms to the point of toxicity, and I don't think we can recover from that. And she signs her name.

I thank this student for providing this information tonight. I know they've been engaged. I've talked to – actually, I know a number of medical students at Memorial. For some reason at this point – there was a time, maybe two or three years ago, I didn't know any. It seems like I know several now. I've had discussions with many of them, not only medical students, but other students as well who are both at Memorial. I've talked to students from College of the North Atlantic, and I've talked to a couple of students who are actually at private colleges as well.

It's interesting that post-secondary students seem to be engaged more than they have been in the last number of years. I think it's because their thought is about their own future and what opportunities or challenges may exist for students and for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

A lot of them very quickly go to the thought of moving away. That's kind of upsetting and concerning to a point where students now are thinking about – the norm starts to creep in of

when you graduate from school, one of the first decisions is am I going to stay or go away. I thought we were getting away from that over the last decade or so.

I had family who live in Ontario who moved there back in the late '70s, mid-'70s, some in the early '80s and never ever came back. I also know a family who have come back over the years, slowly over the years, and some who are retiring and now want to come home now that they've retired. Many are coming and moving to rural parts of our province because they like the lifestyle. It's very much a change from urban areas of the big cities in Toronto or Calgary or Edmonton, Vancouver where many Newfoundlanders and Labrador have travelled over the last couple of decades, and now are coming back to the tranquil, peaceful and enjoyable rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They're expressing concerns as well. A lot of people moved and brought properties in the rural parts of our province like the Bonavista area for example. The Member for Bonavista is over paying attention to me there tonight. He knows lots of people who have brought properties and moved into the Bonavista area because of the beauty and the history. Properties are very affordable. Plus, the Bonavista area has many of the amenities that people need on a daily basis.

They have access to medical care now in the daytime and nighttime, but a lesser amount in the nighttime than they did before. There are local businesses, shops and grocery stores and so on that are accessible to people in Bonavista, yet they are worried about the decreasing amount of services that are available to them in some of those rural parts of the province.

Over the years, we remember back in the '60s when relocation occurred. Communities were shut down and people moved out. Of course there's discussion by communities today, ongoing discussions within communities about are we going to stay or are we going to go. That quite often happens when you start to have the reduction of those services and the centralization of populations.

I know Members opposite will say we have a relatively small population with a very large

geography and that creates challenges as a government, no two ways about it. It creates challenges not just for government; it creates challenges for us as a people in the province when that happens. That's our history and that's our culture. Rural parts of our province were born and grown by the fact of our fishery.

If you're a fisherman or a fisher person, or you're a farmer or you worked to provide supports and assistance to those industries, that's how our province was built. It was built on rural parts of our province. To have the discussion of our young people today, post-secondary education students, those who are fortunate enough to be pursuing post-secondary education, no matter what it is, and then having the thought about do I stay here in the province or do I go is one that is concerning.

Mr. Chair, another message that we received as part of this ongoing filibuster here in the House of Assembly is one from this person who says: The Premier said his government delivered a budget people asked for. How many asked the government to ruin the lives of every Newfoundlander, I wonder, protecting the future generations he said.

In case you missed it, let me tell you, the younger people and young families here in the province now need your help. What are you doing for them? You're driving them out of the province. That's what. Think with your head and use your heart to have a little compassion for the people of the province. Premier, you and the rest of the Liberal caucus need to resign.

I should point out, I meant to mention this when I got up earlier, that when some of these messages that are here – we're sharing the position of people who are sharing their thoughts. They're not ours; they're not our own thoughts. As quite often you'll hear on the open line shows when they start in the morning comments presented here are not necessarily those of this station. It doesn't mean we're endorsing them. It doesn't mean that we're against them. It doesn't mean any of that. It means that we are sharing the views of the people of the province who have sent messages and notes to us and have said please share, go to the House of Assembly and bring in my viewpoint. I want to be heard.

We have people who tell us I can't get a response from my MHA and I want people of the province, I want my MHA, I want elected Members to know what my position is. We've put that up on our Opposition Facebook page. We have these messages that are coming in and we have lots of them coming in through the day. It slowed down for some reason, 3 in the morning the frequency has slowed down. I don't know why that would be. I guess people are gone to bed, if they're able to, Mr. Chair.

Some people still stay tuned and still tuned into what's going on here in the House of Assembly. They're sharing. They're sending in these notes and these comments, their feelings, their experiences, how they feel about the budget, about the decisions of the government and they want us to share them. That's what we're doing.

I look at the clock on the wall, Mr. Chair, I see my short time. We only get 10 minutes to speak at a time and then we're required to sit down and allow another Member to rise.

MR. HUTCHINGS: You'll be back.

MR. P. DAVIS: What's that?

MR. HUTCHINGS: You'll be back.

MR. P. DAVIS: I will be back many more times over the next several hours to come back and share more of these messages we're receiving from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Bragg): The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to stand in this hon. House once again and debate Bill 19. I wanted to pick up on a point that the Leader of the Official Opposition just made. These messages continue to come in and it's happening live. I'm still getting messages from people who are still watching this.

I find it absolutely amazing, to be honest with you. I've been here now five or six years; I've never experienced anything in this House of Assembly like this before. I'm not exaggerating. I've never experienced this. People are tuning in. I can sit here and I can just watch the messages coming up on the phone, ping, ping, ping. It's unbelievable. Whether it be Facebook or whether it be Twitter or whether it be emails or whatever. People are watching it and they're continuing to send in commentary and so on.

I do say to the Members opposite, if anyone is under the illusion that this is – well, I don't have a staff person. Well, I do; I have a constituency assistant, but she's home in bed now. If you think for a second there is someone making these things up – I'm not saying you do, but if you think that, I can assure you that's not the case. I can't speak for the Official Opposition, but I have no doubt they're getting the same thing I'm getting. These messages just keep on coming through.

The messages we're reading are messages from real people from around the province who are asking for these things to be read. There are a lot of them here, to be honest, that are being asked to be read but I'm not reading them because (a) they're not parliamentary and (b) they're not really respectful. I'm not going down that road, just so you know.

I have one here now. This is an email. It says: Hi, Paul, if you're still taking comments for the Liberals, please remind them for me that a government using public resources to repress and silence public dissent, as they did last night with the resign posters, is the definition of a dictatorship.

As well, please remind the Premier that he is not a president of a congressional government. He is a premier in a Westminster parliamentary system; therefore, he is required to defend his actions and policies to the House's Opposition. If he refuses to address his critics, not only does he come off as a coward but he further demonstrates his apparent lack of basic understanding of the position he chose to run for. Regards, and thanks for giving us a voice here tonight. This is from a person in my district, this one is.

So I passed that along – and it's not a friend of mine or anything like that, in case someone's thinking that. It's not a family member. It's not a friend of mine. It's an individual, says on Laumann Place, which is in my district. I don't know this person, but it happens to be somebody who's in my district. As I've said, I don't mind sharing for Members opposite if they want to see them, I'll share all the emails, Facebook messages – show it to you myself. I'm not making this stuff up. I'm really not.

Another message I've received, it was in the string of emails there somewhere, and they wanted me to pass on – it was a question, more than anything else. The question they had was that basically they've been watching the debate and they're wondering why, when they watch it on TV, all they're seeing is the Opposition Members up speaking most of the time. They're wondering why government Members are not up speaking on the budget and defending the budget. That was a legitimate question I got, and I didn't answer it. I said, well, contact them and ask them why they're not speaking. I'm not speculating.

The other thing I was asked to bring up is why the Premier has not – we're talking about the budget and we've been two days now debating the budget. We've been debating the levy and now we're debating the insurance, and I guess we'll be going back to the levy at some point in time. I've had a couple of people comment and ask, given that these are significant measures, tax increases to all people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and if it's something that we absolutely need to do and it's all justified and whatever, then why would the Premier not be in the House of Assembly defending it. How come, when they're turning on the TV, they're not seeing him stand up like other Members and talk about it, or refute what we are saying or what people are saying?

Again, those are not my words; those are the words of people here. I'm just asking the question on their behalf, and I have not answered, other than to say ask the Premier. That's all I'm doing, because I'm not getting into this game of blaming people or whatever; I'm just saying ask the Member, ask the Premier.

So I have another – this one here's a Facebook message. I don't know where this person lives, to be honest with you, because it's on Facebook. I don't recognize the person as someone in my district, so they could be from anywhere. There is a name, but I'm not going to read the name because he didn't ask me too.

I think most people understand how desperate the financial state of the province is. What people don't understand is how this government can keep wasting our money on things that will in no way decrease this deficit. Sure, short term maybe, but long term, only more debt. One example is increasing the cap on class size. This increases the stress on teachers, also on children with learning disabilities who need that little bit of extra help which they will no longer receive; therefore, more mental health issues.

So now we need more mental health experts, more government hiring, et cetera, more money. Money spent instead of saved. We can pretty much apply this to most of the changes in the budget. People who fall in the category where they have to pay all these taxes, strain on financial situations for families. Again, more theft, more people driving without insurance because they can't afford it. Now we need more law enforcement; again, more money having to be spent by government.

If you think along these lines, another example, we were going to hire a contractor to do some renos on our home, but now we can't afford to pay a contractor so we hired Joe Blow down the road to do it in his off time and pay him under the table. No tax revenue from the contracted company. Joe Blow doesn't have to report it on his taxes.

Add to all of this the increases in crime. Why doesn't anyone in government see these issues? While you're at it ask the MHAs exactly what it is they are receiving salaries for. I was under the impression that as elected representatives of their constituents they were supposed to be our voice in the House instead of the Premier's puppets.

The next one: Ask why the current government believes the gas tax is a good thing when people like myself have to drive to work each day. I fill up my small, fuel-efficient Ford Focus every

two to three days. With the new tax hike, I pay \$55 per tank. That's \$165 a week or \$660 a month. That's a lot out of my cheque each month. Add on insurance hike, registration hike, et cetera. It soon won't be worth driving from Spaniard's Bay to St. John's for work. So this person is from Spaniard's Bay obviously.

I have a mortgage to pay, a family with a three-year-old and a car that is on the way downhill. Ask the Premier and Finance Minister to live a year in the shoes of the average Joe on an average wage, most without medical insurance or dental insurance. They wouldn't last a week without their fancy cars, fancy houses and high-end clothes. Have them make a choice between groceries or paying the hydro bill like so many seniors. Survive with your heat on 12 degrees instead of 20 degrees because you can't afford the bill like so many Newfoundlanders.

This one here, the next one: Ask the Premier to stand before us, as he has done, to become elected. Stand up for himself and explain why this province has gone to – I don't know if I can say the word. Anyway it's gone to somewhere in a handbasket – we know the expression – and not use his puppet sitting next to him. He was elected to run this province, speak for our rights and make sound decisions despite what the financial situation was. It didn't happen when he became Premier. Too many spoons stirring the pot; don't force us to lick it.

Paul, this insurance tax hike, 30 per cent, is going to kill all of us with automobiles. Well, it's actually 15 per cent so I'm not sure where he got that. Or two, it's going to kill us with automobile tax, then \$180 for registering your car, plus this crazy gas hike. We all have to go back to peddle bikes maybe, but they would put in a bike and exercise tax. There's no way to get the government MHAs –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Out of time.

CHAIR: Time has expired.

MR. LANE: I'll continue on when I get up again.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's great to hear the voice of the people from my hon. colleague for Mount Pearl – Southlands. Mr. Chair, I have more emails here to read into the record on behalf of the people as the night goes on as well.

I did want to take the opportunity to talk a little bit about diversification once again. The Minister of Natural Resources is here, and I want to do that while she's here, because I have to tell her that I have great faith in her. There's not a lot of faith left across the way but I'm relying on her, I guess, to save our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: I know she's done very well by her own accord and certainly worthy of respect for the success she has had in the private sector. I want to see that translate into continued success here with the government, Mr. Chair.

When we talk about Newfoundland and Labrador and what we want for our future, diversification of the economy is absolutely essential. To that end, Mr. Chair, we need to create the environment that allows the private sector to flourish.

We have, in this province, a vast amount of natural resources. We look to the Big Land in Labrador and we can look to our government. One thing you can say about the Progressive Conservative government, with certainty, is that we had a great emphasis on Labrador and we probably were the first and only government who actually had a strategy designed specifically for Labrador, Mr. Chair.

We have vast mining potential in Labrador, vast mining potential in parts of the province, Mr. Chair, but if we're going to see that mining potential developed and if we're going to see the international companies that are being enticed all over the world – so we're not in competition on a provincial stage. We're in competition on a global stage when we want to attract the IOCs of

the world to come and do business and create jobs right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to do that we need to have access to affordable energy.

I know Muskrat Falls is a contentious item of discussion. A wise person once told me not too long ago it's a no win situation for any politician because there are pockets of people for it and there are pockets of people against it, but here's the cold, harsh reality, Mr. Chair. We need hydroelectricity in this province, and if the Liberal government were to oversee the demise of that initiative now the Liberal government would wear two failures of utility ventures in this province, which would be absolutely devastating because none of us are over the first one yet.

I pray that I live to see 2041, when we are freed from the wrongs of the original deal that was done and they have left our people paying a price to provide cheap power to everywhere else in Canada, whereas we do without. It's time to right that wrong, and we have the opportunity before us to do that.

I truly hope, Mr. Chair, that in a few years' time we are talking quite differently about the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we're talking about the success that has been achieved with attracting power and with ensuring we have the power right here for industrial development for our people.

Mr. Chair, if Muskrat Falls were to stop today, you would sink all the money that's already been spent, the taxpayers' money and you're owed no return. Plus, you'd still have a \$4 billion to \$5 billion problem on your hands because you've got to find the power from somewhere. You'd have to start all over again. You'd have to go back to the drawing board. You'd have to build some kind of infrastructure somewhere.

So it doesn't make much sense to me, Mr. Chair, when we are this close to seeing an investment come to fruition that will yield a return for decades and decades and decades to come. Just like Quebec is building schools and hospitals and roads today from Churchill Falls –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – we will be building the same thing right here in Newfoundland and Labrador with the success of a utility venture.

So I say with the greatest of respect, the greatest of hope for the future, I have a great reliance on the minister to ensure that we do see success, Mr. Chair, and that we don't see another loss to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That the investments we make today and in the future are investments that benefit the people in the long run.

With that – because it's something I feel quite passionately about. I think all of us in this province want to see a return. We'll rely on the Liberal government to ensure that return does come forward, Mr. Chair, at least for the next little while.

I do believe in the upcoming election, though, the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador will voice their concerns overall. I will continue to read into the record now what some of these concerns are.

Another email from a very concerned citizen: I have been a nurse for 13 years. I initially left the province due to a lack of full-time jobs. I could stay casual without benefits and be guaranteed hours for one year. This offer has been made to me by Eastern Health many times over the years, but no full-time job.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to stop there because I scratch my head. One of the things we're told by the health authorities at times is, oh, we can't recruit a nurse, that's why we have to downsize. Oh, we can't recruit a doctor. Really? Well, I'm hearing from a lot of people that are nurses and doctors saying I can't get a job. There's a disconnect here somewhere. That's a problem that I think would be wise for government to try and look at fixing.

Anyway, to continue reading on: I have spent the last eight years trying to move home. How can a person live, buy a home, get approved for loans without full-time work on a single income. If I moved home now with extra taxes, levies, charges and the prospect of being casual despite full-time hours, how can I, at 37 years old, live and pay for benefits or even the needs of daily life on one income in the St. John's area.

Now, there are more and more and more cuts to health care; a system that has already failed thousands in our province due to understaffing, lengthy wait times and lack of upkeep and upgrades. We are leaders in heart disease and diabetes, yet some of the surgeries are not even available in our province. Due to wait times, you have to be sent out of the province just to get life-saving surgery.

Diabetes education, what's that? There are so few educators and so few left in health promotion and community health to cover even one community, let alone a province.

The acute care system is being backlogged with those awaiting long-term care and rehab placement. They just sit waiting for a place to call home, while acutely ill patients sit in beds and stretchers in hallways and emergency rooms and the Liberal government has the audacity to close even one long-term care bed. These facilities, yes, are old. Yes, they are in need of upgrades, but so is every health care building in Newfoundland. Look at some small centres with 100-year-old buildings. Look at areas of the Waterford Hospital.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to stop there again and talk about the difference between a Progressive Conservative administration and the difference between a Liberal administration. What did Progressive Conservatives do? We invested in these rural clinics, we upgraded them. In fact, in Hermitage, \$95,000 was spent to upgrade their clinic just a few years ago. What does the Liberal government do? Close the doors. That's the difference between a government that cares for its people and a government that only cares about the bottom line at the expense of its people.

Why were upgrades to health care centres and schools deferred? They are needed badly. Why not defer payment to Muskrat Falls, a project already behind, a project of ongoing issues. Take a good break from that and review the needs of your people.

As I said, Mr. Chair, there are definitely conflicting views in all of it, but at the end of the day decisions have to be made that are in the best long-term interests. Getting us through the short term is absolutely crucial. That is where I

think we all agree is that the approach the Liberals are taking to get us through the short-term hump is not a good one. It's not one that the people like and it's not one that the people are going to tolerate.

This person is saying: Invest in our province and its people and we will show you what we can do.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

MS. PERRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I look forward to speaking with you again later.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm happy to stand once again. It's quite amazing to stand in this House and to hear the messages from people who are responding to us in real time. Not as many people are probably watching in the middle of the night right now. It's 3:29 in the night or the morning, however one might want to call that.

I'd also like to thank the staff of the legislative House, the people in the Broadcast Centre, the people in Hansard and our Officers around the Table who have been working tirelessly. They're small in numbers, but certainly mighty. The chance for spelling people off is very limited so people are working through long, hard hours.

I imagine some folks are wondering: Why do this? I think that's a valid question: Why do this? I don't think that there's ever been a situation in our history where we have seen so much individual political activism, activism from your average citizen.

It was only two weeks ago or so where there were 3,000 people on the steps of Confederation Building who were demonstrating in opposition to this budget. There are people demonstrating in front of government buildings across the province; people demonstrating over the levy, people demonstrating about library closures, people demonstrating about the very real effects

and the pileup of effects of this budget on people's lives.

It's interesting what's happening. I believe we have a resurgence of civic engagement in our political process. I know that I did get an email from someone who said, what has happened to me now is that I am now going to be politically active. That's a good thing.

For me, the interesting thing is that people are informed. In areas where they're not particularly informed, they're making themselves informed. So their push back is not kind of a knee-jerk reaction, their push back is based on their understanding of the impacts this budget will have on the people.

Why spend all this time, hours and hours and hours and hours talking about the budget? Because, Mr. Chair, people realize that this budget has such a reach into people's daily lives. It has a reach into their families. It has a reach into workplaces. It has a reach into how we undertake our business as a province, as a community together all over Newfoundland and Labrador.

At some point this evening I'll look at some of the specific fees and fee schedules, some of the particular cuts, because there have been so many cuts and so many fee hikes and so many additional fees that will affect people's lives daily. I think that's why we see the push back.

The other thing that I find very interesting is that we know that people of Newfoundland and Labrador are used to working hard. People aren't looking for some kind of utopian lifestyle; people are used to working hard. At times, many families have had to tighten their belts, particularly if they have kids in university, or if they have a child with special needs, or if they have a senior that they're trying to look after, or if somebody in the family has been hit by a particular kind of illness, or we've seen job losses in different industries, particularly in the oil industries. We've seen it in the fishery. There's been this wave of times when we've seen great job losses that hit different communities at different times.

People are not unreasonable. Nobody is looking for a free ride here, but people are looking for

fairness. People are willing to participate to help relieve the financial situation that we're in. The interesting thing is that those who benefited least from our years of prosperity are the ones who are bearing the greatest burden of this particular budget. People know that's not fair.

People are saying, you know what, there has to be a better way. People are willing to swallow the bitter medicine if in fact it takes us forward, if in fact it's a cure. That's the problem; this budget doesn't have any vision. This budget doesn't look at – there's no stimulus of the economy. In fact, what it's doing it's grinding the economy to a halt by impoverishing people, by cutbacks in services, by additional fees. People are being impoverished by this. That's what the people of the province see.

I'd like to read an email that I got maybe just a little over an hour ago. This is from a family man. He said: The budget itself is going to make things tough for a while, but we're trying to make adjustments to the changes coming – it's reasonable.

Rumour has it – my wife is worried about her public service job, so we feel like we're getting hit all around. I'm getting a lot of discontent with the gas tax, people viewing it as just another burdensome levy and three times what the old one was.

Insurance is another issue. A typical insurance policy on a taxi is five grand – that's a lot of money. Tax on that of \$750 really cuts into the bottom line. An additional tax of \$750, who would have thought that what seemed like a little bit of extra car insurance – that the tax on car insurance would really be that devastating and have such an impact. Well, you know what, a taxi driver – tax on their five grand insurance is \$750. That's a lot of money.

He goes on to say: I know one operator is looking at an added \$30,000 before he sees a dime added to his bottom line now. That's outside of an allowable 30 per cent from the latest hearing at the PUB. So we struggle with this hit. How do we recoup costs where our customers are getting the same economic kick in the teeth? It's not the end of it.

Oil may never be back, so all this may stick forever. I don't see oil ever rising above \$60 for any appreciable time unless something of military significance happens in Saudi Arabia. That, and the return of US domestic production, if oil rises, will be enough to knock oil back again. Keep up the fight, he said.

When we look at that particular issue, who would have thought – I'm sure the consequences of the application of tax on vehicle insurance – did government really realize what the rollout would be on certain people and on certain industries, maybe, maybe not. Because it's a business, maybe those taxes can be recouped because it's a business expense, maybe, maybe not. I'm not sure. I'm not exactly sure all the intricacies of the taxi business, but maybe that's possible if they're registered as an independent business.

What we're seeing again is that people – there's no fear mongering here. People are talking about the realities of their lives. People are talking about the realities of the lives in their community, of the people in their community. They know the direct impacts. They believe and I believe, too – because the Minister of Finance has told us so often that she went line by line – that what she did was an accounting exercise. I understand they have to get the deficit under control, but the rollout and the impacts of some of the choices that they have made in this budget are impoverishing our people on a number of levels. Whether it's in the pocketbook or whether it's taking away services like libraries or clinics in rural communities, the impact is real. That's what people are talking about. This is not hysteria. This is not fear mongering. These are very, very reasonable issues that people are raising.

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm certainly delighted again to get up and speak to the discussion here tonight, a very important

discussion related to budget and particular legislation related to implementation on that budget, in particular the insurance increase. Also, we've been talking, the past days, about the levy and about other significant implications of this budget.

I had a note that time from someone from my district who has just tuned in at 3:40 in the morning and just wanted me to share her concern. She says: This budget is a wicked hit on me despite working in her position. A single income to keep a house and car going does not leave much for anything else. Gas alone will cost me significant more dollars during the week. Add in insurance tax and other fees, I don't even know if I can keep travelling to my work for five days a week. She says it leaves her in despair and it's the best job she ever had.

She said she just wanted to share that with me, recognizing that she was following along at this time in the debate here. So that's significant. We've heard from former colleagues on this side of the House in regard to sharing people's experiences. I don't think there's anything better in terms of getting an understanding and a reflection on people's thoughts.

I think in any policy discussion or direction we take as a province it's always extremely important to hear people's concerns, people's thoughts. I know the government has said they did significant consultations in around the province. As has been said earlier, I don't know if some of the decisions that were made where they showed up in the consultations, especially the levy we've talked about and those types of initiatives.

I think people want a balanced approach. I think it's been said that people understood that there needs to be some additional revenues saved, maybe reorganization of service and service delivery and some idea of how we could grow our economy from an economic diversification point of view.

We heard last fall in the election campaign, and even prior to that, that there were great ideas with economic diversification, selling new opportunities, entrepreneurship, business community. How do we pick their leaders? There are particular job skills that were going to

be offered through those that were running but to date it's been very lean in terms of what we seen or any new direction on how we are going to grow our economy or various aspects of our economy or industry then, or new industry based on what this government has done to date.

We've even had speculation leading up that there were going to be assets sold. Assets of the province were going to be sold and they were going to generate \$50 million. We've asked continuously in this House, have they been sold? Has that been generated? Is it in the budget? That's not even in the budget, but definitively we were told that there was \$50 million worth of provincial assets that this government was going to sell and we were going to see it. Well, we haven't. I asked in Estimates where it is in the revenue stream, it's not there.

We haven't even gotten to new revenue streams related to new initiatives or direction related to economic diversification. I do know in the past number of years, and I had the privilege of serving in various areas, we did as a previous administration drive new economic activities in various areas, in both traditional industries and new industries. That's what we need to do.

It's one thing to tax and fee and all those types of things, but people need to see a vision. People just don't want to see here and now, they want to see down the road. Where are you going with this? Is there a light at the end of the tunnel, recognizing that there are some challenges? How are we going to get there and how are we going to see our way through this?

What we seen in this Budget Speech, Speech from the Throne, we haven't seen any vision or direction or really hope of how we are moving through this. That's what we are getting back in our emails and our calls and our discussions with people, and that's what's concerning to most.

Historically, look at us. We are here over 400 years. We settled in harbours and coves all over this great place we call Newfoundland and Labrador and the Big Land, and we've had challenges. No one is better to deal with those challenges than Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We've had our tough times and we've had our good times as well, but what

people want to know – and people will see their way through any tough time in Newfoundland and Labrador, we've done it in our history and we'll do it again – people want to see, what is the way forward?

If you're making choices, and you're making those choices for a particular reason, well you should lay it out for us, show us. Month after month, year after year, where are we going? How are we going to get there and this is the return based on the investment we're making today.

Even if it's on the fiscal plan or putting it forward here, we don't see it. Even if it's on the promise that we're going to show greater economic diversification and we're going to generate new wealth from our traditional industries, or we're going to generate wealth from new industries and new dollars, we haven't seen it.

So there's a vacuum here in terms of vision, direction and hope that people are concerned about and that's what we're hearing about. It's fundamental to what this discussion is all about, and why we're here tonight and why we'll be here for the next number of days, I think, in terms of continuing to discuss this and trying to bring awareness and trying to bring understanding and try to get government to bring direction that people are crying out for. They want to know where we are and where we're going.

When I look at the issue of diversification, we have a number of our traditional industries that have done exceptionally well over the past number of years. The fishery over the past 400 years has been the hallmark of who we are. We've certainly had transition going from a groundfish industry, a groundfish fishery in the early '90s to transforming into a shell-based industry from that perspective.

We've always adapted and we always saw growth. Even through programs in the prior administration, I know working in IBRD, we implemented the Fisheries Loan Guarantee Program to help assist and provide capital for enterprises and entrepreneurs in the fishing industry, to have that capital to expand and to have greater return to their enterprise. All those

things are sound initiatives that we work with and partner with to build that industry and bring greater growth and that's happened. We certainly see in the aquaculture industry over that past period as well. We're generating new opportunities.

My colleague from the South Coast can talk about what it's meant down there in regard to the downturn in the ground fishery in '92, devastation down in Harbour Breton, Bay d'Espoir all that area on the South Coast, and what it's meant since then with significant investments and partnerships from the Progressive Conservative government, past administration and how we were able to work with and identify an opportunity where it presented itself on how we can partner with public funds and with the private sector to drive opportunity. We've seen that down in that particular instance and we've seen tremendous return because of that.

Sustainability of communities, the new growth of communities, a number of times to visit there, new homes, then we have the spin-off activities from suppliers. When you get that large cluster enough in terms of volume of that activity, then that supply service even extends greater. That's one very good example of initiative by the prior administration to take that money we were generating from royalties, take it and invest some of it into an area that expands our economy and expands new growth, new dollars in the economy and there are continued new opportunities.

Right now in the world, between 50 to 60 per cent of fish food is farmed, and there are huge opportunities. Obviously, there's the environmental side of it. You continue to work with stringent guidelines. I know bay management plan was developed over the past number of years to look at best practices and those types of things, but there are other opportunities, other companies that are interested in exploring opportunity here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's a classic example of how you look at what the assets are and what the opportunities are in a particular area, you work with people, you partner with the private sector, public funds, and you have success. But to date, from across

the way and what we heard in this budget and what we heard in the plan, we've seen none of that. We've seen no idea of where the opportunities are and where they need to continue to grow.

Aquaculture is one that we certainly support. You need to continue to grow that, huge opportunities, and there's further things to do in that industry as well. Some others, I will get up later; I certainly look forward to discuss those.

Our tourism industry, what's happening there over the past 10 years is tremendous. My district, the District of Ferryland, plays a large role in that industry, but we've seen an industry grow well over a billion dollars based on a strategic direction and an adoption of policies and guidelines that we've taken, the prior administration, to grow that.

And we all know about the world-renowned tourism commercials and the various programs that we have which supported entrepreneurs in the tourism sector and to allow it to grow and highlight the benefits and the activities in various parts of the province that people want to come and see, both domestically and around the world.

I look forward to speaking again over the next couple of days as we continue debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

I thank my colleague for his comments this morning – a very interesting discussion considering it's 3:50 in the morning. I know Members are all tuned in across the aisle there and listening attentively, as we like to see them do. I see nods of agreement over there – at least one anyway.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to use the next 10 minutes to talk about a couple of matters that have been discussed with me and brought to my attention on a number of occasions. That's what I'm using my time – I have a number of messages and emails and so on that I've been receiving from

people. I'm going to use those throughout the night as well.

There are also other topics that I talked about earlier, about education, full-day kindergarten, Intensive Core French I've talked about, on some responses from people in my district and from the province. Then I want to talk about some of the things that are happening with Justice. Particularly, I want to talk about today or tonight or this morning, a couple of things – and depending on how time goes, I might just get to one right now: the reduction in court services.

We know that the government has chosen to close four courts in the province – two Supreme Courts, one in Grand Falls – Windsor and another one in Grand Bank. They've also chosen to close Provincial Courts, one in Wabush and the other one in Harbour Grace. We haven't got details of the plan of how court services will be obtained through any of those at this point in time, but Provincial Courts have a higher volume of people. I won't say one is busier than the other because we know they are all busy, but they serve a different purpose and, therefore, the volumes are different. But Provincial Court volumes are generally higher than Supreme Court volumes, just by the nature of the work that each of the courts do.

So we have Wabush in Labrador West that is being closed, and we haven't heard the details of how services will be obtained or provided to the people of that area, because courts do provide services to citizens. They provide justice to citizens through criminal courts, traffic courts and civil courts in the Provincial Court process, and also in Harbour Grace.

I have to apologize to the House because a few weeks ago, I was talking about the Harbour Grace courthouse closure or the court services being closed in Harbour Grace and I said there were 80,000 people who used the court. I was told then the number was inflated and it was wrong. I heard the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, recently, here in the House, reference 50,000. It's her area and it's her district and if she says it's 50,000 and my 80,000 is wrong, I can accept – I did some work to see if I could find the actual number, but I couldn't come up with an actual comprehensive

number. If her number is 50,000, not 80,000, then I apologize in providing the 80,000 number which I thought was correct. If her number is 50,000, I can certainly go with that.

The problem with the closure of the court in Harbour Grace is that previous centralization of court services has happened throughout the province. The Harbour Grace court now has what used to be a court in Whitbourne, whose services have moved to Harbour Grace and also Placentia area, so they all utilize Harbour Grace court. I know, for example, in Placentia if police have a prisoner in custody – and this happens sometimes – they have to make several trips back and forth from Placentia. The way the RCMP process works, they keep the prisoner in custody in Placentia and they have to carry the prisoner to Harbour Grace for an appearance and back. Now they'll have to take that prisoner to St. John's for appearances and back. The same thing would happen for Whitbourne and also for Harbour Grace, or anyone on the Conception Bay North area, which, for many of those regions, is well over an hour's drive.

There are a couple of factors here that have to be considered when you close the courthouse, because, as I said, it is a service for people. So if a person has a small claims matter they want resolved through the service of the Small Claims Court, they'll have to drive to St. John's to make their filing because the court will be closed in Harbour Grace. They'll have to drive to St. John's, file their court papers and documents, which would be an hour or more drive depending on where you live and then back and forth to the court.

I know from my own experience and my own background, and from people who have utilized small claims services, that sometimes you have to actually physically attend court several times for a small claims matter. It could be a couple of hundred dollars of a dispute in which you want to file a claim for. A person will now have to make several trips from – it could be Bay de Verde, as an example, to St. John's court for that small claims matter.

If you think of the volume of the court in Harbour Grace – because the Member had referenced 50,000 people utilized that particular court. That's a large number of people utilizing a

single service; 50,000 is a significant amount. I've asked the minister before what analysis has been done to determine the cost. In many cases, what you'll find in a courthouse that's open or a courthouse that's operational, you'll find there are police officers at that court. As a regular part of their job, they attend court.

Back in my time as a police officer, when I was in an operational role and spent many years in operational front-line services, I spent a considerable amount of time in court, sometimes several times a week going to court, maybe subpoenaed to give evidence in a trial at 10 in the morning. I may have worked the night before and had to get up.

I know, Mr. Chair, you're quite familiar with that. You may have worked a night shift, gotten off 8 in the morning and had to be in court for 10 a.m. Or maybe 2 in the afternoon and you get a few hours' sleep, you get up and go to court, try to catch a few more hours sleep to go back to work the next night.

In the case now, a police officer from Placentia area, Whitbourne area or Conception Bay North area will have roughly an hour's drive or more. Placentia is longer than that. The further down Conception Bay North you go, the longer the drive is obviously. An hour or more to drive to St. John's to attend court, spend your time in court and then an hour's drive back and you may have to go work again that evening. So you have two hours travel time plus your court time added to it. Now if you happen to be working –

AN HON. MEMBER: Already under resourced too.

MR. P. DAVIS: It is already under resourced. We know that the minister is reducing, in the RNC's perspective, 14 positions being taken away. I'm going to talk about those a little bit later. If it happens to be a day you're working and you're doing patrol, you're working, doing your investigations, you're responding to calls and inquiries, you're doing your work that you have to do and you have you're scheduled to attend court, you now leave your area.

So if you leave your – it wouldn't be unusual to have maybe one police officer in Placentia at a time, maybe two; Whitbourne is the same way.

Now, you'll one of those officers – it could be one in Placentia, one in Whitbourne, maybe one of each, maybe it's two. Maybe, Mr. Chair, you and I worked and went and did a call or made an arrest together, because we work similar schedules, and we're both subpoenaed to attend court this morning because there's a trial happening.

I could testify for 20 minutes, you could be the next 20, so you and I both get aboard a vehicle and drive to St. John's and now there's nobody left policing the streets in Placentia area, in the Cape Shore, that region, in Whitbourne area, in Bay Roberts or from the detachment in Harbour Grace. There may be a couple of police officers working and we say we have to leave now because we have to drive to St. John's for an hour and attend court. We know it's going to happen because that court services 50,000 citizens, according to the Member, of that region.

So you would fully expect police officers to be in court essentially every day. A court that size, that frequency, I would expect to see police officers there every day. So police officers now have to travel, there's a cost, an expense to travel there, plus they will not now be –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

They will not now be patrolling those streets in those areas. I'm sure if an emergency call occurs – not just doing your routine work but if there's a serious motor vehicle collision and you need several policing resources to help investigate, well now they could be hours away and tied up in court, at that lengthy drive away, and don't have the resources available. This is going to strain even further already strained resources. But the same thing holds true for citizens because having availability to court is availability to justice and having access to justice. Our society declares a person's right to justice.

If a person gets a traffic ticket – if you live in, I'll use Bay de Verde again, or if you live in Harbour Grace or Carbonear, now you have to

travel to St. John's. Traffic Court is not a lot different from the Provincial Court or civil court. You may find that for one reason or another you have to have more than one appearance in court to have your matter settled. Maybe you are a witness. Maybe you've been accused of a crime. Because a person accused of a crime also has a right to fair access to justice. If they have to appear several times, it's going to be a significant imposition and difficulty and challenge for people. People who say I'm not going to challenge that. It's not worth my time. I'm not going to go there because the court is so far away.

There is such a high volume in Harbour Grace. It's not a small, rural court with a very low volume. Harbour Grace is busy court. It's one of the busier courts in the province, now closed, and that's also going to move extra pressures to St. John's court. I would imagine that St. John's court is busy enough as it is. There're going to have to put extra resources there, extra space, extra court rooms and all of that diminishes what benefit may be gained by closing that court in Harbour Grace.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand once again and speak to Bill 19. Of course, we'll be going back to Bill 14 after we're finished with Bill 19.

I look forward to continuing this debate on *Budget 2016*. We're going to have lots of time to debate, for sure. I'm looking forward to talking about this now for the rest of tonight into tomorrow and into the weekend. It should be an exciting week and exciting weekend as we continue to debate 2016. I look forward to the contributions of other Members now, like I said, this week and over the weekend and so on as we continue to debate this.

Mr. Chair, I have a tweet I want to share here. It came in just a little while ago. People are still engaged, believe it or not, even at 4:01 in the

morning. I actually had one message from a person who said that they've actually watched this now 24 hours. Had a couple of little catnaps, woke up and have been following this now for the last 24 hours. It's interesting the amount of interest there is in this debate. It's not really a surprise, given the fact that this is really going to hit so many people.

This person just wanted to reference the insurance tax, which is technically the bill we're debating now, even though it's really the budget in general we're talking about. This was sent to myself, the Member for Mount Pearl North and it was sent to the Member for St. John's Centre. It says: My family, with two teen drivers, it will cost \$100 a month in taxes. That's what this person is saying; that's the insurance tax. That's \$1,200 a year. That's just in insurance tax. That's significant money, Mr. Chair. There's no doubt about it.

I had an individual who wanted me to reference the fact that they're living – well there are two, actually, I have there. One person wanted to reference the fact that she was living paycheque to paycheque and the impact this budget would have on her. I have spoken about that, but then I had another email I just saw from a gentleman who just wanted to point out that you don't have to be low income to be living paycheque to paycheque. I've referenced that before as well, but I'll get into it again now for the sake of those two people.

It's true because quite often when we think about people who are living paycheque to paycheque, it invokes this picture in our mind of somebody who is low income, maybe they are in receipt of government assistance or maybe they are working minimum wage jobs or whatever and you picture this – they are literally living paycheque to paycheque. And that's true; there are a lot of people like that. All these taxes are going to have a detrimental impact on them and on their family and on their struggle. Because there are a lot of people who struggle just to live, just to survive. That's very important that we recognize that.

In addition to that, there are a lot of people who – many people would say they're well to do because they have good incomes. You think well, they can suck it up; they can absorb this.

But just because somebody has a job and they have a good income, that doesn't mean that they are not living paycheque to paycheque. That's something that maybe is being missed as well. There are a lot of things in this budget, I think, being missed. I can't believe there are only a few people over here that's picking up on this because everyone is getting the emails.

When you think about it, you have people who come out of school, young people, and a lot of them are drowning in debt in terms of student loans and stuff like that. If they get a mortgage or whatever the case might be, they have to pay a mortgage. If they get a job, they are going to need a car to get back and forth to work and so on. So they have a mortgage, they have a car payment, they have a student loan. If they have kids, then there are expenses around daycare and clothes and groceries, all the stuff that we all have to pay: phone, light, cable and all those things that have been continuing to rise.

They are literally living paycheque to paycheque; they really are. Whether they own their own home or even if they are paying rent. I don't know what the rents are in some of the rural areas. They are probably lower, but they are going up. Certainly in the St. John's area, you are paying an awful lot of money to rent a basement apartment or to rent the top part of a house or whatever. It is literally an arm and a leg just to pay the rent.

If you have somebody, you think about it, whether they own their own home, they are paying the mortgage or they are paying rent and they have a car payment and they are paying off a student loan, they are just barely making it now. Now we're going to throw all of this taxation on them, the cumulative impact of all this taxation. This is going to really cripple some people financially.

I'm sure everybody gets it. I'm sure they must. I'm sure everybody must understand that. I'm sure they must. But for some reason, there doesn't seem to be a willingness to budge on any of this. All people are looking for is a bit of relief, my goodness. If these people can't survive, then they can't pay their bills. They're going to end up leaving or they're going to end up losing what they have or going bankrupt. If they have any expendable income at all, they're

not going to be able to spend it. If they don't have any expendable income, then what's that going to do for business?

I don't know sometimes – it's easy to sit here and talk about this. Sometimes it feels like you're talking and talking and talking and nobody is listening. I know some people are; it's not fair for me to say that. You really have to think of the impact that this is going to have on people.

These are our constituents. That's the thing, these are our constituents. These are the people who voted for us. Regardless of what side of the House you're on and what party you represent or if you represent no party, these people elected us to do what was best for them.

We knocked on doors; we all did, with our various platforms. There were three platforms. I don't know that anybody on either three parties said they were going to do all this stuff. I don't think there was any party that said they were going to tax everyone into oblivion.

I had one particular person say to me the other day – and he lives in Southlands. You would say, well, he's living in Southlands; he's got a lot of money. He's doing okay for himself. No doubt he's doing okay, but you have to remember you're not getting a house in Southlands for less than \$500,000. That's what they cost. That's not a mansion, that's like a regular house in Southlands. That's what it costs.

The mortgage is big. They have the vehicles, they have kids and they have all those expenses. He said people might get the impression that I'm living high on the hog but I'm not. I'm just paying the bills like everyone else. He said to me, I just got – and these were his words, not mine. He said: It's not that long ago that Doc – those were his words – nailed me right between the two eyes with a sledgehammer on that municipal budget. Those were his words. He said: Now, the Premier just leaned off and kicked me – well, I'll leave it to your imagination with the provincial budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: In the hand.

MR. LANE: In the hand. Yes, he kicked me in the hand with the other budget. That's how he felt. I know this person is not just someone who is in my district telling me; I know everybody is hearing this. I know everybody is hearing it and I know that we're in a tough financial situation, but, guys, there has to be another way to ease some of the pain.

We've talked about some of the things that we're doing that could ease some of that pain. I look at Members here, there are some Members who have had all – there's one Member here that has four libraries, five libraries shut down in his district. We have a \$30 million contingency which we've never had. Make it a \$29 million contingency. It's not going to make a big difference for the contingency. Make it \$29 million instead of \$30 million and you've got all your libraries saved.

I'm not saying that is the priority over taxes or whatever, but as an example if I were the Member for one of the districts and my district was losing four or five libraries, I would be saying to my colleagues, my God, you have a \$30 million contingency, make it \$29 million and save my libraries. Surely to goodness you can do that. I don't understand why that wouldn't be happening – maybe it is happening. I hope it's happening for the sake of your district but, boys, don't sit down and take it. Don't sit down and let your constituents take it. That is not what you were elected to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I, too, am continuing to receive emails. This one came in at 3:21 a.m. The Minister of Health is here so hopefully he might be able to address for us some of these questions, because I don't have the answer to them but he raises some very legitimate concerns.

He says: Since tonight is on Bill 19, regarding the 15 per cent insurance increase, wouldn't that also apply to ambulance and fire departments? Therefore, the cost of ambulance, which now

costs \$120, would increase to \$150. He raises a really good point.

Income Support payments for recipients, which is more of taxpayers – again, he raises another issue because anyone who is on Income Support, that ambulance is paid for from the government, Mr. Chair, so that would indeed have an impact on the budgets of the health authorities, I would think, or at least of Advanced Education and Skills. It would impact the budget somewhere and, at the end of the day, it's just the one pot and the money comes from the people's taxes, in large part.

He also says: If Income Support is not paying for the ambulance, it's paying for a taxi for people to go to medical appointments. Again, that 15 per cent increase is going to be on the taxi. Certainly the taxi rate won't increase by just 15 per cent because they are going to have to find the increase in insurance, they are going to have to find the increase in registration fees, and they are going to have to find the increase in costs. So that taxi is probably going to double in terms of price to individuals and to government for those who are on Income Support.

The 15 per cent increase in insurance would see a 25 per cent increase in charges for companies to recover the cost. Many private ambulance services, volunteer fire departments and the cost to seven departments of the St. John's Regional Fire Department would feel the major impacts of these increases. I certainly look forward to hearing from Members opposite or the minister as to how they are going to alleviate this burden for our service providers. It certainly is a very interesting issue and I thank the constituent for raising it with us and, hopefully, we will hear that addressed.

The same individual sent me a second email. He is really at a loss, I guess, as to determine how people are going to deal with all of the increases in the cost of living. He is also suggesting a minimum wage increase. He is of the view that the wage rate of \$10.50 an hour will have people living in poverty and he is suggesting that the minimum wage rate be increased to \$15 per hour.

These are the kinds of things that people are out there trying to figure out and trying to grapple

with. It's a quite a long email and he has done some research with respect to statistics. Like my colleagues have said, there is great and grave concern amongst the people we represent about what the impact of this budget will mean to the bottom line and what it's going to do for their quality of life, Mr. Chair. It is certainly not going to get better. It certainly won't be a stronger tomorrow or a better tomorrow. The tomorrow that the people face, once all the measures in this budget, and the last two being the levy and the 15 per cent on insurance, which have not passed – and we're all very hopeful that maybe there will be at least some moderate changes.

We are thankful, Mr. Chair, that in response to the outcry of the people that the Minister of Finance did go back to Ottawa and get some relief, so we do appreciate and thank her for that. But we are also saying that we need to go a bit further, Mr. Chair, because the cuts are too draconian and the impacts would be far too harsh on our people.

Mr. Chair, another thing that comes to mind as I listened to the heart wrenching emails that are being read out in this House by my colleagues – and as I read some of the information, some very personal, private stories we're hearing from people – I can't help but think about the whole issue of mental health and addictions which hasn't been getting a lot of attention. I do sit – I'm a proud Member of the Mental Health and Addictions committee and we've been doing work for several years on this initiative.

I thank my colleague for St. John's Centre who was quite instrumental in launching this whole initiative and having the great event we had. I think it was the first BeHeardNL, was it, I ask my colleague – I can't remember the exact name of the conference that we had that night down at Holy Heart Theatre.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was the launch.

MS. PERRY: The launch.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Community Coalition 4 Mental Health.

MS. PERRY: The Community Coalition 4 Mental Health, and incredible work, Mr. Chair,

that these people are doing. In the Liberal red book there was a promise that there would be a greater emphasis and more done to help people with mental health and addictions, but we haven't heard anything about it since the election. What we've seen – and again I'll reiterate what I've said in this House several times, actions often speak louder than words. What we've seen is a budget that I gravely fear will increase our issues with respect to mental health and addictions. People are very, very worried, the stress and anxiety that they will feel wondering how they're going to feed their children.

As someone spoke about earlier tonight, even something like Girl Guides – we all love our children. I don't have kids personally, but I love my nieces and nephews very much. I know everyone who has a child loves their child very deeply and wants to do whatever they can. To have a child who wants to avail of Girl Guides or who wants to avail of hockey but can't because you don't have the money is very stressful, Mr. Chair. It can cause mental health concerns for both the parent and the child, I would say. This budget is far too draconian. It will undoubtedly lead to an increase in the issues we're seeing in this regard.

As we went across the province and did consultations with people, that was already a prevalent issue for them with respect to financial restraints and the impact it had on their ability to avail of health care services that they required and they just had no money to do so, Mr. Chair. For people who don't live without a worry of where that next \$5 is, it may be hard to understand, but, boy, there are people where that \$5 means a lot and that \$5 is well budgeted for and that extra \$5 is nowhere to be found. That is real. It does exist and it's of major concern to them as they try and absorb the concept of what the impact of this budget will mean.

Here we are, we're all talking about it, people are very upset and angered by it but we've yet to feel it because it hasn't actually happened. We're going to feel it, come July 1. We're feeling it today in terms of the gas. That hurts enough.

Come July 1, we're going to see all the additional taxes with respect to HST. We're

going to see the rise in the cost of our groceries. We're going to see the rise in the cost of our insurance when we go to renew. It's really going to start hitting home and that's when the problem is going to become even far more serious, Mr. Chair.

In terms of representing the people, all of us here on this side of the House are quite honoured to be bringing your voice forward and to try relentlessly to have some sober second thought with respect to the measures of this budget and to implore that you take another look at a different approach, what you can do to actually stimulate the economy. We need to hear more about diversification. We need to hear more about hope. We need to hear more about what the plans are for the future. We need to see some positive actions, Mr. Chair, and we need to see some positive results.

I know that the people of the province will continue to bring forward their ideas and suggestions for us to consider. I think it's incumbent upon all of us here in this hon. House, on both sides, to heed the words of our people, to respect what people feel they deserve. Yes, we all know we'll have to tighten our belts and those things happen at times. We're all prepared to work together and pull on the oars as long as we're all agreed that we're going in a direction that will, in the long term, benefit us, Mr. Chair. We're not there yet, but hopefully we will be in the not-too-distant future.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm happy to stand and speak to this bill. We are now at 4:20 in the morning. Some folks may be rising, those who have early jobs, those who may be working in health care, those who drive taxis, people who work in the media. For some people, this is the beginning of their day, yet there are still lots of people snug in their beds, which sometimes seems like an attractive option right now. But we're very happy to be here in this House and to use this time and these resources to be able to bring the concerns and

the issues of the people of the province to the floor of the House.

Mr. Chair, the Minister of Finance, a number of times, told us how bad the financial situation is, in that she went again line by line by line through every budgetary item looking for ways to cut. I believe that's what she did and I believe that is also somewhat of an unfortunate way to approach this whole budget situation.

Her goal was to minimize the debt and it is her guarantee that in seven years, we will return to surplus. I have my doubts about that because, again, there has been nothing in this budget that has pointed to any kind of economic stimulus, nor any kind of economic growth. As a matter of fact, in her budget, she has indicated that we will see a slowing down of the economy. We will see further job losses as a result of her measures the province is taking to eliminate the debts and to bring us to surplus.

I, in fact, feel that rather than – government says that they are going to be dealing by diminishing the debt and diminishing the deficit. What we are hearing from people across the province is that this budget is creating deficits and debts for individual people and families in the province. One would wonder – I believe that the Minister of Finance cares about people, but I question the Minister of Finance's approach to how she is dealing with this budget, with the debt and deficit situation.

I'm happy as well to continue to read some of the concerns that have been sent to me about this situation, about the budget but also, particularly, the direct impact in people's lives by this budget. Someone told me: A friend in her mid-30s with a young family sent me this today. She's a government employee and doesn't want to be identified, but her and her partner are applying for jobs on the mainland since the budget dropped. She describes their family as middle class. And we're hearing stories of people talking about they feel that they have to leave. That saddens me for a number of reasons because one would hope that people would be able to find ways to hang on.

In some ways, for those of us who are a little more comfortable financially, we can find ways to weather this storm. There are a number of us

who are secure financially, who have backups. For some people as well, then it's hard to imagine how the odd fee being raised or the odd additional fee, or the odd levy or the odd drop in this or cut in this service would really drive someone away from the province. I find it distressing. Why would people feel that, because of a budget, they're going to leave their homes and their families and move elsewhere?

People can see the effects of this budget, and that's what we're dealing with here this morning. People are really seeing the direct impact on their lives with this budget and then not only their lives individually, but the province as whole. So they can see the growing unemployment; they can see the cut in services. Imagine if someone is really concerned about the changes in education and it's a young family and they are planning on having children. Anyone having children wants the best that they possibly can have for their children, and that's a very real concern.

So, to continue on with this, in her words: I understand that our province is in a fiscal state that is unimaginable and that some drastic measures need to be taken, but we made a decision to stay here a long time ago for several reasons and those reasons are disappearing daily. My children deserve a good education. As a middle-class family, I don't think I should have to worry about being able to feed my family a healthy meal. This is very odd for us to be hearing this; a family who identify themselves as middle-class, concerned about whether or not they can provide a healthy meal for their children.

We know with all the extra fees and with the extra taxes on gas that everything is going to increase. She goes on to say: The cost of living in the past year was enough, but looking forward with all the increases in cost and decreases in income, I can't make a budget work and it's frustrating. The government is top heavy and they need to cut spending from the top down, not the opposite. They need to stop looking out for their buddies and start looking out for our province. The future looks dire for our family, so the budget is forcing us to look outside so that they can have more now and later. I'm sick of the lies.

What we have here is a family that feels totally disempowered by this budget. Again, in some ways, it's hard to imagine – how could a budget do that to people? But we're getting a lot of emails like that. We're having conversations like that. Remember when the budget first came down, up in our office, the person, who is tasked with answering the phone, was nonstop. His desk is next to my door and I could hear him nonstop put the phone down – while he was on the phone, messages were piling up on the answering service. It was people talking about how the budget was going to impact them.

Now, I know that some Members in this House have accused us of fear mongering. Actually, it was quite the opposite because people were very confused about the levy. People were very confused about any kind of additional – were there special amounts of money to help people who were in really low incomes?

What we would do is we would try and calm people down and talk to them about whether or not they would have to pay the levy, or we'd talk to them about let's look and see if there are any programs or services that you would be able to avail of – people who were really concerned about the cutting of the over-the-counter drug program.

We didn't fear monger. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, what we tried to do was we tried to calm people down and say just hang on now, let's see what we can do, let's see what we can find out for you, let's put the brakes on this. But people are seeing it for themselves. I think the experience of the people of the province in relation to their feelings about the budget may not even be related to specific fees or specific taxes, but they can also see that nowhere in this budget does government say we're going to work together and weather this storm. That's what's missing.

First off, they saw that the promises that the Liberals made, the very clear promises that they made about no job cuts, no increase in HST – and I keep forgetting what the third one was because it was a broken promise anyway. I can't remember –

AN HON. MEMBER: Mental health support is as important as physical health.

MS. ROGERS: What's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: Mental health is as important as physical health, is it?

MS. ROGERS: I can't remember. We'll find it out. It's a broken promise, so it's left my mind. People felt so betrayed by that. They felt betrayed by their government and they felt that this government, that the province – they felt that something happened to their province.

AN HON. MEMBER: Evidence-based decision making.

MS. ROGERS: Their what?

AN HON. MEMBER: Evidence-based decision making.

MS. ROGERS: Evidence-based decision making, yeah. So people are disheartened and I'll be happy to get up and speak again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is indeed a privilege to get up and speak to this piece of enabling legislation related to *Budget 2016*. I was certainly delighted to hear my colleague speak of some of the responses she has gotten during tonight and this evening in regard to some of the things we're discussing here and the impact it's having on people. It is very important to be able to express that and outline it here in the debate and the discussion we're having.

When I was up earlier, I had an opportunity to mention the fact of some of the lack of economic diversification that we're seeing since this government come to power last fall and very little in the budget this year to direct towards that. One of the things I did talk about was some of the initiatives that had started and I think need to be continued on the last time I was up and spoke. One of those was our traditional fishery and what that means to all areas of the province as well as the aquaculture industry and what that

means and how we need to continue work on that as well.

As well, over the past number of years, the ICT sector in Newfoundland and Labrador has grown to approximately \$1.6 billion. We've seen a variety of new developments, digital media. The film industry in Newfoundland and Labrador has grown significantly when we look at the productions that have been done. Those complements and those professionals that have been developed to drive that industry are so important. That's a good investment as well. Those are the kinds of things I'd encourage those on the other side to look at and continue to pursue. That drives new opportunities and new dollars in the system, which is very important.

The other one, too, that's very important is telecommunications. Over the past number of years, if I can remember the figure, well over \$20 million was invested by the previous administration in regard to high-speed Internet and the leverage from the private sector, I think somewhere around \$100 million to the point, when we look at connectivity, we're very high – I think 97 or 98 per cent, somewhere in that range. Recognizing that telecommunications is regulated by the CRTC; it's a federal initiative and a regulatory framework.

Having said that, our administration recognized the importance today of access to high-speed Internet from not only an economic point of view, from a social development point of view, from a learning point of view. So we invested heavily in that to make connectivity a priority. What it was about was another example about a great partnership with the private sector where, in some cases, those that provide the service delivery to various regions and do it now, they would do their business case and business plan and say it's not worth our while to go in and do it because our return is not going to be significant enough to engage in that ourselves.

So we made a strategic decision, to work with the private sector, to use public funds to entice them to go into particular areas to build the infrastructure they need to put in, so the people living in those communities and regions of the province could have access to high-speed Internet. That meant, oftentimes, a cost-shared arrangement, maybe 70-30, where we would

partner with them, put public dollars in so that the infrastructure could be built for those families, the very young in terms of doing school work or just general knowledge could access the Internet, high speed. As well, certainly from an entrepreneurial point of view, small business can function anywhere now around the world, but in any community or any town or any city in Newfoundland and Labrador as long as you have that access.

That's very important too from the entrepreneurial and business side of things. So that's why we thought, and I think everybody agreed, that it was very worthwhile venture to do that to drive activity in our communities. Now, I noticed this year in the budget there is a small amount as well for investment in regard to high speed. It is not nothing like we've seen in prior years, but hopefully they will move to look at those areas now that – the last ones left are probably the most difficult and probably the highest cost, so there are challenges indeed in regard to that. Certainly with new technologies, being innovative, working with the private sector, I encourage them to continue down that path. As I said, it drives social and economic development, which is extremely significant.

I just know from my own experience in my own district, looking at regions over the past number of years that, for whatever reason, the signal wasn't available, the fiber wasn't put in, whatever the case, and it had to be resolved – we collectively worked to do that in areas like Middle Pond, Horse Chops, Admiral's Cove, Brigus South, those areas along the South Shore, Biscay Bay farther down on the Southern Avalon. Those are areas that are smaller communities, but still it's fundamentally important to have access to that high-speed Internet. Through the programs we were able to do that.

In my prior role as minister of IBRD, I know we oversaw that. In many communities right across Newfoundland and Labrador and regions, we were able to do significant work. I know on the Northern Peninsula, we did significant work there in regard to enhancement to high speed. I think there was a young company starting out, I think it was Northern communications – I'm not sure the exact name, but an innovative, new company –

AN HON. MEMBER: They're from Deer Lake.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Deer Lake. Yes, a very innovative company and doing great work. We were able to partner with them, which was great because that was a local company, some very bright individuals that were driving activity with it. That shows where you've got vision and strategic partnership in regard to working with such a company to drive new technology, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians partnering with government so we can drive their expertise. I think they're doing quite well in regard to that.

That's one area as well, as we look at economic development and putting strategic plans in place, what we have done in the past that we've seen a lack of here with this government. We certainly encourage them to get to work and to continue to drive initiatives like that and even new ones. It's good to know what their vision is, what their strategic directions are and where they want to take our province.

With commodity markets and things like iron ore in the mining sector and the oil and gas sector, there are challenges, but we do believe it's short lived. Commodities around the world are wanted. As we look at growth around the world, those types of things, that will continue to come back and it will be needed.

I mean, several years ago, China was having unprecedented growth rates of 7 and 8 per cent. It was really unheard of, but it was certainly driving iron ore and commodities. Places like Brazil, India as well, large countries, large populations as well where they're developing and have a burgeoning middle class, that drives commodities and drives goods and services that are generated around the world and drives the economy for us.

It's a global economy as we know. It's affected greatly by what's going on in the larger countries of the world. We do well because of that. We will bounce back from some of the difficulties we had currently, in the last couple of years. We need to have a plan. You need to have clear strategies on how you continue to improve our current industries and maintain them, sustain them, but also how you look outside of that. As I mentioned some examples

of what we've done, as a prior administration, of building in other areas and creating new growth that it needs to continue.

I urge the government to start that and to start letting people know what that vision is – or if they have one. Or if not, create one, and let us know what that strategic direction and strategic plans are so people have that hope and they have that direction and they have that desire to stay here, raise their children. We know with our demographics and what is happening with regard to our population, we need more people, young families, to continue to grow our economy. We look at our aging workforce. It is not only to have a taxation base to be able to raise the funds needed to take care of our seniors, but certainly to drive our economy for positions whether that is in the public sector or the private sector that we can develop those expertise we need to continue to grow our economy for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, as I said, it's so very important. I know over the night as well I've had a number of people contact me with different views and thoughts that they'd like for me to share here in the House during this debate. I look forward to the opportunity to get up over the next couple of days to continue to share those thoughts and ideas of people from Newfoundland and Labrador and also from my district, the great District of Ferryland, that certainly it is an honour to represent the people of the Ferryland District. I look forward over the next few hours to continue the dialogue, to continue the discussion, which is extremely very important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

The last time I was up, I was talking about some of the implications as a result of the closure of the courthouse in Harbour Grace and how it will compromise the ability and opportunity and access to justice by people of that region and also how it's going to reduce policing services because police officers, every time they go to

court, it will be about two hours. An hour, each way, to attend court and come back from court, so that's a two-hour travel a day for each appearance in court. I was explaining earlier how police officers commonly go to court. They could do it several times a week and that's two hours for each trip, plus the cost of transportation, the fact the police officer is not in the community and so on.

For my 10 minutes, this time, I want to focus a little bit on changes in the RNC that have been proposed and are part of this budget. Back in the early 2000s, back in 2004-2005, even earlier than that, there was a recognition that something had to be done to make improvements to the RNC in a number of ways. There was a new training program that had developed over a number of years. It started in 2004 at Memorial University but, also, government reflected that there was a need to grow the numbers of members because in the decade prior to that, during the '90s – it is worthwhile to go back to the '90s for this – numbers had diminished significantly. It went from about 400 police officers down to – I think the lowest number was around 296-297, that area, of police officers. There was a very small number hired during that decade.

A problem formed with the RNC in policing. I joined in 1985. There was another fairly substantial class in '86, a smaller number in '87, '88, '89 and then, essentially, recruiting stopped. So you had a group of police officers that were going through their careers, from the beginning of their career to the end of their career, with nobody coming behind them. As these police officers started to retire, with nobody behind them, there was a hole that started to fill in the vacuum. There were very few hires. As people continued to retire, there was nobody hired to replace them.

So, in 2004-2005, recruitment started at a pace. A large number of recruitment training has happened. I spoke to an officer today who, I believe, she said she was the second most senior officer on her shift and she has nine years' experience. That's because all of those senior officers now are in senior ranks, higher ranks. They are in specialized areas, investigative roles and so on. What you see on the front line, quite

often, you usually see all those young, newer police officers that are front-line police officers.

I was reading the most recent statistical report from the RNC, which was 2013 statistics from a report received in 2014. It indicated, in one part of the report, there was about 420 police officers in 2014, but in 2013 there was a smaller number than that, about 402 I think the number was, Mr. Chair. I have the annual report open in front of me. I'll just have a quick look; 402 is what the number was in 2013.

Also, they had a very high ratio compared to the rest of Canada. In Canada, police services are about 90 per cent male to female. The RNC has been very successful; that number is 76 per cent. So a much higher number of female officers in the RNC than there are comparable with the rest of Canada. They've done a good job, and kudos to them for focusing on trying to find a more gender-balanced police service.

What the previous government, when we were in power, and the PC governments even prior to me, had done was continue to build the service and also expand the numbers. There was a plan to increase by 20 more, a commitment 20 more; 10 had already been put in place two years ago and the plan was, for this coming year, to add an additional 10. That additional 10 have now been cut because of the budget. There are also four vacant positions that have been eliminated.

So that's 14 positions that they were expecting to have filled and additional officers that they are now not going to have. But here comes the problem. I just explained a minute ago how back in the 80s and 90s and in the early 2000s how this group of officers were hired and no one was hired behind them as they moved through their career. Here's the problem now is that 30 per cent of the RNC can retire today. That group that has gone through their careers, they've hung on; now they're in the 30-35 year period of their career, then there is a hole and gap, and then we have people with 10 years' experience – first class now has about 10-11 years' experience.

I mentioned the officer I spoke to had nine years' experience less, then there's a gap in between. So all these officers that are at the end of their career are able to retire today, and it's about 30 or 31 per cent of the entire service

based on the numbers we have, about 125 – I think the minister quoted, in Estimates, 126 officers that could retire today.

We know it takes a long time to fill that gap. That's been underway now for a decade. Yet, since 2004, when the first cadets started to train through the new Memorial University RNC training program, here we are a decade later and they are still not beyond the crisis that have existed because of the demographics and that if something was to happen – for example, if the government opposite decided we are rolling back public servants now the fall, and that includes police officers, police officers are going to say well, hang on now, I'm thinking about staying on another year or two years or three years and now you are going to reduce my salary and I'm thinking about the implications to my pension, the implications on my lifestyle. They are probably just going to walk – not all of them, but I would anticipate some are going to walk out the door.

I spoke to a police officer recently who got his papers filled out. He said they are in his desk, filled out and completed. Depending on what government does, he is going to walk out the door, because they don't want to have that negative implication. So reducing recruitment at this point in time, reducing numbers is a time when government should be focused on trying to build those numbers.

If 20 officers leave the RNC today, that's going to be significant to policing in our province. Twenty would only be a small fraction of what could walk out the door today. You have 126 officers I believe was the number – I heard 120 at one point in time, but I think the minister maybe in Question Period the day after or a couple of days after Estimates used the number 126, so I think he probably went and got an update.

Here is the statistical data that's important to consider as well. If you look at calls for service, Mr. Chair, in 2009 between the jurisdictions of the RNC, Northeast Avalon, Corner Brook and Labrador, they did 72,424 calls for service in 2009. If you go to 2013, it's gone from 72,000 to 77,276. That's a 5,000-call increase from 2009 to 2013. When a call for service is received, it either means something has to be

dealt with over the phone or a police officer now has an investigation to do or has something to follow up on; 77,276 in 2013.

I'm just reading from right off their website and on the most recent statistical report that's on there. If you look at violent crime – which is the most concern to all people. In 2009, violent crimes against a person were – and I'm just picking one line. We shouldn't just look at one line because you have to look at statistics in a larger way. Just as an example violent, crimes against person, 4,166 in 2009. These are reported instances in all RNC jurisdictions. In 2013, 4,229 saw an increase there.

All of the incident classifications – in 2009 there are 48,000 incident classifications including violent crime, crimes against property, other Criminal Code. Controlled drugs and substances see an increase there as well. I would imagine today's numbers are higher again. Other federal statutes, Criminal Code, traffic impaired violations, Provincial Court offences and motor vehicle accidents in 2009, 48,000; and 2013, just shy of 53,000. So the numbers are all trending upward is the point here, Mr. Chair, in that it's bigger demand for policing services than before, higher demand on individual employees.

We know there's still a fair bit of overtime work by officers so that they have enough people doing the jobs that they have and the response that they require. What we're seeing now then is a reduction in recruitment which is going to have a long-time impact to policing and a long-time impact to the citizens of the province.

So 420 officers, it's taken a decade to get those numbers back up. It's roughly where they are today. It's taken a decade to get those numbers up. They don't need to go back to the 290s and 300 range where it was. If police officers that can retire today were to walk out the door today, then it's going to have a significant impact on policing resources, response in the public.

We know, Mr. Chair, we hear every day in the news incidents of armed robberies and reported crimes. When I come back next – my 10 minutes is almost up. I heard this week – and the Minister of Health, I hope, can shed some more light on this maybe through debate. I'm hearing there's a reduction in transportation assistance to

people who need it for methadone treatment. If they can't get access to methadone, we're going to have a bigger problem than we've ever seen before.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an absolute pleasure to stand in this House once again and speak to Bill 19, the insurance hike bill.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to continue on now with reading out some more messages I've received from people who want to be part of this public debate and have their two cents' worth as it relates to this *Budget 2016* and to share their, I guess in some cases, their commentary, their frustration in some cases with government.

This is a text, actually. It's interesting because I'm getting texts and emails, Facebook, Twitter. They are coming from all different ways. This gentleman says: There are two types of mental illness, in my opinion. Mental illness related to a chemical imbalance and then there is society driven mental illness. This budget and the complete lack of innovation and revenue generation is going to increase the level of mental illness, and cost to the health care are going to rise due to this budget.

The extra costs and stress this is going to put on families and relationships is going to cost extra in family courts as well. I have been practically begging government to accept a meeting where I can show a much better way. It was never my intention to have to bring this message this way, but this message needs to be delivered in public if it may because the people of the province are going to hear it.

New parents take babies to the libraries for story time, a place to meet and talk to other parents about the struggles of parenting. It's a healthy, social, safe place for new parents to take a breath outside of their own homes. Mental illness, stop and consult, think. If it's possible, could you ask the – that's all I'm going to say about this one.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: No, I'm reading through the message. I'll stop right there because some of the other stuff that's being suggested there or whatever is probably not in the best interest of me to read, so I won't do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Yes, I don't want to be disrespectful to anybody. That's not my intent. I'm going to continue to read the emails and stuff but if it gets into uncomfortable territory, I'm not prepared to go down that road. So I'll leave that one there.

In terms of Twitter, I have four tweets here I'd like to share. And no, they're not from the Member for Mount Pearl North in case anyone was wondering, just to make that clear.

The first one: By the time I've paid my levy, insurance, gas, tax hike and everything else, it's actually cheaper for me to move. The next person says: Who are they saving Newfoundland and Labrador for? Everyone I'm talking to is looking to move. So that's two people saying that.

Another person says: You need to give Tracey a huge high-five – I assume he's referring to the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. You need to give her a high-five, so well spoken.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: The other message I received on Twitter said: Keep calm and filibuster on. It's interesting that people are still watching.

The last message I received was actually at 3:37. I don't know if one of these individuals is still up, but the last one was 3:37. I can see my phone is going there now. So there's somebody up now, I guess, watching again.

It's interesting, as I said, how this debate is being followed by so many people. The amount of public engagement, I would say, is unprecedented. You have to ask yourself, why would that be, because we haven't seen it with anything else. Why would it be that there's so

much engagement? My hypothesis as to why there is so much engagement is because –

AN HON. MEMBER: A big word.

MR. LANE: It is a big word, like marmalade. It's because it's impacting so many people, that's the answer. That's my guess. It's because it's impacting so many people.

As a matter of fact, I would suggest there's nobody in this province that's not impacted in one way or another by *Budget 2016*, without a doubt. Whether it be the young, whether it be the elderly, whether it be the single or whether it be married, whether they be middle-age people, whether they have family, kids, no kids, it doesn't matter. Everybody has been touched by this budget.

Some people have been touched more so, or have felt the negative impacts more so than other people. Some people are in a better position to absorb some of this than other people are. One thing I think that we all know for sure is that people are concerned, people are frustrated, people are angry and people are looking for alternatives. They're looking for alternatives to the budget.

I'm not going to stand here and say – which I haven't, and I'm going to continue not to stand here and say, we don't have a problem. I'm not going to say that because I believe we do have a problem. I'm not going to say that measures shouldn't be taken because measures should be taken. The status quo is not going to work for our province. Everyone acknowledges that.

Everybody acknowledges they are going to have to pay a little more and contribute. People want to – I suppose they don't want to. Nobody wants to pay taxes but they are prepared to, maybe that's a better word. They are prepared to pay their share to get us out of the hole. We all know that, I think, but I will say again, it's a matter of degree. It's a matter of what we can afford to pay to help get us out of the situation we are in, and it's about the choices that have been made.

There are a lot of choices that have been made in this budget. I've heard some Members opposite say we didn't have a choice. I'm supporting this. Do you know why? I don't like this budget. I've

heard Members opposite say I don't like this budget. There is lots of stuff I don't like, I don't agree with or whatever. I'm going to vote for it anyway, but the reason I'm going to vote for it anyway is because we don't have a choice. I would say we do have some choices. Like none of the choices are great choices. We don't have a whole lot of flexibility, but we do have some flexibility.

I'll go back to the whole education one, which is not even a monetary issue. I say to the Members opposite, you have to be getting it from your districts. I know you are on this whole education piece. I know you're getting it. You have to ask yourselves, and I understand the whole thing about what we can afford and we're in a tough spot, but to make these decisions to go ahead with full-day kindergarten and then have children in your districts who have special needs and they're saying they're not going to get the resources for them, and to be into multigrading and team teaching and jamming kids into a classroom, having to pick your name out of a hat for French.

I understand there are rural districts where they don't have that French. I get that, too. I think those should be brought up, not everyone else brought down. We should be going for the highest common denominator, not the lowest common denominator.

That's an example of something that's not even a monetary issue. It's just a choice that's being made to say we're going to do this at the expense of something else. I don't understand it. I can't understand how you can support that. I can't understand how you cannot be demanding the minister and the Cabinet to change it. Before it's too late, reverse it. It's not costing a dime. As a matter of fact, it will probably be less money. I don't get it. I don't get why if we're going to put \$30 million in a contingency – I'll say it again. I already said it but I'll say it again. If there's \$30 million in a contingency fund, make it \$29 million and save your libraries.

It doesn't impact me. I have one library in my district and it's very well used. The City of Mount Pearl owns the building and they pay for everything inside and out. They lease it to the province for \$1. They take care of all the maintenance inside out. So except for the cost of

the librarian and whatever, the rest, it's a good deal.

The library is not an issue for me, but my God, if I had four or five libraries in my district that were all going to close and I knew that we're hanging onto a \$30 million contingency, I'd be going mad. So I'm asking you, I'm asking the government to make some changes. I'm asking the Members, lobby and get some changes made. It all makes good sense. It all could be done.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

As we continue into the night, it's 5 a.m. now, I'm going to read into the record some more of the emails that we have been receiving from the fine folks of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This email states: I have been watching off and on for the past two days, and all I have heard from the Liberals is that they do not want to leave a huge debt to their grandchildren. Well, I am a grandmother, and this budget makes me wonder how my grandchild is ever going to have food on the table in front of her, clothes on her back and a roof over her head.

Yes, our province is in debt. I, a simple high school graduate who has worked minimum wage most of my life, realize that. Being a member of the lower class in our society, the class that struggles to make ends meet, I know that *Budget 2016* will ruin the lives of our children today. We will have no choice but to give our children unhealthy meals instead of nutritious ones because of the high tax on fuel which will cause a huge increase in imported grocery and produce items.

Mr. Chair, I spoke of this earlier tonight as well. In looking at the budget – and I have to say, I concur with the people who expressed the view that there seems to be more of a concern about what Wall Street thinks than what there is about the well-being and livelihood of our very own people, Mr. Chair.

Our government, prior to 2016, had laid out a five-year plan. Yes, it would have needed tweaks. Yes, I do think we would have made the responsible decision to defer all-day kindergarten once the continued decline in oil prices came on.

We had laid out a strategy that looked at attrition. Attrition, Mr. Chair, is much more favourable than job cuts. What you do is you're replacing the people who retire and have an income to rely upon. So for every 10 people that retired, seven would be rehired.

Wall Street, Mr. Chair, had no problem with that plan. Wall Street, in fact, endorsed that plan and maintained our credit rating. It was only after the election, it was only in January, actually, of this year that we received a downgrade in our credit rating.

Now, post-budget we didn't get a second downgrade which is fabulous, but we did get a downgrade in January. That was because the markets recognized that we had a new government. Before they expressed any confidence in a new government, they wanted to see a plan.

That plan, Mr. Chair, we're still waiting for. That plan hasn't been laid out and as a result, we, as a people, are now paying \$950 million in interest costs to service the debt. I would like to think that if – and, in fact, we've been told. It's not a matter of liking the thing; we've been told if a clear plan was in place, maybe that credit rating could be restored to what it was under the management that we had not so very long ago. We do still hold out hope that there will be some type of formulation of a plan because right now there is no plan.

Here is another email, Mr. Chair, from someone who is another concerned citizen that we all represent. While I listen to chirping from Members opposite, I'd really like to be hearing some compassion from them, and some acknowledgement at least that they are going to take the words and concerns of the people they represent into consideration and they are going to represent them at their Table. If they can't represent them at their Table, they'll find a new table.

This email from another person: I'm a substitute teacher and have been for the last eight years. I have zero hope of getting a full-time position in this province. The cuts to our education system are ridiculous. My daughter starts kindergarten in September; full-day kindergarten at the expense of the rest of the school system. I am not for this.

Now, this is a parent, Mr. Chair, of a child who's going to kindergarten but who is looking at the greater good and the interests of the province as a whole, not just at their child. Because I'm sure they recognize it would be a great start for their child to have this but they are looking at the bigger picture and the province as a whole. They are not willing to hold the province ransom and lose all the other benefits of the education system just for their child, Mr. Chair. So it's very good on her and quite impressive from her.

We need more supports in our schools, not less. I have substituted in many schools on the Avalon and classrooms are just not big enough to include more desks for higher class sizes, not to mention the lack of support that will be there for these children.

Mr. Chair, I had one teacher who works on the Avalon say to me, where are we going to put them? All we have left is closets. The nightmares have yet to begin because the minister is touting all the merits of it and, oh, there won't be any problems. Just wait until September comes. *Open Line* will be besieged with calls from upset parents. We will hear story after story after story from the professional educators in the system and they will be horror stories as they try to implement full-day kindergarten in a time when they are not ready and in a time when the province really can't afford to be doing it, Mr. Chair.

Our children are our future – going back to the email. Our children are our future and you are ruining their education. I don't know where the research came from but why, for the love of God, are you sending five-year-olds to school an hour before high school students. I am for double bus runs to save money, but we are not doing high schoolers any favours by letting them sleep in longer – a very good point, trying to get high schoolers ready for the workforce. I don't

know; the wisdom of some of these decisions makes you wonder.

In a few short years they will enter the workforce and will not get to sleep in. Have you thought about how this will affect after school programs, like tutoring for tuition? Junior high school kids will have to wait after school an hour for the high school tutors to show up. Really? Where are your heads, and how can you honestly say that you thought this through? My rant has been about the education system, but I can say so much more about everything else in this budget and the implications it has on the people of this province.

My Member is the MHA for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. She has not spoken. Where are you? Stand up for your constituents.

That is something we are quite proud, Mr. Chair, and quite honoured to do here in this House and we will keep this filibuster going as long as we possibly can. Thank you once again to the people who are sending us these emails so that we can ensure your voices are heard.

I have another email, Mr. Chair. This one says: It's about time for the Premier to resign. Between cuts, lies and scandals, it's enough to make a dog sick. Can you imagine this – this one is expressing anger again, Mr. Chair. It's unfortunate that this budget has incited so much anger in our people. We're a happy people, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and for the most part we're a gentle people, and to see the total lack of disregard for their well-being by the government is infuriating them, Mr. Chair, and rightly so.

She goes on to say: They have not accomplished anything since they took power. Moving forward will be nothing but stress for every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. I bet the cost of health care is going to rise across the province because if this soon doesn't stop, we're all going to need a bed in there. Enough is enough. It's time to up the ante so we can get back to some sort of normal in our lives.

Mr. Chair, every time I get up I only get about one or two emails in because each one needs so much discussion that we can have. This one again speaks to the mental health and addictions

issues and the inability of our families to be able to provide adequate, healthy eating, to be able to afford to purchase their diabetic strips or all medications which are all going up, having to travel over an hour to see a doctor, outrageous initiatives that are throwing cost after cost, burden after burden after burden onto the backs of our working citizens.

We truly do hope that the minister will revisit some of the measures she has introduced in her budget in the best interest of the people as a whole.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Here we are at 5:11 in the morning.

It's discouraging, Mr. Chair, that we are not hearing from Members of the government about some of these issues. Our challenge over the past few months – because it's almost been two months now since the budget came down. So much has been said. Many things have been said over and over and over again, and then sometimes it's so easy to get desensitized when we hear things being said over and over again. It's like oh yeah, here's that again.

Our goal as representatives of the people in our districts is to be able to bring their realities, their concerns and their issues to the floor of this House. Not simply just tell tough stories, but to hopefully influence the kinds of decisions that are being made in this House.

The way our Legislature is established right now, because of the type of voting system that we have which is first past the post, the representation of the people in this House isn't necessarily adequately reflecting the ways that people voted in this past election. That's been the case since our Confederation in 1949 and it's an issue that we really need to look at.

As people who have been elected by their communities, by our communities to come to this House to bring the reality of people's lives

to the floor of this House so that those are the issues that direct the types of legislation that is passed in this House, the type of legislation that is designed even before it comes to this House – and I guess that’s what we’re doing here this evening, or this morning as it is. We’re looking at what are the realities of the lives of the people in our district. How can we make sure that we are not getting desensitized, that we are actually looking again at the direct impact on people’s lives.

I have an email here from a mom. It’s about all-day kindergarten: Gerry, although I am not in your district, you are one of the few people there tonight that I feel will actually listen and try to make the others see what this budget is doing to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So basically in her opening she’s telling us she’s concerned that people are not listening. That’s what we’re hearing again and again and again, that people feel they’re not being heard. It’s a challenge.

One of our greatest challenges as a society is to listen to one another with the intent to really hear, to really hear what’s going on. Of course as we look at individual cases we think, well, we can’t really accommodate that one because we have to look at the good of the province and the bigger picture. I believe what is happening over the past few days is that by bringing so many of these stories to the House we are getting a bigger picture. That bigger picture is one of anger, of confusion, of fear, of a sense of betrayal, of a sense of hopelessness.

It is interesting because a year and a half ago we still felt that we were a have province; a year and a half ago we still felt that the sky was the limit. The price of oil was up. Government had been investing in infrastructure spending. There was a possibility of a new Waterford Hospital. There was a possibility of a new hospital in Corner Brook. We were looking at all-day kindergarten as a good thing. That we had come to the point where we could afford that.

The general feeling in our province was so different than what it is now. It seems to have come crashing down. Part of it is the result of the crashing oil industry, the price of commodities. Also the incredible debt and strain on our province because of Muskrat Falls.

That’s a big issue that we haven’t spoken a whole lot about here in the past few days. Hopefully, many of us will continue to raise that issue. That’s a huge issue and it has become a drain on our economy.

In this budget, in spite of library closures, in spite of clinic closures, in spite of cancelling the over-the-counter drug program and the adult dental program, \$1.3 billion will be transferred to Nalcor for Muskrat Falls. In the previous years, it has been over \$700 million every year transferred to Nalcor for Muskrat Falls. It’s a concern because Nalcor was supposed to be the powerhouse that was going to make us money. Will we ever get to that point? We don’t know. Will it be in our lifetime? We don’t know. We certainly don’t know.

It’s so interesting that the feeling in the province, that the sense out there on the streets and around people’s kitchen tables is that things have changed so drastically. A year and a half ago we felt we were a have province and we were trundling along and things looked good.

How many of us in this House had friends and relations, or even our own kids, who were working in Alberta thinking about, wow, maybe I can come home. Maybe I can move back home and move my family back home, that there’s work and things are looking good. Now we see the opposite, and it’s such a drastic change. Is it an exaggerated response? I don’t think so.

I think people are being realistic, and I think people’s reactions to this budget are because they expected and hoped for more from this government. They expected leadership. They didn’t expect accountants to just cut line by line, they expected leadership. They expected someone to say we are on your side, we have your back. We got our steady hand on the wheel and we’re going to navigate our way through this storm. We’re going to do it together and we’re going to make sure that when we come through it our communities will be stronger, our citizens will be stronger, our social programs will be stronger. There’s nothing in that budget to say that.

Back to the woman who wrote about all-day kindergarten. She said: Some Members of the Liberal Party have said they don’t want the

children to have to pay for the decisions made by the government. Well, they are paying for it because their education is suffering.

My nephew, who has a heart of gold and smile that lights up a room, has ADHD. He was supposed to get one-on-one support to help him with his schooling; however, this did not happen. My sister did fight for my nephew and was promised that going forward he would have the support that he was supposed to have. There was improvement with the support and it showed with his attitude in school but now that's all going to change.

My nephew, next year, is going to be in a multigrade classroom and the number of students is going to increase. How is my nephew going to get the help he desperately needs when there is an increase of students in the classroom and the teacher has to concentrate on multiple grades? We know he is not going to get the help that he needs. We know he is going to fall through the cracks and he is going to suffer. His future is going to suffer.

I am a supporter of all-day kindergarten; however, at this point in time we cannot support it – this is the letter that I'm reading out. Financially, we can't afford it. Schools need to be upgraded, teachers put in place, increased classroom size in multigrade classes. I'm begging this government, for the sake of the children, for the sake of my nephew's education and his future, please, please, please delay full-day kindergarten until the province is financially secure enough to handle it. I know that the steps have to be taken to get us out of this financial hardship, but the children should not suffer because of it.

Again, Mr. Chair, a reasoned approach. Again, what she's saying, I know that steps have to be taken. The people across the province know that steps have to be taken, but they know that some of the decisions are actually hurting people rather than strengthening people, rather than strengthening our communities. What they're saying is we want someone to listen to us.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferrysland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, again tonight – or this morning I guess, it's 5:20 – to stand and to speak to Bill 19, as well overall *Budget 2016* and some thoughts on that.

I recognize my colleague and some of the information she had in sharing some experiences and thoughts from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in regard to concerns they have with the particular budget. I think that's a great part of this debate and discussion here tonight, and over the past number of hours that we've heard consistently for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from all over the province in regard to their thoughts and issues with some of the initiatives that are in this budget.

What I'd like to do is just identify a couple of people I've heard from over the past number of hours and items of concern from them and maybe share some of their experiences in what they're telling me and what they want me to bring to the House of Assembly to let the government know, and all of us know what their concerns are in regard to the budget.

A couple of the ones we've heard from are in the actual budget document. One is related to reducing – I heard from someone talking about reducing the operational grants to the Research and Development Corporation. It was about \$3.2 million. That's someone who has experience with some of the grants and initiatives through post-secondary, through Memorial.

In my previous role, I know master's students; Ph.D. students would get access to actual grants and bursaries to do various studies at Memorial. It could be related to ocean technology, various research initiatives that happen at Memorial. Those students were certainly Canadian students and international students as well.

So it allowed an opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, Canadians and others from outside our country to come and study at a world-class facility in regard to those grants, bursaries and subsidies. A question to me, and I'm not totally sure whether there would be any reduction in those because they were seen as very advantageous and putting us on the

international stage in return to that type of research and be able to do it.

The other thing it does, too. We've talked about our demographics and helping to attract people to our province. This provides an opportunity for international students to come here and study as they do in other disciplines at Memorial. To come and study and to experience our culture, our way of life over a period of time, whether it's doing an undergrad, a graduate or maybe Ph.D. to become incorporated and assimilated into our communities here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and at that time hopefully maybe engage in employment and look at staying permanently here in our wonderful province, which we need those people. So there are certainly means to do that.

As well, from the Research and Development Corporation point of view, that was an entity that the prior administration made a huge commitment to in regard to growing applied research and development in Newfoundland and Labrador and tied to specific industries. Through the Atlantic Accord, there's provision through the oil and gas development offshore that a part of those royalties or part of the return from those assets would be required to go towards educational programs, research and development.

This was a means or a mechanism, one of them through the Research and Development Corporation, to access some of those funds through the offshore agreements and royalty agreements that we would look at facilitating greater technology inefficiencies in various industries and being twofold. As I said, it's applied technology, but as well to – and a classic example would be, I remember a number of years ago there was a project sponsored which talked about retrieving a greater amount of oil from an actual oil reservoir.

Obviously, that's twofold with that technology and ability to increase the extraction of oil from that reservoir was that obviously the oil company would get greater return, but obviously from a provincial point of view and a royalty point of view, we extract greater royalties because of that. So that's greater efficiency, greater financial benefit for all concerned, for the partnership. That's just one classic example

of applied research and how working with the industry through the Research & Development Corporation, that it's allowed to progress and we see greater returns for that for all concerned.

As I said, that's money well spent. Unfortunately, this year the overall grant has been reduced by \$3.2 million. Nevertheless, we certainly encourage government to continue with this initiative. We have seen huge returns on this investment from the research point of view, but also from the student point of view, as I said, in terms of particular training and how that's being supported. It's been very successful.

I mentioned earlier, too, in some of our discussion when we look at the development of the North Sea and what Norway did 40 or 50 years ago when they started out and developed their oil fields offshore. Incidentally, when you look at some of the work that's been done off here by Nalcor in regard to what's out there, much of that that has been done is very similar – the seismic work is very similar, the picture is very similar to what it was in Norway over 40 years ago which bodes well for current and future developments off Newfoundland and Labrador offshore and what it holds for us.

The offshore in Norway, we know they get their production platforms of even a couple of hundred is compared to us offshore now. I think in the near future we'll have four producing wells. If you can understand the magnitude and quantity and what we're talking about in regard to future development, future royalties, the future is indeed bright, but the issue is we need to get through a couple of years to be able to access the great wealth that's there. Obviously, that's driven by the global markets, global commodities, the world price of oil.

Also, the good relationship we have with the oil companies. The royalty regimes we have in place that is clear and concise. They know full well coming in we negotiate. Statoil obviously is a player that over the past couple of years with the Jeanne d'Arc Basin and the things they have found in terms of the work they have done and what their prospect is for the future and the amount of oil that is there looks very promising.

It's very important we have a very good relationship with them and build obviously in

the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, what our return is going to be for that development. That's deep water as well, which is a new add on to our offshore industry where we have been drilling in deeper water. There are challenges that come with that in terms of mitigating the risk, and challenges in regard to transportation of workers to and from oil platforms in deeper water. Obviously, it is further offshore.

Those are things that through innovation and things we've talked about here, even the Research and Development Corporation and working in partnership with the industry, we'll overcome those as they've done in other parts of the world. Whether it is in the North Sea, whether it is off the coast of Brazil, it doesn't matter. Those are obstacles that appear, and through working together and through initiatives they get overcome. There's no doubt, that will happen.

Other issues that we've talked about, people that we've heard from in the past while and some of the issues in the budget they talked about. Some concern in regard to Memorial and the reduction in the operating grant and what that may mean in terms of fees for students and those types of things. Obviously, over the past number of years in the previous administration, our direction has been to really focus on youth and give an opportunity for strong training institutions, easy access to try and eliminate – not eliminate, but I guess reduce – the amount of debt that they would have once they complete their formalized training.

In doing that, as I mentioned earlier, we talked about not only freezing tuition rates, but looking at the whole grant program, that it wouldn't be repayable. That loan portion of the grant wouldn't be repayable and it goes straight to a grant portion. That's what we did over the past number of years.

Those things are very important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as we hear from them. The other one I've heard from is the Prescription Drug Program for over-the-counter drugs. It's very important in introducing limits to diabetic test strips that are consistent with national guidelines. That's what was outlined in

the budget. There's about a \$5.5 million savings, I assume, for government.

I've heard even from my own constituents in regard to the importance for having access to over-the-counter drugs and other things that they require, especially – I was talking to a group in my district who are seniors. Obviously they're on a fixed income. That's new dollars for them now they need to take out of their pockets because they can't access those over-the-counter drugs as they did before. Now they need to pay dollar for dollar for them.

So there are some of the concerns, a few of them that we've heard over the last little while. I'm looking forward to getting back up many times over the next couple of days and talk further about what we heard from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and certainly bring it to light so the government on the other side can understand it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

I had a chance to get up and speak further on the budget earlier tonight, earlier this morning. I was speaking in regard to the plan for the budget under the Department of Justice and Public Safety to reduce the number of police officers in the RNC.

I previously had talked about the closure of the Harbour Grace courthouse. In particular, there are four courthouses, two Supreme and two Provincial courts that will be closing, but in particular the Harbour Grace court, any implications for people and also the pressures put on policing for that area.

The last time I spoke about the number of police officers, about 420 right now. Just about 30 per cent of them are eligible to retire from the RNC today. Some I spoke about, who I've spoken to personally who are eligible to retire, made comment about waiting to see what's going to happen in budget number two this fall – the fall budget and what actions the government takes. That will help form the decisions of officers who are currently eligible to retire. Then if they do

that, even if some of them did that, the impact it would have on policing for our province.

I note, Mr. Chair, under the RNC's corporate plan from 2014 to 2017, that it lays out a number of goals which we know resources would be necessary. It lays out a strategic direction and also goals the RNC have that would be impacted by a reduction in policing services. Their corporate plan that is laid out from 2014 to 2017, identified seven goals and 25 objectives, which are aligned with the strategic direction identified in the plan. The strategic directions include Public Protection, Order and Safety as an overarching strategic direction. Under that there are a number of goals, and one of them is to improve highway safety.

We heard last night of another fatality in the province. We know that highway safety is on everyone's mind. We know that highway safety impacts all of us and is a concern for us, especially with the increase in traffic that we see in some areas. Also, people seem to travel faster, seem to be in a hurry to get where they are and they don't pay attention to their driving as they used to.

We know highway safety is an important one and we know there is a correlation between enforcement action by police and the number of accidents. If enforcement action is increased and is communicated to the public that enforcement action has increased – not just for a day, or in the case of the RNC, if they did a blitz on the Outer Ring Road for a few days and traffic slows down for a few days, but once the RNC go away the traffic speeds start to pick up again. We do know with consistent application of enforcement, there is a correlation of a reduction of the number of accidents.

As well, there is an enhanced response to domestic violence. This is an area that is evolving, Mr. Chair, in response to domestic violence, not just from a reactive perspective but also a proactive response to domestic violence. Technology is being used today. Best practices are being applied today to be able to identify and target people at risk of being victimized by domestic violence, because we know there are patterns that occur with domestic violence, and that takes resources.

I have a sister-in-law who's a police officer in Fredericton, and she works specifically in this area in domestic violence. She researches files, looks at activities, trends involving individuals and then will follow up and intervene with a family to provide supports and assistance, but it's heavy resource dependent in order for this to be effective and reduce the likelihood of domestic violence.

We know many homicides in Canada – and it's not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador either – are as a result and are connected directly to domestic violence and lengthy relationships that are unhealthy and continue to worsen as time goes on.

Another goal under Public Protection, Order and Safety is the enhanced relationship with community and stakeholder groups. This speaks to both areas I just talked about, traffic safety and also domestic violence. There are stakeholder groups and organizations who are very knowledgeable in areas of concern in our society today, and who can interact with the police, RCMP and RNC, to better understand what these stakeholder groups represent, any information and guidance and expertise they can offer to policing. So police officers, police agencies can better adjust their response and their proactive efforts to have the greatest impact on areas of crime, concern and matters of interest for the community. The same goes with community groups and stakeholder groups.

The next one is enhanced response to persons with mental health issues. Mental health issues have been talked about at such great length here in the House of Assembly. It needs to be discussed and debated more. It needs to be talked about more and how the response for persons with mental health and addictions is dealt with. Like so many illnesses, it is known that the faster the response, the faster and earlier it's understood, then the better chance and likelihood of a productive and advantageous follow up.

I am sure the Minister of Health, with his background as well, could speak about health overall but certainly could speak to mental health issues as well. How better understanding, resources that are available, will increase the

response and assistance and support to individuals who are dealing with mental health.

Of course, police officers need to be trained. I know they do have training but it has to be a continued evolution of training and understanding of how to deal with such circumstances. There is such a variety and broad range of mental issues that police could be confronted with in the field and also then the responses and partnerships that are available to assist them in their response.

The other one, that's the other goal here under Public Protection, Order and Safety under the corporate plan for the RNC is to continue to implement intelligence led policing. That's an area that continues to evolve as well but, again, it requires resources.

The reason I raise these, because they are in the corporate plan of the continued development of policing, is the RNC has seen in their plan that they need to continue to focus and put resources towards these. We know if resources become stressed, which is a risk with the RNC, which could take many years to adjust back again – while there have been great advancements in funding and resources to the RNC over the last decade or so, it would be a negative impact on the RNC and on society in our community itself if those resources were to be diminished and stressed. Knowing that there are such a large number of police officers who can retire today, it could very easily be that police officers start to go but we know it takes many years to replace those resources, to train police officers.

I remember very early in my career being told by a police officer – and I might have two or three years – and he's saying: What do you know? Because it takes, some believe eight to 10 years – it could take a decade before a police officer actually learns their job and knows their job fluently and well. It's one of those careers where it's really, in large part, by your own experience that helps you drive and grow your own career and your own ability to do your job.

Also, under strategic direction there's Public Trust and Confidence which is so important, promoting gender equality and diversification – I talked earlier about statistically how the RNC has a higher proportion of female officers than

the Canadian average, and that's a good thing they've done – and access to justice, including business processes.

Even in the RNC's own corporate plan, they talk about access to justice which is an important factor for all communities for so many reasons. If you're a victim of a crime, if you're a witness of a crime or if you need access to justice for civil matters, then access to justice is important to society. It helps to keep the society healthy and also provides a better response.

I raise all of these, Mr. Chair, in three times that I've spoken this morning on matters of justice. It's a critic role for me as well and I thought it's important to take some time to put some attention to them because I believe they're important to the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, not only on the Northeast Avalon, not only in Harbour Grace, in other parts of the Island and also in Labrador.

If you look in Labrador, and especially in isolated communities, there are areas where police officers are only seen from time to time. Black Tickle, as an example, is a very rural part. Every so often the police will fly into Black Tickle. Quite often the community knows they're coming ahead of time. Sometimes they have to go in and stay in there a longer period of time because of an issue or matter that may be happening in one of those remote communities. We have so many islands and so many remote communities around the province that don't have a police presence all of the time. Sometimes that provides challenges for them.

In the case of Black Tickle, as I mentioned, a nurse is now being removed. When it comes to some of the areas that policing deal with – mental health, people who are in a medical crisis or in a domestic challenge themselves, then even having that nurse removed from the community can add extra pressure to families in a community and won't positively impact the community. It will actually negatively impact the community.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to take my seat. My 10 minutes is up once again. I look forward to the opportunity and chance to speak further, as the morning progresses, on matters involving the

budget and decisions that this government has made.

Thank you.

CHAIR (D. Bennett): The Speaker recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to stand once again. It's 5:41 a.m. so in the words of the late Mike Critch of VOCCM, it's late last night, early this morning.

We're debating here in the House of Assembly *Budget 2016*, specifically. I can't even tell you what the bill number is now, 19. It has been a long couple of days, but at the end of the day I think it's worthwhile.

I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly appreciate the fact that we continue to bring their concerns to the forefront. I look forward to doing so over the next number of hours, number of days and possibly into the weekend. Who knows where we go from there. Anyway, we'll keep her going as long as we need to and hopefully, the hope in all of this – some people say, why do a filibuster? What's it all about? What's it going to accomplish?

The government has the right in the end to vote on the budget, vote on every bill, and they can pass every one of them. That's true. That's the way our democratic system works. Now, there are some people who would argue, and I've heard people say it a number of times, that really what we do under our system is we elect a dictatorship for four years. That's what some people view it as.

I understand why they would say that, because it is kind of true. You run for election, somebody forms a government and at the end of the day they have the majority and they can put through every piece of legislation, the budgets, do it all and they don't have to change a thing. They don't have to listen to anybody. If they do a poor job, the only time that people get their say is in four years' time when you can either say, you know what, you did a good job and we're going to keep you there –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – or you did a lousy job and we're going to turf you. That's our system. There are many people who would argue that there are challenges with that system, there are problems with that system.

I've come to the conclusion that there are problems with that system. We really need to have our system revamped as far as I'm concerned. A complete overhaul of how we do things in the House of Assembly. That's right from the very beginning in terms of political parties and party donations, and how that's all done and the amounts people are allowed to give, amounts corporations can give and how all that's done. It ties into, even if you form the government, this whole concept of all-party committees, which as far as I'm concerned should be mandatory. We have a process that exists in the House of Assembly but they are never used or they are hardly ever used, and really they should be used.

There shouldn't be a piece of legislation go through this House of Assembly without going through that process first. How much better would the legislation be if there was actually an opportunity for input from all parties so that we can get something there that everybody could reasonably agree on before the start. Then we wouldn't have to get into this business of trying to put through amendments and amendments being found out of order and all this kind of stuff for technical reasons and otherwise, or government just simply not wanting to have to admit that, wow, we made a mistake, or there was something there that could have been done better and we're not going to give it to say that was the case so we're going to vote it on through and accept no amendments.

The whole concept of recall legislation, which was brought before the House, the timing was questionable and suspicious. I'll agree with the government on that one. The timing of that private Member's motion on the recall legislation, the timing was suspicious, given the circumstance, to say the least, and it could have been done 10 years ago if the will was there. I get that, I agree with that; but, that being said, it's still not a bad concept to look into. All of these reforms are good things, I think, to look

into so that we could have proper debate on bills, proper input, from Members.

Even the budgetary process – and this is not new either; this happens with all governments. But private Members on the government side have no input into the budget. That's the reality. You see the budget a couple of hours before it's read in the House of Assembly and then you're expected to get up, stand and support it. Whether you agree with it or not, support it anyway. Detrimental things in your district, you support it anyway. That's the system.

That is not being critical of this government any more than any government, but it's the system. And the system is wrong. There should be input by Members. If that had to happen, some of these things that are in this budget probably wouldn't have happen, or there's a good chance it wouldn't have happened. The Member could have had that input, and that's a problem.

That's why when we look at a number of the things in this budget, a number of the decisions that were made, they're wrong. The sad thing about it, Mr. Chair, is that I know that Members over there know it's wrong. Absolutely, they do; they know it's wrong. The Members know that there are things in this budget – there is no Member going to stand up and say yes, you should have shut down that library; yes, you should have shut down that courthouse; no, you shouldn't have done these roads, or you shouldn't have done this or you shouldn't have done that; or I agree with the levy.

That's why there're not up speaking. I know why they're not up speaking, because they can't defend it, that's the reality. They'll do it once or twice because they have to do it for the team. I get that. I've been there, done it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Team player.

MR. LANE: Absolutely, team player. I've been there and I've done it. I played the team player too, but at the end of the day, you have to remember that the team that you are playing for is your district. That's the team, the people who elected you – that is the team, ultimately.

I know it's a tough decision and I know it's got to be killing you to hear Members reading all

these emails and stuff because you're getting them too. It's got to be killing you to sit here and hear it because I know you're hearing it. But it's true; no one is making it up. People are not supporting this budget. They are just not supporting it. We understand why they are not supporting it, because of all of the measures that are in here. They don't all have to be in there. That's the thing. They don't all have to be in there.

Changes can be made. They really can. Don't think for a second because you voted for the budget that she is over. It is not over. The Cabinet can come in here tomorrow if they wanted to, if the will was there, they could come in tomorrow – the Premier could call that Cabinet and say, listen, we're changing this, we're changing that, we're changing something else and it's happening. The Cabinet can agree to it and they can bring it down and you can vote for it and be happy to vote for it. Probably everyone over here could vote for it too then. So it can happen.

I'm encouraging Members, lobby. I'm not saying you're not. I know a lot of you are. Keep lobbying. Don't take no for an answer because, at the end of the day, it's your district that's getting impacted. You're the one that's going to wear it. You're going to wear the decisions. You were an elected Member. You were elected by the people in your district the same as every other Member in this House on all sides. They elected you. They didn't elect this minister of that minister, they elected you, and you're just as important and you have a vote just like everybody else.

You don't have to go wearing this. The detrimental things that are happening in your districts, you don't have to wear it. I encourage you, lobby, lobby, lobby, internally, make some changes. As I said before and I'll say it again if I knew there was \$30 million in a contingency and all it was going to take is one of those million, that's 29 million and now all of these libraries are saved, I would be saying, b'ys, make it \$29 million. Save my library; make it \$29 million. It's simple enough.

If you even look at the budget, we are budgeting at \$40 a barrel. We are up to \$50, \$51 or whatever it is and have been for a while now.

This budget is not going to be as bad as what's being said. I'm not saying we're not in a tough situation, but it's not going to be as bad. You're putting all these measures in place to mitigate against that, and that's a good thing. That's good fiscal prudence, no one is arguing that but, still, it is not going to be as bad. Some of the things that are being done are not necessary; that's all we're saying. They are not necessary.

You are going to put all of this negativity on people in your district and people in my district and over here in their district and we don't have to do it. We really don't have to do it. All we need is a sober second thought and make a few changes. If you made a few reasonable changes, the people would accept it.

The people know we're in tough shape. People know that they're going to have to pay more. Everyone knows that, everyone expects it. We're gone to, I can't say the – we're gone to hell with it. That's where we are gone. We're gone too far, too much, and all we need is to make some changes.

It's still not too late. I encourage everybody to lobby to get that done. I encourage the ministers lobby to get that done.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I know that you know the difference too.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to start out by congratulating you on doing a fine job in your new role there. In the wee hours of the morning we're all still managing to be quite coherent, which is great.

I want to thank my colleague for Mount Pearl – Southlands. He always gives me a great intro to start with because his topics are very relevant, Mr. Chair. It's easy for me to expand and continue on with the debate and the points that he's raising. I certainly commend all my colleagues.

The Member for Ferryland – I was just outside watching him on the cameras actually. I'm quite proud of my colleagues that I have here in the House and of their intellect, their compassion and genuine concern for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also really enjoy hearing him talk about diversification. He has a great handle on the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador and a great belief in the potential of the people. One day we will hear us all talking proudly once again about the province we live in and the hope we have for the future, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to pick up where the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands left off and talk about that \$30 million again. Why do we have \$30 million parked in a contingency fund? Yes, we know it's there for emergencies. We also know, though, that should there be a dire emergency, the federal government will be there. Anything in excess of \$500,000 the federal government has a program which automatically kicks in. So people are right to ask questions in terms of what are they really doing with this \$30 million.

We survived quite fine for the last 10 years without \$30 million parked to the side. When we did have Hurricane Igor there was a response and money was found. I don't buy that argument. I don't buy it one single bit. I do truly believe that we should be avoiding all these devastating cuts to education and health care by reallocating some of that \$30 million. If you want to keep a contingency fund, roll it back even; roll it back to \$20 million or \$25 million, but keep the money in health care and education so that we can keep the libraries open, keep the clinics open; keep the Intensive Core French program and stop some of this outrageousness that we're doing in destroying both the education system and rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair; keep some of the money in the seniors' pockets and allow them to be able to continue to afford the medicine that they so desperately require and that they deserve.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Mr. Chair, now I'm going to resort back to reading some of the emails of the

people of Newfoundland and Labrador. This one reads: These Liberals are mocking us, the people of this great province. This is unacceptable. They need to be turfed out and we should demand that the Lieutenant Governor do his job. I think I will write Queen Elizabeth and tell her what is going on.

Now, Mr. Chair, the Lieutenant Governor has come up quite a bit recently because people are wondering: How, in God's name, can we get out of this situation without having to wait until 2019? I'm going to digress a bit and say if there's anything good at all that's coming out of this debacle of a budget, it's that people are becoming interested in politics. People are becoming much more interested in what is happening in this House, how legislation works, and I do think, in future, we will see an increased participation in the vote. Because people want to be heard, and they want to be able to say to the politicians that represent them we have a voice, you are our voice and we're going to elect the person that best serves us. People will no longer sit by the side and just watch things happen. I think people will become much more active in making things happen. So that is a bright side to this whole debate, Mr. Chair.

Another person writes: The Premier downright lied in his campaign, the telling of half-truths, not speaking to the press, and missing deadlines for negotiations. You may not have known the true finances of the province, but you do not need to cripple the province to correct it.

Another person writes: Stop running our province like it's a burger place. All they're doing is cutting and taxing. Be the voice of the people, be there to need the people, be in the best interest of the people. It's all about the people. Stop missing dates with unions for bargaining. Make the right decisions for once.

The emails continue, Mr. Chair. Again, I will say there's a lot of frustration and anger out there. To go on with the next one, this person talks about the choices once again. I think that is what we're all saying. We all acknowledge that things need to be addressed. We all acknowledge that with the price of oil being down, we don't have as much money to go around to do the things we'd like to do.

This person writes: The choices made by the Liberal government, especially Premier and Finance Minister, are not the sign of intelligent, reasoned stewardship. To compound the blunders and grievous miscalculations in the budget, which are having and will continue to have an adverse effect and oppressive impact on the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, they then make another idiotic misjudgement – and Mr. Chair, I am reading the email. So like my colleague just said, we're voicing the words of the people.

They then made another idiotic misjudgment and hired McInnes Cooper at \$350 an hour to run the collective bargaining for the province, who then hired consultant Cathy Dornan as their communications strategist. Dornan being the same Dornan who was Liberal Premier Brian Tobin's director of communications. They go on and talk about further connections to the Liberal Party. They talked about, actually, some of these people working on Liberal leadership campaigns, Mr. Chair.

Then they go on to say: And then – and this is all bold caps lock – this collection of legal minds dropped the ball on the nurses' contract. This is not to say that patronage of this kind has never happened before in the governance of Newfoundland. At a time when the decisions of so-called managers of the Exchequer have seriously violated the trust of the people they represent, taking this action in no way represents insightful, knowledgeable and prudent decision making.

Mr. Chair, they are very, very, very concerned with what they're seeing happening. Like I say, this government touted itself on its Bill 1 and trying to take partisanship out of politics, and you have someone who worked on the minister's campaign now being hired as a consultant. I understand and appreciate that the people of the province are very concerned about it. When the promise has been made there would be a higher bar, then people expect to see that higher bar. They certainly don't expect to see the same type of patronage that has existed since 1949 continuing on. They're expressing their frustration and their dismay, and rightly so. I have several other emails. Some of these are quite long, so I'm going to leave them for the next time that I rise to my feet.

If there is anything that we can get across to Members opposite here tonight and during the course of this filibuster is that you have really, really, really disappointed the people. The people feel let down by your leadership. The people feel betrayed by the budget. The miles and miles and miles and miles between what was promised in the election campaign versus what was delivered, there is no reconciliation for that in people's minds and next year or as we get closer to an election I think if you open the books and start to spend, spend, spend, it is going to be hard to do away, given that is what you are saying is the root of the problem. So that would be a hypocritical thing to do.

It is also something you are saying that we can't afford to do. If you want the public of Newfoundland and Labrador to believe that we have to rein in spending, then that's something that you are going to have hold fast to, even going into an election. So you are making some interesting times for yourselves as politicians but, far worse, you are making hard times for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The people are saying it is unacceptable, they want you to revisit the budget, and we truly hope that over the course of the next few days that is exactly what happens.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I would like to reiterate once again – and here we are at 6 in the morning and some people are pretty tired, some people are pretty fresh. There are people coming and going. I imagine a lot of people now are waking up and getting ready for their day, maybe getting the kids ready for school. For those who are taking school buses, some of them long trips on their school buses and maybe have to get to school extra early. So a new day begins.

We are still Tuesday here in the House of Assembly, although that can be a little bit confusing. We are still in Tuesday. Although,

for most people outside of this bubble, it's Wednesday, but we are Tuesday, go figure.

Again, I would like to quote from Doug House who was the Chair of the House on Economic Recovery Commission from 1989 to 1996. The Economic Recovery Commission was struck to look at: How do we make Newfoundland and Labrador a more sustainable economy? How do we make sure that our rural communities are more sustainable? How do we move beyond just our addictions to one or two industries or megaprojects?

He said – I quote again: “The economy does not operate in isolation. Successful economic development depends on successful social development and sound environmental management. Education and training, employment programs, social-security reforms, transportation and communications, infrastructure development – all need to be coordinated and integrated so as to contribute to economic development.”

Mr. Chair, the last few times, I spoke I raised the issues of how could things have changed, how could this spirit in the province have changed so drastically when we look at where we were two years ago or a year and a half ago, when it seemed that there were all kinds of possibilities and that we were a have province. Now we hear people talking about leaving the province. How are we going to turn that around?

I believe the problem with this budget is that there wasn't an overall overarching vision for the province. There wasn't an overall overarching plan that looked at stimulating the economy, strengthening our communities, strengthening our people. People see that so people are kind of feeling at loose ends. All they know is that this government, the Premier and the Minister of Finance, kept saying the situation is bad, it's unprecedented, it's horrendous.

They were the ones who were saying that the sky is falling, not us. We weren't the ones fear mongering on this side. It was government who did that. They kept hammering it home again and again and again and again and the people believed them. Why wouldn't they? Just like the people believed them when they said when they were campaigning that there'd be no job losses

and no HST increase, the people believed them. This government has spread fear and confusion and despondency and hopelessness because of their messaging before they brought their budget down and then once they brought their budget down.

I would like to read a few emails that I have received or letters from young people. It's a little discouraging. I believe that this government has a moral obligation to try and turn this around because people are despondent, they feel that there is no hope, (a), the way the budget attacks people – and again, the government says that the budget is dealing with the deficit and with the debt, with the great debt and the great deficit that the province is experiencing, but the other thing that this budget is doing is creating a deficit and a debt into the lives of individual people and into the communities of the province.

This from a young man who is in grade 12 at Holy Heart and he emailed me and he said: What can I do about this filibuster? I said: Speak to your friends and let me know what your friends are saying; let me know where your friends are at with what is happening in the province. This is what he wrote: B – B is a girl – has continuously expressed to me that her and many of her friends and mutual friends have expressed that they have no choice but to leave the province in the next year, especially with possibilities of what could be in the October budget.

Now, we know that the other budget is coming down. Government has warned us that it's going to be really difficult, so people are sitting on their wallets; people are afraid. And it's the messaging that this government has pounded into the psyches of the people of the province that the province is on the verge of bankruptcy; instead of we have some real, significant economic challenges – people can get that message – however, together, we're going to weather this storm and work it through.

No, all they gave was despondency and hopelessness, and the young people have heard that message. He goes on to say: I personally know of at least 10 people at Holy Heart whose families have taken jobs outside the province and are leaving at the end of this year. That's horrible news. That's really horrible news. Is

that directly related to the messaging? Again, this messaging has been going on since this government was elected.

Since this government was elected at the end of November 2015, this government has pounded down the message of the dire financial circumstances. It's been bouncing off the walls of this House of Assembly. It's been bouncing off every wall in the province.

I'll continue on with the email: Many students who drive can hardly afford gas anymore for leisure summer activities. They're aware of the price of gas. People are afraid of increased tuition fees at MUN. So far, we seemed to have avoided that, but there was a possibility that those tuition fees were going up. We don't know what's happening next year because of the \$20 million cut to MUN, and the previous government did a \$40 million cut to MUN last year when, in fact, what we should be doing is investing in MUN, making sure it's a centre of excellence because we need to be investing in our young people. We cannot be cutting this deficit and this debt by turning our backs on the future of our province, the future generations of our province.

Mr. Chair, he went on to say: Many, many, many of the people I've talked to have expressed they mistrust the Liberal government and even high schools are beginning to make choices as if they may need to leave or not. That message has been ingrained again in the people. That message came from this party. That message came from this government who are saying that the situation is so desperate, and people believed it because they kept reiterating that message time and time and time again without countering it with: However, together, we are going to be able to pull through this. That's the part that they didn't do. We can see that in the budget.

I can remember, Mr. Chair, when I first read the Budget Speech before coming into this House of Assembly, I was heartbroken. I thought: What? This is what this government, this is what this Premier, this is what this Minister of Finance is presenting us with? An accounting exercise that gives people no hope whatsoever.

Even the young people, Mr. Chair, have picked up on it. They've absorbed that message as well

because they hear it in the news, they hear their families talking about it, and they hear their teachers talking about it. I don't think that's the message we should be giving. I think that the message that should be given is that there is going to be a way out, not that we are going to cut the financial costs, but again what Dr. House has told us: "The economy does not operate in isolation. Successful economic development depends on successful social development and sound environmental management." That's what this government has forgotten.

"Education and training, employment programs, social-security reforms, transportation and communications, infrastructure development – all need to be coordinated and integrated so as to contribute to economic development." That's the message that this government has to get out.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

MR. KIRBY: I have a point of order, Mr. Chair, under Standing Order 49.

CHAIR: There's a point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm calling a point of order under Standing Order 49, offensive language. According to Standing Order 49, no Member shall "use offensive words against any Member of this House."

We had a conversation last week, Mr. Chair, in the House about trying to do through the backdoor what a Member cannot do through the front. I just would like to get a ruling at some point on whether the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune did that very thing just prior to the speaker who was up.

As I recollect, and you can check the record, I believe the Member got up and said she was reading an email that said, I quote: The Premier lied. Now, if I got up here in the House of Assembly and I said that any other Member of

the House of Assembly lied about something, then that would be a violation of Standing Order 49 using offensive words against another Member of the House.

Moreover, if I got someone or if someone sent me an email using an expletive, could I stand up in the House of Assembly and use that expletive against another Member of the House of Assembly under the guise that was sent to me by somebody else. I'd like to get a ruling on that because to say that the Premier lied, whether it's allegedly in an email to you, it still seems to me that is a violation of Standing Order 49.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair will take the point of order – sorry, the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Chair, in regard to Standing Order 49, it references no Member shall speak disrespectfully and it goes on to list. My understanding is the hon. Member was speaking from other emails from people of the province that she had received and was reiterating what was in those emails. It wasn't directly from her.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Again, I'll just say the Chair will take the point of order under advisement and report back to the House.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to stand and speak on the bill here this morning. We've had a number of hours speaking to it and had good discussion. I listened attentively to my colleague for St. John's Centre speaking to particular circumstances that she has spoken on, some people she had spoken to and what they're views were. She spoke on some of the implications of some of these decisions and choices that were made in regard to people's lives and the issues that are of concern to them moving forward and looking at how they are going to be affected by the choices that were made in *Budget 2016* by this Liberal government and what it's going to mean for them.

I've had a number of people as well who have corresponded with me in regard to items and issues they have in regard to the budget. I've shared a few but I'm going to share a few more in regard to what was relayed to me. I have one here, just indicates to me, writing as a concerned constituent. To give some background: I grew up in Newfoundland, as my family has for generations, like many of us have; generational, many of our families. She talks about, she loves the fresh salt air and the brightly coloured houses and the overall culture and traditions of our great province.

She graduated from Memorial University in 2011 with two bachelor degrees, and immediately went to work teaching in public schools in rural areas of the province. I would have preferred to stay here near my family in St. John's, but recognizing teaching jobs are often hard to come by, she took what she could get and she taught in Newfoundland for four years before taking a year off from her position to follow her spouse abroad.

She goes on to say, and referencing the budget cuts funding – in many areas have a direct impact on her life. She talks about fewer libraries, fewer teachers, tax on books, less funding for Memorial University and of course the debt reduction levy to name a few.

She said: I understand the need to bring our spending in line with our income so that we reduce our provincial debt; however, I believe this budget is short sighted. If government taxes citizens in every possible way you will find taxpayers forced to leave the province. Moreover, those people who feel they need to leave because of this budget, educated and skilled workers and young families are exactly those who are the drivers of the economy.

I guess we had a lot of discussion about that, about maintaining and growing our population. Young people, young business people, entrepreneurs, young professionals, highly-trained individuals throughout post-secondary institutions, those are the ones we want to maintain to continue to grow our population and based on our demographics to fill those positions both in the public and private sector that will come open in years to come. It's very important we provide that environment and

encouragement, hope and plan, that those people want to stay here and grow our great province.

This lady goes on to talk about increased taxes will surely bring more revenue for the government until the source of those tax dollars can't take anymore and moves away to a place that offers basic public services. She referenced the old saying you can't squeeze blood from a turnip, and the turnip has had quite enough squeezing.

She talks about the fact of spreading her opinion in regard to this and referenced that elected officials exist to represent those that elect them and the general population, and wants to make sure that all MHAs speak out and are heard clearly and loudly on issues of concern to residents. I think what this lady highlights are many of the concerns that have been expressed in regard to challenges with this budget and some of the means that are taken, some of the choices that are made.

The concern for us is the fundamental principle – and I talked about it earlier – in regard to sustaining our communities and our demographics and what that's going to mean in regard to continuing to grow our population. People want to stay and live. Whether it's the smallest community in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it's bigger towns or one of our cities, you need to have access to services and programs. That may be on a regional basis, it may be just from a hub, but in a reasonable amount of time you want to have access to medical care, you want to have appropriate road infrastructure, you want to have access to education, access to recreation facilities: all of those things that drive social as well as economic well-being.

Some of the things we're seeing here in this budget certainly question the ability of people to be able to access it. First and foremost, people need to feel that they're going to live in a particular area of the province and by doing that, not only have access to those services, but they need to believe they can have a brighter future and a sustainable future.

That's all tied to providing a certain standard of living and care for their family, whether that's their mom and dad who are seniors, whether

that's a young family, a middle-class family now raising kids, whether that's young people coming out of post-secondary, coming out of trade school or coming out of high school and going to work, maybe works an entrepreneur, maybe start their own business. They have to have a feeling and understanding that there's a future here and they're going to make the commitment to put down roots to build a place from here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

They don't feel that or they don't feel their government is outlining for them what the plan is today, not only today to deal with particular circumstances, but what it's going to be next year or the year after and 10 years down the road. They're looking ahead. Anybody who's going to invest, whatever investment you do, you want to make sure you're getting a return on that investment. If you're going to put down roots in any part of this province right now and think that it's going to be there for me in a number of years, and if I have kids, they're going to have opportunities available to them and it's going to be successful, well, that's important. In this budget, the message has been mixed from day one. Prior to the budget being announced, we had the Minister of Finance telling us there was nothing good in this budget; there were no good choices made in this budget.

After the budget was announced, the message was the same. Shortly, a week after, we were told there were a lot of great things in this budget. It was a wonderful budget – it was not a bad budget. There are good things in this budget, so don't worry. The problem for all of this is that the message has been all over the place. If we're looking for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to want to continue to grow and prosper in this province, first and foremost we need a clear message from them on what the plan is, recognizing that there are some economic challenges right now, but a clear and decisive, balanced approach of how we deal with that.

That we articulate it clearly and we listen to the people, obviously, so they have an understanding of what it is, and we hear their views, that can be presented to them in a manner that gives them comfort and confidence in our economy and allows them to want to stay here and continue to be part of Newfoundland and Labrador. Because we do have a lot of natural

resources; we do have a lot, in the future, that we can look forward to, but we need to have a strategy certainly from a diversification point of view, economic management point of view, that we can maximize the potential from those resources and what we have.

Whether that's our traditional industry, as I spoke to before, in regard to our fishery; whether that's the oil sector, which holds tremendous promise in terms of reserves off our shore; whether it's our entrepreneurs and the great business people we have in our province, continue to grow and provide economic opportunities and employment for people; whether it is through our post-secondary facilities and the scope and level of opportunity out there that exists for our young people; whether it's the Marine Institute, whether it's Memorial, whether it's the College of the North Atlantic, those campuses around the province. All of it provides tremendous opportunity. We need to continue to match up those skills, labour, with what is needed in the workforce. That's an ongoing process in terms of identifying that and making sure we meet the demands of our economy today and certainly years out. That's something that we tried to do, in the previous administration, to match that and we continued to work on it.

But, as I said, the point here is that we've got to lay out the plan for hope and make sure the people understand, have confidence in the government and in the province that there is a bright future here and there is a plan. That's all people want to know. Whether you're running your household, whether you're running a hockey team or you're coaching, you want to lay out a plan from the start and how you're going to do things and how you give confidence to those that are around you, and that's all we're asking for here.

This budget, unfortunately, doesn't do that. It sets the wrong tone. It's been communicated poorly. I think we need to revisit some parts of that. And, as my colleague said earlier, it's never too late to do that. It's never too late to lobby and advocate and make sure that we get this right because we're at a critical point in our history and we, indeed, need to make sure we make the right choices.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

Good morning, everyone. To those people tuned in at home, it is now 6:24 on the clock on the wall here in the House of Assembly on Wednesday morning, June 8, but it's still Tuesday on our calendar. We started sitting at 1:30 on Tuesday afternoon and we sat Monday afternoon at 1:30, almost went 24 hours – well, 23½ hours or so, broke for about 20 minutes and then the House reconvened at 1:30 on Tuesday and now it's 6:25 a.m. on Wednesday. The way the parliamentary calendar works, you stay on the same day until the House rises or breaks and then reconvenes.

Mr. Chair, a lot of people are tuned in to the House of Assembly today. We're seeing that our social media is starting to become reactivated and on Facebook – we have an Opposition Newfoundland and Labrador Facebook site and throughout yesterday, last night and throughout the morning, people have been putting their notes and comments, which we have been bringing piece by piece to the House of Assembly here and sharing with the public. People have asked us to share their messages.

People have expressed that they felt that their messages are not being heard by the government, so we've been using this forum. No other Members in the House – the Independent Member and also the NDP Member have been using similar type of forums throughout the night. There are people tuned in to the House today just to hear what's happening and to listen to what other people feel about the budget.

A lot of people tune in to radio stations in the morning. They might listen to CBC Radio or VOCM or other radio stations in the morning and they hear things that are going on and what's important today. So I thought I'd share some with you today. I can tell you that in my district Topsail Elementary kindergarten sports day is postponed due to weather. I can tell you today as well is World Oceans Day. A day that is very important to many people; I'm sure the Minister of Environment will recognize that

sometime today. We also hear through the news that Hillary Clinton is now the presumptive democratic nominee. That happened overnight since we've been sitting here in the last 18 hours or so.

AN HON. MEMBER: No Bernie.

MR. P. DAVIS: No Bernie, but apparently he is not taking it easy and he is not taking it lightly and he is not letting go.

There's three moose seen on the Trans-Canada Highway near Butter Pot, just reported by our friends at VOCM and also two more moose on Pitts Memorial Drive between Kilbride and downtown. If you are headed to work this morning and you're listening to the House of Assembly, watch out for the moose, keep your eyes open – I know it's a bit foggy outside – you always drive safely and give yourself lots of time to get to work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: And more relevant to us here in the House of Assembly, it was on this day in 1977 that the Hon. Joseph R. Smallwood retired from politics in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was on this day in 1977 when he had his last day in politics, after a lengthy and historic career in politics that will be remembered for so many and for so long.

Of course, Mr. Joseph Robert Smallwood, who came from Gambo in our province and probably pound for pound, year for year, constituent per constituent, citizen for citizen, was probably the heaviest hitter politician in the history of our country who left so many things –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: What's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: Did the Blue Jays win?

MR. P. DAVIS: The Blue Jays lost. That is a good one to raise. I don't think you're allowed to speak yet, but I will tell you, yes, the Blue Jays lost; extra innings, bottom of the 10th, Detroit had a walk off; a walk off win in the

bottom of the 10th, so the Blue Jays lost again. Not as bad as they did the night before, but the Blue Jays lost again.

All the important things that happened overnight that the people want to know in the morning, and I'm glad I've taken the time to share all of those with you. Too bad it wasn't all good news, especially for the Blue Jays.

Mr. Chair, we talked about a number of things during the night. My colleague, the Member for Ferryland, just talked about how people feel about the budget. I referenced this earlier. He talked about how people feel they've lost hope. That's part of communications when you're talking about what you have to do as a government. While decisions are tough and difficult, I would say that any government that has been in power from Mr. Smallwood's time, as the first premier of the province, through any of the premiers and governments through the years will say that each of every one of them had difficult and hard decisions to do.

Some will say, well, our decisions are harder than your decisions, or we're in tougher times now than we were before. Of course, it's all relevant to the circumstances that exist at the time; it's all relevant to what people believe the government is doing right and wrong. Out in the back of the hallways here of the House of Assembly there are a lot of historic documents, pictures and photographs. If Members of the House, especially newer Members of the House haven't had time to walk down towards it – because you have to kind of walk past the government caucus room towards the Opposition caucus room to see them on the walls. I'm not sure if some of the Members opposite will wander down those hallways. They might be afraid of the power and the attraction to them, to go towards the Opposition Caucus Room. On the walls down there, there are some photographs from the Colonial Building when it was battered and bruised during riots in days gone by.

I would never advocate for violence. I never believed that's the right way to do things, but that's what happened back in those days when people were upset and quite angry with government. I certainly hope that doesn't happen these days and certainly doesn't happen in

Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe it would be a black eye on all of us for that to happen.

People are talking to politicians, they're talking to their MHAs and they're talking to their elected Members. Other elected Members are talking to provincial elected Members. Municipalities and municipal leaders are talking to government, talking to Opposition and talking to individual Members. Municipal leaders, mayors and councillors are doing the same as well and expressing their views and their concerns.

As my colleague for Ferryland talked about earlier, it's how people feel about their stake in life. That's what happens. When the budget was first presented by the Minister of Finance, it was like a black cloth or black blanket had been thrown over the province and thrown over people when they felt smothered and they felt pressured. They became worried and concerned about their own future and the future of their family. Mr. Chair, with all due respect to all the Members here in the House on both sides of the House I believe that's how people continue to feel today.

We all know people in different walks of life. We talk to them about what we do. We know as MHAs – and certainly I would never describe MHA as a job. When someone says what is your job or what do you do, I'd never say that being an MHA is a job. It's a life or lifestyle more than it is just a job. It's a life and a responsibility that goes with you 24-7, 365 no matter where you happen to be in the province. Even if you're outside the province, you're still an elected Member of the House or you're still as whatever – if you're a minister or you have another responsibility, that goes with you everywhere all the time.

I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that MHAs are expected to be exemplary citizens, model citizens, that people of the province can model themselves after or would look at as to be what they think all citizens should be an example of what citizens should be. So we always have to be very careful of that.

The decisions you make and how you communicate them are what impact people quite often. The key is how you communicate with

them, the information you give them and how you give it to them. When you suck the life and the optimism out of people's lives, you take away their belief in a better future or an opportunity.

That's why when I talked earlier I talked about a police officer I know who's got his retirement papers in his desk, wondering should he pull them out and send them through, or should he hang onto them for another while. The particular officer is very good at his job, very experienced, does very, very well. He's a leader in many respects and just worried about his future. That's playing on his ability even to do his job.

That's what has happened throughout the public service. We talk to public servants all the time. I found it very interesting when I became a Member of the Opposition, after the election last year, that I felt public servants are much more open to me than they used to be before. I'm somewhat disappointed because I would hope that they'd be open to me and to all Members of the House, but I felt that they were more open and shared their views. Just yesterday, I spoke to a public servant who expressed her views, who I haven't spoken to for some time. I was interested and glad that she did.

We are hearing this from public servants around the province in many different walks, especially ones who work the front line. I have to tell you, hats off to all of them in the work they do; hats off to the work that public servants do. I want to also thank the Members of the House of Assembly and the staff that work here.

Mr. Chair, you have three staff around your table here. You have staff here at the end of the House and you have Pages. We have staff in offices away from the House that do work through Hansard, through the Broadcast that takes place and our staff outside this House, whenever it's open, around and make this House operate.

While we are here overnight doing our job as politicians, we shouldn't lose sight and reflect on the fact that they have to be here as well for the House to sit. I extend our thanks and our appreciation and acknowledgement to the work that they do as well. That goes on to public servants, as I said.

Mr. Chair, my time is running down; we only get 10 minutes in this format to speak. I'm going to end my time now and I look forward to the next chance and opportunity to rise and continue discussion on this bill.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to rise in this hon. House once again and speak to Bill 19. Mr. Chair, I've spoken many times last night, this morning and so on, and I'm looking forward to speaking many more times today, tomorrow and perhaps even into the weekend. We'll see how things go.

As I've said earlier, I've never seen the likes of the engagement that we are seeing in this budget. People are outraged, they're frustrated and they're continuing to watch – even in the wee hours of the morning and so on, there have been people watching, we're getting messages and it is starting to pick up again now with Twitter, Facebook, emails, texts and so on from people that I'm getting. I know the Opposition and the NDP are getting it as well.

We're going to continue to let the people have a direct say and direct input into these proceedings. I have some messages. The first one here was a tweet and this person says: This budget decides my family of two's future: stay or go? That was the comment, and very relevant.

I have a Facebook message next. It says: Ask them to reinstate the seniors' drug program, as cutting that will make numerous seniors suffer. I'm assuming they are talking about the fact that seniors for a number of non-prescription medications used to be covered under their drug plan and that's been cut under this budget. That's going to have a very negative impact on seniors on fixed incomes. That is what this person is saying.

I have a text here, it says: People are engaged in their anger and fear. It's hard to imagine the number of people afraid, not of the increased costs, but of the reality of losing everything: their homes, cars and jobs. I hear it every day at

work. That's a very interesting text message there.

I also have a couple of emails here to read. The first one says: Thank you for continuing to fight for our province. You have done for your constituents what the rest of us wish our MHAs would do for us. We feel betrayed by our MHAs because they are working for the Liberal government rather than the people of their district; great to you and the other MHAs for doing this.

The other email I have here: Will you please ask – I can't use names – the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance why they are pushing through full-day kindergarten to the detriment of other students? I know this has been discussed often in the House but, to this day, I have not heard a compelling reason as to why not. To me, it seems to be irresponsible and poorly thought out. That's another email there.

The final one that I'm going to read here – this one here is an email as well. I am going to have to be careful when I am reading this one because there are a couple of words that are probably not parliamentary. I have given a lot of thought regarding the Premier. He has been interim or official Leader of the Liberal Party since January 3, 2012. He has been sitting in the House and working as the Leader of the Opposition watching the goings on, on the then current PC government. That being said, here are the two conclusions I have come up with.

Number one, the Premier has sat in the House of Assembly and acted as the Leader of the Liberal Party and was – what can I use for that word? Not being competent in his duties, I guess – that's the only word I can put in there – and to be aware of the financial situation the province was in. Meaning, for lack of a better word, he was not smart. I'll say that.

So if he claims to be an intelligent man, then option two becomes the only outcome. Option two is that the Premier knew exactly where the province was financially and did his job as Leader of the Opposition. Then, when he was campaigning and telling everyone how he wasn't going to raise the HST and no talk about the levy, as well as all of these other promises he had made, makes him not truthful – I'll

substitute that. So the Premier is either not intelligent or not truthful. I'd like to hear the answer to that question.

Now, that's what this person is asking. Those are not my words.

AN HON. MEMBER: What's your answer, then?

MR. LANE: I don't know. To be honest with you, I don't know the answer to that question, I say to the Member, because I was as thrown aback as anybody when this budget came down. Quite frankly, I understand where this individual is coming up with this, because I campaigned – and I know the Members over there campaigned based on the red book, the policies. We were going door to door and we were talking about the fact there's going to be no layoffs and we're not going to raise the HST, that's a job killer and all those things. Then, we turn around a few short months later and this budget comes down.

Can you blame people for saying that either you didn't know what you were talking about – when you were going door to door making these promises, either you didn't have the information, you didn't seek the information, you didn't cost out your platform, you didn't look at reality, which means it speaks to the competence issue; or, you did know all things and you went around making promises that you knew you couldn't keep. That's how people feel. People do feel like they were led down the garden path. They feel like they were betrayed.

I said here last night, or yesterday, whenever it was – I can't keep track of the time now – that after the budget came down, and I sort of thought about going door to door and the conversations. I have to say to the people, I felt like a snake oil salesman. I felt like I was going around selling a bill of goods, because I was. I was. That's what I was doing.

That's one of the big reasons why what happened, happened, and I'm sitting over here. I could not justify in my mind knocking on someone's door and telling them all these things, and then to have to turn around and say, no, everything I told you is wrong b'y. I just couldn't do it.

I understand why people feel that way. I understand why this gentleman feels this way, and he's not alone. If you were to go and start knocking on random doors, I'm telling you, you're going to get it. You look at all the social media there, you're getting it. You look at the – it wasn't a CRA poll, but whatever the other one was that was done.

AN HON. MEMBER: CRA tomorrow.

MR. LANE: CRA is tomorrow, but there was another one and you're (inaudible) it. People are very, very upset. One of the main reasons why they're upset is that they feel like they were led down the garden path.

I know that all Members over there know that. You know it because you're getting the same messages I'm getting. That's the bottom line. How can you blame people for feeling that way?

How did 2 per cent on HST four months ago – how was that a job killer then and we fast forward to now and we're going to go 2 per cent on the HST, plus an income tax hike, plus a levy, plus a tax on insurance, plus all these fees, plus jack up all the gas, and that's not a job killer. Somehow that's okay, but just the 2 per cent alone four months ago was a job killer. I'm not surprised nobody is standing on the other side and defending it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I'm not surprised, I say to the Member, because it's indefensible. If somebody were to ask me that question, I don't know what I would tell them. There's no way I could muster up an answer to say how it could be this today and four months later it's a total 180.

You cannot justify it. There is no justification other than to say, well, things were worse than we thought. Things were worse than we thought and we have no choice. That seems to be the standard answer: Worse than we thought, we have no choice and, of course, we're heading for financial ruin.

It's that bad – and I know it's bad, but I'm still not convinced it's as bad as it's being made out to be. I'm not convinced it's that bad. I know we're in tough shape, but I think that's being

inflated. I bet you when this budget comes down at the end of this year it's not going to be as bad as has been predicted. People will say, whew, that wasn't as bad because we did a great job of managing it. I think that's part of the plan.

Anyway, I'll let the other Member have her say now.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Like the Member opposite, if that was the master plan then it would be such a dreadful thing to have imposed all these taxes on people just to be able to say in a few months' time, look at the money we've saved. When you save it on the backs of the hardworking individuals of Newfoundland and Labrador, it's a sad state of affairs.

I would like to commend my colleague from Mount Pearl – Southlands for catching his words in his emails. Certainly, when I read out the email earlier today, we're voicing the words and the opinions of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. You can use whatever tactics you like here in the House but please don't ignore or disregard the fact that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are trying to tell you something. They are trying to tell the Liberal government they are very, very, very unhappy with the *Budget 2016*. They are very, very, very disappointed with the initiatives and actions they've seen from this government, and they do feel betrayed.

My apologies, Mr. Chair. I certainly did not intend to use any strong language but people feel strongly that they were betrayed. I will, in reading the rest of my emails I have here, Mr. Chair, pay attention to the wording. Like my colleague from Mount Pearl – Southlands, try to find an equivalent word that still gets the meaning across.

My next email is, I do believe, from the district, my very own District of Fortune Bay – Cape La

Hune. If not, it's someone who knows me quite well because they know about my mishap on the road not too long ago. This email is: The closure of dialysis in Harbour Breton is of grave concern. The Bay d'Espoir Highway is a long and dangerous road to get patients to Grand Falls-Windsor. Think about mid-winter. The Member for Fortune Bay herself lost a tire on that highway a few weeks ago.

After years of lobbying for dialysis in a growing community like Harbour Breton, it is foolish to go and close it in exchange for only four long-term care beds. I'm also concerned about the reduction of X-ray services in Bonavista and removal of an on-call radiologist, as well as the removal of a nursing station in Black Tickle. They serve all the little fishing stations in Labrador, as well as Black Tickle.

These could be enough to swallow if government hadn't decide to squander these savings through whimsical expenditures on Labrador tunnel studies, Nalcor severance and legal teams who dropped the ball on contact negotiations. This government is not concerned with savings. They are more concerned with dumping rural and remote Newfoundland and Labrador off the back of a sled and shooing its people back into urban growth centres.

Mr. Chair, that one truly speaks to my heart. They all speak to my heart certainly, and I feel empathy for all the frustration the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are experiencing with this budget. This budget really, as a resident of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, overwhelms me. What is government trying to do to rural Newfoundland and Labrador? Strip our health care, strip our education, it is unbelievable, Mr. Chair.

Rural Newfoundland and Labrador, there may be some who think you're just costing us money. We contribute a lot to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we have for centuries, Mr. Chair. The fishing industry, I would put forward, continues to be a viable source of revenue for Newfoundland and Labrador. We continue to have very strong inshore and offshore fishermen in these smaller outports. Many of them travel away to work in Alberta. Some of them work offshore. Some of them work in megaprojects like Muskrat Falls.

They go away for a couple of weeks and then they come home for a couple of weeks, Mr. Chair.

They contribute significantly, both to the economy of the rural community in which they live and to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole. Their wives and children stay, or in my case the husband stays. They stay living in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. They pay local taxes. Their children are going to school. They're buying lumber and hardware from the hardware stores. They're supporting the grocery stores. They're supporting the local gas stations, Mr. Chair, and they're paying income tax in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I don't think we should dismiss rural Newfoundland out of hand, and we certainly should not treat them as second-class citizens. If there's anything the people, particularly in my district, the people in Hermitage and Rencontre East, Gaultois, McCallum and François feel, they said they're being treated like second rate citizens because they live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and because of that they're losing their doctor and their nurses. Really?

Rethinking regionalization needs to happen because I think the Liberal government is going to take it way too far. We live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, we understand the challenges with respect to geography. Mr. Chair, yes, there are some opportunities for shared services, absolutely, no doubt. If a community is 10 minutes apart and there's a clinic in each one, okay, but not an hour apart, not 45 minutes apart and not on roads that have no snow clearing services other than from 6, 7 o'clock in the morning until about 6, 7 o'clock in the evening.

If you're going to make regionalization the mantra of the Liberal Party, my goodness, you're going to need some money to add to the Department of Transportation and Works for starters. You're going to need some money to be increased to Advanced Education and Skills. You're going to need a lot of additional money to be provided somewhere in the block of health care funding to pay for the additional ambulance trips and taxis for people who have such costs covered by the government, Mr. Chair. It's a case of cutting off your nose to spite your foot, I

think, sometimes when I look at the short-sightedness of some of the decisions that have been made thus far.

I'm quickly running out of time again, Mr. Chair. I have one email that's rather long so I will read this one into the record. This one is from the community of Gander: Gander Academy is the largest K to 12 school east of Montreal; built for 500 and holds 1,200. The art rooms, the CITE, music rooms and broom closets are being utilized as classrooms. Broom closets, Mr. Chair – we're putting children in broom closets. How much is the education of children in Gander worth?

To top this off, lunchtime busing is being cancelled in a school with no cafeteria and not enough space to fit the number of desks. What will hungry young children age five in full-day kindergarten do? What will teachers do? Where is the plan? Will they defer our new four to six school yet another year?

Mr. Chair, it is outrageous to think that it is sensible to move forward with all-day kindergarten when you have such severe problems already existing in education that you have made no effort to address. In fact, as a result of the actions of your cuts in this budget, you're actually making them worse. That's not something I want to be remembered for if I was the Minister of Education, I can certainly grant you that. It's certainly not something the people of the province are going to be quick to forget.

That is another thing I do believe that is quite different. I actually had one Member opposite compare what they're going through now to Bill 29. There's no comparison, Mr. Chair, none whatsoever. What is happening here today is affecting each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. It's hitting them directly in the pocketbook and it's certainly hitting them from a point of view of being worried, because if they're not directly affected than their mother or their brother or their sister or someone connected to them is.

People will not be quick to forget the tragedy that is the budget imposed on Newfoundland and Labrador in 2016. The budget that will regress the economy, set us decades behind and take us a long time to get over. Like the Member

opposite said, maybe they are hoping it's going to be much better. If the price of oil goes up, well and good, but if it doesn't as a result of the actions of this budget, you're not even going to hit your targets for collection of income taxes because people won't be working, businesses will be gone bankrupt and people will have moved. It's very, very scary and we need some changes.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

The last time I spoke, which wasn't so very long ago – and here we are now, it's 6:55 in the morning, and I suspect a good many people are up now and getting ready for work or getting ready for school – I was talking about what this government did to the spirit, to the hearts and souls of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They pounded and pounded and pounded away at the message that everything was so bad. That it was way worse than they had thought, that the economy was falling apart, that this was unprecedented and they kept at it and kept at it and kept at it.

I don't know if that was done intentionally to prepare people for the budget so that government felt that the budget wouldn't be as a shock to the people because of the constant pounding away of the message that basically the arse is out of her, Mr. Chair. That's the message they kept saying. People believed it. People believed it, but giving that realistic message – if, in fact, it's realistic because I don't think that it's an accurate message. Yes, we have a huge debt, and, yes, there's a huge deficit; however, we are not going into bankruptcy and the province is not falling apart, but this is the message that government gave.

It is irresponsible, because what has happened is they haven't given any hope. Government hasn't given any leadership to say to people we will get through this together and this is how – none of that. Nothing on stimulating the economy, nothing on diversification, nothing on creative approaches, nothing on harnessing the energy

and the rich resources of the people of the province to compel us forward. So people are believing it and it's sad because the emails that we are getting – we didn't create this fear. We didn't do the fear mongering.

It's absolutely unforgivable what this government has done to the heart and to the soul of the people of this province. They have taken away all hope. They have created despondency where people are beginning to think that they are going to leave. This has happened only since this government took power.

They started that messaging, they started it right away. They started by saying we didn't realize how bad it was. Everybody knew how bad it was and it's the reality. Part of it is the reality and so we have to face that reality.

Imagine if we had a big boat and there were 20 people rowing the boat and there was a storm. What does a leader do? The leader says, yes, there's a storm, but you know what, we're going to get there. This is where we're going and this is how we're going to get there. Have hope because we're all going to row together, we're going to make sure we get through this storm.

What this government has said, there's a big storm, I don't know what we're going to do about it, but we're going to take away your paddles. We're going to take away your paddles and somehow, at the end, we're going to be able to get some paddles back.

Mr. Chair, that's not leadership. That's what is lacking here. There's been no leadership. There's been no vision. There's been no assurance to the people of the province that we are going to get through this together and that we are going to come out the other end.

The spirit of despondency, of hopelessness, of giving up is a direct result of the messaging of this government, is a direct result of how this government has chosen to deal with the financial situation that we face as a province. They've given up. It's like they've given up on the province. What the message is then, of course, people are going to believe it. Well then, I guess if the government is saying that there is no hope, then I guess there is no hope. These are the kinds of messages that we are getting from people.

For instance, this is a message from a young family. They have a two-year-old and they have another baby on the way: We were planning on building a fence so we can have a fenced in yard for our growing family. Government is basically taking that and more. While this might not seem like a major problem – and it doesn't. In the scheme of things somebody's personal fence – in the scheme of things, in terms of the situation that the government keeps telling us the province is in, that doesn't seem like a major problem.

Again, when people are writing to us, they are being reasonable. They're not being extravagant and they're not looking for utopias. While this might not seem like a major problem, it is the safety of our young family. We live on a busy street and can't play outside as much as we'd like; something that's essential for our child's development, soon to be children's development. Our second is on the way in July and we're devastated by government's choice to axe the meager baby bonus. That baby bonus, Mr. Chair, as you know, was upon the birth of a child the family would get \$1,000 and then \$100 a month for the first year of the child, so \$100 a month for a year. And families who are planning on that were looking forward to that and that was axed.

Now, what happened is that government decided any family whose child had already been born and were still in the process of getting their \$100 a month would continue to get the \$100 a month until that child turned one-year-old. But, Mr. Chair, I had a grandmother tell me about her daughter who is a single mom, a single mom who is doing well who was expecting twins. Her twins were due a few months after the budget came down. So this is a single mom who had worked hard to pull her life together and was giving birth to twins in a few months after the budget came down.

She would have received \$1,000 for each child upon the birth of the children, plus \$100 a month per child for a year. So she would have received \$2,000 at the birth of the twins, plus \$200 a month, and she was depending on that. She planned for that and that was taken away just like that, even though she was just a few months away from giving birth. What a kick in the guts

to people who were expecting something, who were promised something.

The measures of the grim reality – because that's what this government is; they're a bunch of grim reapers. Their Government Renewal Initiative and then the measures that they put on that, measures such as taking away these supplements to help young families with new babies, they're grim reapers. That's exactly what they are. They've done nothing but sow seeds of despair and despondency and then taking away supports that help people weather the storm, when they should be doing the opposite. People know that.

Again, I remember when we talked about the over-the-counter drug program. The Minister of Health and Community Services said, oh yes, but what, these people want a utopia. Really?

I got a message today from a woman who's on income support who has a severe physical disability. She uses a wheelchair. She had eye surgery this past week. Her eye surgery – and she's on income support. She's unable to work at this point in her life in terms of earned income. She had a lens put in her eye. Her eye was scratched. Her eye was really dry because she could not afford the drops that she needed. Those eye drops now are no longer provided by the over-the-counter program.

Her surgeon called the pharmacist and said that she needed it. Now, this woman, because her expenses are high because of her particular disability and because she's on such low income, she's on income support, she has budgeted \$30 every two weeks for food. That's all; \$30 for two weeks for a fully grown adult. Not much money for food for two weeks. Her eye drops, finally, she had to pay for, \$20-and-some-odd cents. That came out of her \$30 budget for her food.

Is that what this government was aiming for? Is that really what they were aiming for? To what end? In the end, to what end? We cannot make sure that people have their basic needs? Then again to sow those seeds of despair, those seeds of despondency, they're responsible for that. They're responsible for the fear mongering. They're responsible for the people who are

saying, I don't know if I can any longer live here. I don't know if I have to leave.

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

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

CHAIR: I remind the Member her time for speaking has come to an end.

I recognize the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise this morning at approximately 7 o'clock to have some thoughts on this bill. Certainly it is a money bill on the budget in general. It's been a pretty interesting night, a lot of good discussion and sharing of ideas and thoughts from this side of the House, from the folks here, on the budget. It's good to hear, good discussion.

I listened to my colleague for St. John's Centre, some of her comments as she relates to the specific implications of some of the measures and sharing personal experiences of people in her district or people she knows.

She spoke of a low-income individual there and the challenges with the removal of over-the-counter drugs and some of the benefits there. That's no longer available, that's been pulled back. Anybody that's on low income or fixed income, as she rightfully said, that's dollars that's coming right out of their pocket. They have to readjust their weekly and monthly services they have because, obviously, they can't make that up.

They have to readjust many things in their lives to try and decide – while there are decisions made by this government in what they were going to do in their budget, well, this individual that was referenced by the Member for St. John's Centre, that individual has to make some very serious choices and decisions in what they're going to do, because you had a service that you could avail of. This wasn't a luxury service, I'm sure. If you are getting over-the-counter drugs for some condition, that was a requirement of a condition they have or

something of that nature. So it's certainly very difficult.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Chair, we seem to have some –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As the Member was saying, the Member for St. John's Centre, obviously there were concerns there in regard to particular circumstances. It's very important for the individual to access, and an adjustment in terms of what they would spend and how it would affect their daily lives.

That's the thing with any budget, and certainly with this one where there is so much tax and fees and different changes. It really affects the disposable income. In this particular case, as the example was given, related to health care and overall access to services, which is really important and really significant in regard to people's lives and how they operate, because, as I said, we're not talking about luxury services here over and above. We're talking about basic needs, living needs and being able to meet your weekly and monthly requirements.

One of the other things in the budget, Mr. Chair, I wanted to reference, too, is related to education and the budget. In my particular area, meeting with concerned parents and people of the region, especially the Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove to the Gould's region, relating to some of the bus changes and some of the savings proposed in this budget by renewal of contracts for busing. Parents are very upset, and no consultation in options and what would take place in regard to moving the actual start time for a bus pickup, especially for kids K to six, much younger. That time frame, moving earlier in the morning and then on the latter side, the older students in high school getting out at a later time causes a huge problem in regard to child care, after-school programming, daycare, if it needs to be paid for.

Right now, obviously, those families have a structure. If mom or dad works, both of them commute. There are timelines set up for their children to access care before and after school,

and getting safely to school as well. With some of these changes, we have younger kids that are at bus stops much earlier in the morning. Many more mornings there's darkness, with smaller kids walking on sidewalks, in some cases not sidewalks, walking to a bus stop, having to stay at that bus stop at earlier times. Many parents are very concerned about that on the safety side, about younger kids getting up much earlier in the morning. There is a major concern with the English School District with the Minister of Education in regard to consultations, what options were looked at, what could be done – a major concern.

I've heard from and met with the families and some of the concerned parents in the Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove to the Goulds, that region there in regard to the three schools there. We have the K to six, the junior high and the high school. Then further down the shore when you look at from the area of Bay Bulls to Bauline and the two schools there, St. Bernard's K to six in Witless Bay, and Mobile in seven to 12.

Again, there in that region we're looking at changes in the bus schedule. That's all supposedly about the tenders for the busing contracts coming up. Government is going to re-tender. In doing that, they suspect to have savings by reducing the number of buses –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: – which, again, means that there's less busing. So we're going to save on that.

On the other end, it's going to cause havoc for many students and families and the whole busing system in terms of getting youth and our students to school, and the implications that has in terms of the dates or the times, as I said, for after-school programming.

As an example, I know in Bay Bulls and Witless Bay there are after-school programs in that region. Families have their day arranged that their son or daughter gets picked up at a bus stop, they proceed to school. After school now,

as it stands, they go and avail of an after-school program. That's available to them.

Right now with the changes, that's not possible because in actual fact where the high school students are pushed out farther in terms of getting out of school, they operate the after-school program which the younger kids would go to. So if they're out at a later time and the schedule has to be changed, that's not conducive any more. So they are not able to oversee and work in the Lifestyle Centre in Bay Bulls, for example, to offer the after-school program.

The younger kids now don't have that program to avail of in some cases. What's the choice now to the parents? Well, if they commute or work in St. John's or elsewhere, now there's an extra cost. First of all, they need to find it and see if it's available; see if there's daycare or other avenues available to them to care for their child. If they can find that – which there is no guarantee they can – then there's an extra cost. There is a couple of hours cost they have to incur to take care of that student after school, which they never had before.

The same thing in speaking to parents in the Goulds region as well, in regard to the younger kids. In some cases an older sibling would care for the younger child, a friend would care for the younger child, an older student, but with the change in times it becomes an issue. Number one, is the daycare available? Can I find it? If I can – maybe I can't, we don't know – what's the cost? There is going to be an additional cost, obviously.

What we've done here, while government is saying we're going to make an effort here through the busing to reduce the number of buses and have some savings, but guess who the cost is going to be passed on to in many cases. There is going to be an extra cost passed on to those families.

I spoke to a single mom in one of the regions in regard to – she works. She has a position she goes to every morning, but she said to me I can't afford – when you look at, I'm going to work, it's 16½ cents more I'm paying on a litre of gas. I have insurance going up 15 per cent on what I'm making. I have all these other levies and fees I have to pay. Car insurance, house

insurance, all those kinds of things are going up. Now I'm going to be told I have to pick up an extra hour or two and rearrange my whole day because you're going to change my busing schedule, which there was no consultation, no discussion on. All of a sudden I got a letter in the mail saying, well, in September – here you go, now work through it. That's not acceptable. That's not acceptable at all.

As I said, when you land on all of those other fees and everything else they're going to have to incur – to what was mentioned there earlier about hope and direction for our people and our province. So you're laying all of this on families and youth and single moms and single parents and in some way that's supposed to instill hope. Don't worry, things will get better and everything will be okay. These people, some are struggling now and we're just laying this on them with no discussion, no insight, no idea if there could be alternatives or anything like that.

So, as I said, I've heard from a significant amount of people in my district in regard to this. In the two regions, it was done without consultation. It was short sighted, like many things in this budget, and I certainly hope and advocate that the Minister of Education will get involved with the English School District and give direction to get this resolved for the benefit of the parents, and certainly the youth of our whole province and not just in my district.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good morning and thank you for recognizing me again this morning, to allow me to continue debate on this bill. This bill is a money bill. So for folks who are tuning in and saying why are you not just talking about taxation on insurance, it's a money bill and being a money bill allows Members a very broad range of topics, pretty much anything they can talk about related to government, activities of government, or decisions that government makes, or budget related.

We rise for 10 minutes at a time, which is a fairly short period of time in the House. That's all we have is 10 minutes. One of the good things about being in Committee here is that we can rise as often as we like, as long as there is alternate speakers.

My colleague here was just talking about education. Throughout the night, he and I had a couple of conversations about education, not just education itself but also commitments made by this government in relation to education. If you look in their Five Point Plan for A Stronger Tomorrow, one of their five point commitments that this government has made is Investing in Our Future Through Education. Investing in Our Future Through Education is one of their five points.

The other four, first one being Restoring Openness, Transparency, and Accountability, a lot of discussion about that this week; Building a Smarter, Stronger Economy, we heard a lot about that during the campaign and we haven't heard much about that since then; Improving Health and Health Care – I just received an email in the last couple of hours from a gentleman, a copy of a letter to a gentleman in Bonavista who has a special needs child who he cares for. He makes regular visits to the Health Care Centre in Bonavista and the reduction of after-hour services, he's very well laid out and described how that is going to have a negative implication on him and his family. He is very, very concerned about the safety of his son and the health of his son because of the reduction in health care services in Bonavista, especially after hours.

The next one is Supporting Safe and Sustainable Communities. They've done some things there, safety reduction in policing, budgets for policing, courts and so on all deal with safety and sustainable communities. And the last one is Investing in Our Future Through Education. That's their Five Point Plan for A Stronger Tomorrow as laid out by the Liberal government last year during the election campaign.

My district, Topsail – Paradise represents, I would argue, probably the fastest growing, if not one of the fastest growing in the province. Areas such as where my colleague for Cape St. Francis represents is a very fast-growing area. We know

that the Harbour Grace, Carbonear, Port de Grave area is very fast growing as well. We know part of Terra Nova and the Clarenville area is growing very fast as well. Every Member of the House now is singing out their own district saying fast growing.

Topsail – Paradise District is very fast growing, one of the districts that were amended and adjusted. It would have been anyway if the size of the House didn't change because the population has grown so quickly. A lot of young families are moving there. If you look at the subdivisions that are being built, very young families, new parents starting their families out are moving into Paradise. There are still hundreds of homes being built between Conception Bay South and Paradise every year.

It was only a few short years ago that Paradise – probably about a decade ago that Paradise was around 9,000 residents. Now it's close on 20,000. Conception Bay South has grown now; it's exceeding 25,000. Conception Bay South is the second-largest community in the province, larger than Corner Brook and larger than Mount Pearl. It now has 25,000. It's an area that's growing rapidly and that brings young families. Of course when you have young families and children, they turn five, they go off to school and they need education.

Part of the plan this year, and what's happened over the last couple of years, is when the current government was in Opposition they would quite often say to the government, you need to get ahead of schools, you need to start talking about schools and you need to find schools. There's replacement of schools. Schools that are aging need to be replaced. That was ongoing.

I know the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave talked about Coley's Point. There was work done. The former minister of Transportation, who's now the critic for Education, has spoken here several times, the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, on what he did while he was minister – expropriated land because the project was hung up on trying to get the land settled. He, as the minister, took the initiative to expropriate the land to get the school underway. That was done by the current PC Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

In Paradise, in his boundary – he takes in part of Paradise as well. In Paradise, there were plans for new schools. Currently, Paradise is 20,000 people. There are three elementary schools and then students are bused out, are transported out.

Currently, there are students that are being transported to the former School for the Deaf in St. John's on Topsail Road because of the lack of space in Paradise. New schools are urgently needed in Paradise. One is underway in Octagon Pond. Construction is underway on that one. There's also a plan for a new middle school, a five-to-eight school in Paradise. The new Liberal government has deferred that project for two years.

There's also planning underway and the development of a high school for Paradise, grade nine to 12, a new high school for Paradise, and that's been deferred indefinitely by the new government, the Liberal government. There are currently temporary classrooms on Villa Nova school, which is Villa Nova Junior High and that's located in the Chamberlains-Manuels part of Conception Bay South, which is in the east end, and many of the students that attend that school are actually from Paradise.

Children from the east end of Paradise are bused to Mount Pearl for junior high and senior high, but we know Southlands is growing – I got it in, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands – putting pressure on the schools for Mount Pearl as well, and putting pressure on those. There is that concentration coming from Southlands and Paradise going to school in Mount Pearl, so there is a need for new schools there in Paradise. But also Villa Nova, part of their plan was to put the extensions on, there was Phase I and Phase II. Phase I has been deferred indefinitely. Phase II has been deferred indefinitely as well.

So there's Paradise five-to-eight middle school deferred for two years, Paradise high school which is nine-12 deferred indefinitely, and the extension renovations for Villa Nova Junior High, Phase I and Phase II, both deferred indefinitely. My point is and why I bring all of this up is that when you have growing populations, children ready to go to school, they have to go to school somewhere.

While schools need to be repaired and upgraded if you don't have the seats, you can't put the children in the seats, but we're having the children. In Topsail – Paradise, in my district, the east end of CBS and Paradise, it still continues to be a significant growth area for the province and the demand for schools. We know it takes a number of years to construct a school and have it ready for occupancy, and this is going to create turmoil in the out years.

That's why when Liberals were in Opposition they used to say to us on a regular basis, you need to get ahead of it. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, he talked about it himself in the House. You need to do better planning and you need to get these schools built because you haven't reached a crunch yet. When the crunch comes, you're not going to have any place to put them. You need to deal with it today. And that's what we were doing as a government was trying to get ahead of it.

There are other schools as well deferred and other projects: Riverside Elementary in Shoal Harbour deferred indefinitely, as well as Coley's Point Primary. While we were making progress on it and had plans to continue with the development, this government has deferred it for three years. Gander Academy, the reconstruction of K-3, continued planning but construction deferred for one year.

So, Madam Chair, that is based on the information provided by the government who have now delayed, deferred, either for one year, two years or three years, or deferred indefinitely. And there are some health-related projects. In AES and Transportation and Works, the Gould Bypass, burin protective community residence and medical laboratory services program for Grand Falls-Windsor all cancelled. So they are all cancelled and other projects deferred, about \$100 million worth of projects that are deferred for education.

As I said, and I can't be any clearer than if you don't build them today, start and continue that process today, you're not going to have these buildings for three to five or six years, because that's how long it takes to build them. That's how long it takes to develop them and build them, and you need to start those today.

So deferring a project indefinitely, as the case of Villa Nova Junior High, that could be six, seven or eight years before that's being seen again. For Coley's Point, three years, so if you are deferring it for three years – and it's says Coley's Point Primary planning, is what the sheet provided by the government says, deferred for three years. So if the planning is deferred for three years that means this government doesn't plan to see that school for probably seven, eight years – maybe even longer than that. But it is three years to plan it and it's going to take three, four or five years to build it, so that's a long time out, Madam Chair.

Other projects, as I talked about, Paradise five to eights deferred for two years.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: I look forward to the chance to get up again.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand up here once again in the bad boy's corner here in the House of Assembly and to have a few words on Bill 19. I think it's Bill 19. I'm losing track of some of the bill numbers here now, but anyway, it's the bill around the insurance increase, which is, I guess, a piece of – 14 is it? It doesn't really matter what the number is at this point in time. I'm that mesmerized now, I've been up all night and getting kind of tired but –

AN HON. MEMBER: Nineteen.

MR. LANE: Nineteen; I was right the first time.

Anyway, it's all about the budget. At the end of the day, it's all about the budget, regardless of the bill number. If we're talking about the levy or we're talking about the insurance, it's still all about the budget.

I want to say once again to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, keep the emails coming, keep the Facebook messages coming,

keep the text messages coming, the Twitter messages. I've never seen so much engagement before. This is just unbelievable and ever since people started getting up now – you can see the phone here ping, ping, ping, it's just constantly going with people sending in messages in real time. People are watching this debate, they are engaged and the reason why they are engaged is because everybody has been impacted.

I have a couple of emails, or Facebook messages here first, that I want to read. A gentleman asked me to read it. He says: I have a question I would like answered. If I were to buy into the fact that this province is as bad as the Liberals say it is, which I don't believe it is that bad, nor do I, for one second, believe that the federal government would allow us to go bankrupt, my question simply if you sell me on the fact that this is all needed – I guess he is referring to the budget – and I believe this government is competent – which I don't – they must have a long-term plan. In their plan if oil were to continue to rise a little more, let's say it trades at \$60 a barrel for the next six months, what do they have to do to roll back some of these taxes, fees and levies?

Part of their plan is there is no plan. If they were to say if oil were to trade at \$60 a barrel, we could get rid of this and that while if it trades at \$70 a barrel for eight months, we could get rid of everything, back to what it was. We all hear that there's a short-term plan of putting the fees, taxes, levies on there but nothing about what it would take to remove it. Government can't be just nearsighted; they have to be far sighted too.

Basically, it's a little convoluted. I guess he is just writing a Facebook message and there are probably a few typos and autocorrects in there, but the gist of what he is saying is we are putting all these taxes and levies on, but where is the plan to say that if oil reaches a certain number, we're going to take this tax off. If it reaches another number, we're going to take another tax off. If it reaches another number, we're taking it all off.

Where is that plan to say exactly – not just we're going to take the levy off in so many years; that is not what he is talking about. He is saying all this taxation – we should be able to say if oil reaches a certain price for a certain period of

time, this is gone. Reach another price, that's gone. Lay it out there in numbers and facts.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Canadian dollar.

MR. LANE: I'm not arguing the Canadian dollar. I'm not arguing, I'm just reading what this man is saying.

I have another Facebook message here. I can't read the first part because I don't want to mention names. Anyway, I'll get to his suggestion. We're trying to keep it nice here.

Why can't we put in place a tax for non-resident workers like they do in Nunavut? So he's saying there is a non-resident worker tax in Nunavut. I don't know if that's true; he is saying it is true. I'm assuming if he says it's true, it is. There are tens of thousands of dollars that could be used from these high-paying jobs from non-residents to help relieve the burden on the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm assuming he's talking about some of these oil executive people and so on. I have a number of those people I know in Southlands that are renting homes. I guess that's what he's referring to.

There are tens of thousands of dollars that could be used from these high-paying jobs from non-residents to help relieve the burden on the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. I hope this government doesn't think they have the support of the people, as they haven't supported us. They are doing nothing but forcing us all to relocate because we can't afford to live here.

So pleased to see all non-Liberal Members representing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thank you for being our voice.

This gentleman, this is another suggestion. I don't know if it's a realistic suggestion, I honestly don't know and I don't know how much money it would yield anyway. He's suggesting that in Nunavut if you are a non-resident person that's earning a living in Newfoundland and Labrador, then you have to pay a tax for that. I'm assuming he would be referring to people in the oil industry and so on. I don't know if there are that many people and

how much that tax would be and how much it would yield. I don't know, but that's just another suggestion that this gentleman has made.

We continue to receive emails that are providing commentary, that are providing suggestions, which is good to see. I certainly hope that Members and ministers are making note of these things and could possibly look into them. Some of them may be realistic; some of them may not be realistic. Some of these things, it's easy to say it, but it may not be just as simple to do it. Other things, perhaps, it could be done. So I think it is worthwhile to look into it for sure.

The problem we have here is that we only get 10 minutes, so by the time you get up and you read a couple of emails, whatever, and you make a few comments your time is almost up. You don't have time to get into anything substantive.

I have three minutes left. I see we have a bit of a shift change going on here on the government side. Some people have to get some rest and that's all good. I would just simply say, once again as I said maybe the last time I spoke or the time before, and I've said this in the House anyway, that it's never too late to make changes in this budget.

I know. Someone is shaking their head – oh my God, I can't believe he's saying that again. Well, I'm going to keep saying it because that's what the people are saying. It's never too late to make some changes to the budget. We all know – I'll say this again too – we're in tough financial circumstances. A lot of people would question whether or not we're in as tough a situation as what is being portrayed. Some people believe that's being inflated for whatever reason. I'm not going to argue one way or the other on that one, because I, quite frankly, haven't sat down with the bond-rating agencies and stuff like the minister and the Premier would have done, to have that conversation one on one, to have that told to me directly. So you're only taking information at face value, what you're being told. We know sometimes those things can be somewhat twisted from time to time and inflated and exaggerated and whatever.

I still think we all agree that we are in tough financial times. Everybody knows that. Everybody knows certain changes had to occur.

Everyone was expecting to pay taxes. Everyone was expecting it would be higher than normal this year, there would be some cutbacks. I believe everyone is willing to pay their fair share. Once again, it's the cumulative impact of all of it. You're just doing too much at the one time. That's what people are saying.

There are some people who will be able to suck it up, but it's going to have a major impact on their lifestyle and so on, and they're upset about that. There are other people that are literally, literally teetering on the edge, living from payday to payday, and this could put them under.

I read some emails here earlier from people. I read one there just the last time I spoke about a person saying there's people in fear of losing their home, losing their car and stuff, and that's what everyone is talking about at work. That's true. That's what's happening in the workplaces.

If you look at the government workplaces, whether it's Confederation Building or the hospitals or the schools or whatever, people are worried to death they're going to lose their jobs. They don't know what's coming this fall, or they're going to be asked to take rollbacks on salaries and stuff like that. Imagine someone who's working for the public service who's going to have to face all these taxes like everyone else, and then on top of that they're going to be told: oh, by the way, we're rolling back your salary. Now, I'm not saying that's going to happen.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I am debating the budget. I am debating this budget, I would say to the Member. I am debating the budget. I wish somebody on that side would debate the budget. That's what I'd like to hear. I'd like for someone to defend this budget, because I don't think it's defensible, quite frankly.

Anyway, Madam Chair, I thank you for the time.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Unfortunately, I'm out of time, but I will be speaking again and –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Good morning to all of you who may be rejoining us now. It's been a long night but a wonderful night, as we have shared with the People's House the voice of the people, and we relayed to Members opposite everything that we are hearing from the very concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Just then, actually, on my Facebook I was noticing comments. Someone had asked, has anyone noticed how much the price of oil has actually gone up since February? It certainly is climbing, Madam Chair, but for purposes I guess by way of explanation, why we are not seeing that directly translate into an improvement in our budget. There are two factors that impact in large part how much revenue we receive. One is the price of oil and the other is the exchange rate on the Canadian dollar, because of course oil is valued in US dollars.

While oil is trading far above the budgeted price of \$40 – now I think oil is trading over \$50 or higher today – unfortunately, the dollar was probably lowballed too much as well in the budget. Because the exchange rate used for the budget documents was 1.2965 and it doesn't directly translate into 71 cents but for purposes of explanation, that's roughly 71 cents and the dollar is trading at 78 cents. That's about a seven-cent margin, which translates into millions of dollars that we're not gaining even though the price of oil has gone up. So that's quite unfortunate.

Over time, the price of oil – hopefully, we'll see the trend continue. Hopefully, we will see that translate into an improved bottom line for the province so that these budgetary cuts that the government has implemented and the draconian taxes the Liberal government has implemented can be reversed in short order, Madam Chair.

Now, as I said, time passes so very quickly in this House. I'm going to read another email from a concerned citizen of our fine Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This email is addressed to the Liberal Party. You have a captive audience, especially those from the Island portion of our wonderful province – and I'm sure, Madam Chair, the audience is just as captive in Labrador, and there are equally as many concerns with this budget.

The person goes on to say: More captive is what you have made us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: Madam Chair, there is a bit of volume in the Chamber. It's hard to hear.

More captive is what you have made us. The simple freedoms we once enjoyed as Newfoundlanders now come at higher costs; costs most of us cannot afford.

To leave the Island by car or plane on vacation is the dream of every person, but with increased fees, fuel and ferry taxes, it is an unreachable desire for even more residents. For many now, even a simple trip to Butterpot, Gros Morne, the Nature Park or many of our beautiful provincial parks and sites is now just unattainable. The extra cost in gas, the added taxes to insure our pleasure vehicles and crafts, as well as increased fees at many of these sites, makes them now a distant dream to low-income families.

Families have to choose between child care, food and transportation to work over sports and the pleasure and well-being of their families. We are becoming captives to the budget and, in ways, slaves to the almighty dollar.

I am 37, and I remember family weekend getaways, fishing, camping, exploring Newfoundland and what beauty and diverse people it has to offer. I can honestly say that generations to come may not experience this as we have in the past, and it's shameful. It's shameful for our government to take what small liberties exist away from such caring and loyal people.

Madam Chair, that really speaks to the heart, as many of the emails that have been read into the

record over the course of the last two days have done. People of this province are hurting. They look to their government for support and encouragement and hope, but that is not what they are receiving from the Liberal administration of today, unfortunately, Madam Chair.

I certainly for one did not – when we ran in the election – want to see a change of government, but we did have a change of government. As a citizen of the province I said to myself, well, all we can do now – and I too said we'll hope for the best, and I really wanted them to do well because it's in the best interest of the people for that to have happened, but I think history will show that this administration will probably have the most devastating impact we've ever seen on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, unfortunately.

Madam Chair, I'm going to talk again – in my few remaining minutes that I have left – about rural Newfoundland and Labrador and how gravely concerned I am for our future well-being. I will say again, the lives of each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian is valuable. The lives of each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian should be held as more important than anything else, and like the email I just read into the record, certainly held with higher value and in higher regard than the almighty dollar.

For residents of rural Newfoundland with this budget, we are being treated – I would have to agree with how some of the frustrations expressed by my own constituents – like second-class citizens. I implore this House to revisit where it's going with some of its cuts to education and health care, and where it's going to go in the future. We've only seen the first slice, Madam Chair, of the actions that this Liberal government are going to bring. If the vision of the leadership that we have seen thus far is anything to go by, we have a lot to be worried about going forward.

One of the things that give me encouragement is the strength of our people. The strength of our people is what has given each and every one of us here participating in this filibuster going on now 24 hours, I guess – Bill 14 yesterday and today Bill 19. We will continue, Madam Chair,

as long as we possibly can and hopefully see some wisdom come to bear by the decision makers across the way that changes need to be made. We really need to get some indication that they are listening to the people. We don't have any indication of such thus far, but we will continue to try and we will never give up.

The people will speak themselves, I'm sure, when any persons aspiring to be politicians or continue to be politicians, knock on their doors in 2019. I tell you this time we're going to see much more questions coming from our constituents when we knock on the doors.

There's an expression. Every time I get up I almost use one of our traditional Newfoundland expressions, but there is one that really rings true that every politician should keep uppermost in mind, especially given the contrast between what was promised for leadership –

AN HON. MEMBER: Fool me once.

MS. PERRY: You got it – what was promised for a leadership versus what we got for a leadership: Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador won't be fooled a second time. That is one thing I have absolute confidence in, based on what we have seen thus far coming to us from the people.

Like the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said people are going to be reminded every time they fill up their car, every time they go to the grocery store, every time they renew their insurance, every time they renew their registration, every time they go to do anything in this province and face increased costs because everything is going up, they will be reminded that what they voted for was absolutely not what they got.

With that, Madam Chair, my time is quickly running out. I will take my seat and look forward to continued debate.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm happy once again to stand and to speak to Bill 19. It is 7:45 in the morning and, again, I assume most people are up and about getting ready for work, getting ready for school or on the road on their way to work. I am not quite sure what it's like out there right now. We've been at this all through the night and there are no windows here in our Chamber, so it might be a lovely day out there, who knows. There are some people who just come back into the House. Is it a nice day out there?

AN HON. MEMBER: No, foggy and cool.

MS. ROGERS: Foggy and cool, I hear. Well, you know, there are some foggy and cool things happening in this House as well.

We've been receiving emails from people from all over the province about how the budget affects them. We're hearing from people who are directly affected by the budget. We are also hearing from people who have questions they want answered. What we are hearing regardless of the message – the message that we hear again and again and again is that people say that no one is listening to them. They want to be heard.

Again, so many of the emails that we get when people are identifying real blocks and barriers to their lives because of the budget, is that they are being very reasonable, really reasonable. Nobody is looking for a free ride. Nobody is looking for a utopia. People are just looking for the services, strengthening the services, issues that will strengthen their communities, strengthen their families, so that they can get on with it.

People are afraid. Many people have told us they are afraid. They don't know what the future holds. They are afraid because that's the message that government has given them. The message where the government has pounded and pounded and pounded away at it since government was elected saying how very, very bad the economic situation is.

I am challenging government to do the right thing, to do leadership and to turn that message around. I'm not asking government to lie to the

people. I'm not asking government to tell falsehoods. I'm not asking government to say that things are better than they are. I'm asking government to take leadership and to say this is how we are going to get through it together.

So many people are saying, particularly young working families, I don't know if I can stay. Our young people are saying I don't know if I want to stay, I don't know what the future holds for me in Newfoundland and Labrador now. That message has to be turned around. It has to be, because this government has created this atmosphere in this province. They have an obligation to turn that around and to do the right thing and to instill hope and optimism in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador again. That is what leadership is.

Leadership isn't about saying it is so bad, it's so bad, it's so bad and then to stop there. There's been no message whatsoever about how we are going to work through this together.

This is an email that I received just a little while ago: I work full time as a PCA and HSW – that means I work full time as a personal care attendant and a home support worker – with a client in an area outside of public transit. I do not work with an agency. My client is due to lose two hours per day under the removal of “housekeeping” services – and she has housekeeping in quotation marks – under the new budget. As we know, people's housekeeping services for their home care has been cut down to a maximum of two hours a day.

This will mean my client will be alone for an extra two hours a day. From the language used regarding this from the Minister of Health, he said: When it comes to home care, some people were getting a lot of hours for what was essentially cleaning and laundry. He obviously does not understand what home care means.

My client is approved for four hours personal care and four hours of domestic support. She will now possibly be cut two hours a day of this. What the Minister of Health doesn't understand is that a living person does not have needs that fit into an eight- or a six- or a four-hour schedule. You could be on the job doing duties that vary as situations arise.

My client needs to be toileted and cleaned at various times during the eight hours of work. I cannot assume that during the two hours that will be cut that my client will not need help toileting or laundering of their soiled clothing. They have family members who have timed their working lives around when I leave the house so that my client will not be home alone for too long.

So this is a complex situation. Again, this is about a person who is severely disabled, who needs eight hours of care during a day, and their family then takes up that care. They work their working hours around taking up the slack and the care, but two hours of that home care will be cut. This will throw this family into havoc. They have family members who have timed their working lives around when I leave the house so that my client will not be home alone for too long.

My questions are – this is two questions from this home care worker and this personal care attendant – will my client be left untoileted for two hours from 2 to 4 p.m. in the day? Will their family member have to cut back on the time they work? And question number three: What happens if there is a health crisis during these hours? I understand that social services have divided up the allocated hours into chunks of time, but living, especially as a vulnerable member of the population, does not work like clockwork.

So we can see, Mr. Chair, that the decision being made here, particularly around the areas of home care hours and personal care hours, how this affects people's lives. It just points out the need for a universal home care program that's part of our health care program. Not this private program where people are jostling and trying to schedule and are unsure of what's going to happen.

Then this home care worker and this personal care attendant go on to say how this affects me personally. I have a vehicle I keep on the road as my client is off the bus routes. I will now pay extra in insurance with the increase in tax. My insurance is already high as I use my vehicle to take my client to and from appointments, as well as activities for stimulation. My drive to and from work usually costs me \$30 to \$40 per

week. I am still trying to figure out how much it costs me now. A big, big concern for my own situation is how I will get by on 30 hours per week instead of 40 hours per week with all the increases in the new budget.

This person's employment will probably be cut by 25 per cent, yet their employment costs are more. Their employment costs are rising, and the extra insurance on vehicle insurance so that this person can take her client back and forth to appointments and also on outings. Also, the gas will be more.

I will no longer be eligible for the Home Heating Rebate as I once was. I feel a sense of responsibility to my client who I have been with for three years now and would not feel comfortable leaving my job in hopes they found a worker in the rural area they live. This worker would have to go on foot, as owning a vehicle would be impossible because the salary is so low in this particular area of work and it needs to be higher.

We need to professionalize our home care service. It's a way of keeping people out of expensive institutions and keeping them in their homes, if that's what they want. Particularly for seniors, seniors have told us time and time and time again that they want to age in place. They want to age in their home.

In anonymity, I would not like my name read as it would compromise the anonymity of my client who I am bound to in confidentiality with on their personal situation, regards.

Mr. Chair, again, what we're looking at is the rollout effect of some of the decisions of the budget. What we see is that some of the decisions actually make our people more vulnerable. Rather than strengthening our people, rather than strengthening our communities so they can weather the storm, the budget has the opposite effect.

CHAIR (WARR): Order, please!

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand at nearly 8 o'clock, the second 8 a.m. I've had the opportunity to stand in this House and talk to the 2016-2017 budget, but particularly some of the bills that are going to have a dramatic adverse effect financially on the citizens of this province but also on this province as a whole.

Today, we're talking about Bill 19, which is a bill to impose additional taxes of 15 per cent. An additional levy on the insurance industry in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly home and auto insurance, to go along with the already increased tax that are on the insurance companies who, from discussions I have had with a number of people in the insurance industry, is going to be passed on to the consumer.

This 15 per cent is only part and parcel of the additional costs that the residents and the citizens and the consumers who have to have insurance for life safety, for legal reasons, will have to incur over the next number of months and obviously the next number of years.

For those who are just now tuning in, what I've been doing for the last five or six times that I've gotten up is to explain and answer a question that some of my colleagues on the opposite side and some of my own constituents have asked me and some general people in the population have asked. The question about when things were good in Newfoundland and Labrador and when the PC administration were in, there was a lot of money generated through oil royalties, things that we had negotiated, the better deals we had gotten for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. What did we do with that money? Where did the money go? It's been touted about \$25 million, \$20 million and all this type of thing.

I've gone back through and I've looked at – particularly around the eight-year period when things started to sort of ramp up a bit and the monies were coming in and we were peaking at \$140 a barrel oil – how much money we had to put back into the economy here and put back into the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. We came around the figure – and I think we all agreed to it, I've spoken to it probably six or

seven times, that we're talking about \$28 billion, very significant.

Significant for any jurisdiction, but particularly for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador where our average budgets always range from \$6 billion to \$7 billion, to we're well over \$8 billion now when it comes to that. Obviously, in fiscal restraint times and when you're being more efficient with your spending, a good mid-\$7.5 billion to \$7.89 billion is a good budget. So you take \$28 billion and put that into a province, that's being able to run your economy for a period of time.

The issue that we had in Newfoundland and Labrador was that we had to catch up. We were so far behind. That's no blame to previous administrations, regardless of what political stripe they were. It was a reality that we were only getting X number of dollars from Ottawa as part of our equalization and our whole economy wasn't stimulated in any way, shape or form. What was driving the economy for generations and generations and centuries was the fishery, and we know what happened in the fishing industry. So it's only the last number of years, through aquaculture and some of the new changes in the fishing industry, that we started to move that forward.

There were some new industries that took off. The tourism industry; a billion-dollar industry that started to move forward, that started to give people a sense of hope, that started to get new investments. So we have the fishing industry that's starting to pick up, we have the tourism industry that's starting to pick up. We also – through very different approaches in the different other sectors, the aerospace sectors, the technology sector – started to drive the economy.

What we had to do was put incentives in play. Sometimes incentives are just having the proper infrastructure. Put the proper infrastructure there so that the citizens of this province get to have a proper lifestyle, get to be able to use the amenities that obviously give them access to services, but do it in a safe environment and put us on an even playing field with everybody else in this country and this world.

I talked about the \$28 billion and I went through each of the categories; equalization, \$10 billion. That was just to replace what we lost when we became a have province from what Ottawa used to give us. Now we are on our own dime, and rightfully so, and we paid our own way. A matter of fact, we paid in to the equalization, so the other provinces who were having fiscal challenges could benefit from that, and it was a good thing to do. They had helped us out, why wouldn't we – we're all part and parcel of this great country of ours.

Infrastructure: \$6 billion to eliminate mouldy schools, to ensure people had safe roads to travel on and bridges, and ensure we had clinics that were accessible and services people needed. Poverty reduction for those who are most vulnerable, we had services to be able to get a hand up and not a hand out. So \$1.2 billion went there.

Tax reduction stimulus: We wanted to stimulate the economy and draw people here and make us competitive with the other parts of this country, particularly Atlantic Canada, and we did that with a \$4 billion tax stimulus. This tax stimulus was back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The average Newfoundlander and Labradorian had more disposable income because we changed the tax regime so that when their paycheques came in every week, there was less money taken out. They could put it back into the economy, and it worked. It stimulated the economy; it kept things moving.

We also did debt reduction. One of the big things that were the biggest financial worry for us in this province was about our bond rating, because that determines when we can borrow money when we need it and the rates that we borrow it at. One of the issues the bond companies had was around the unfunded liabilities in our pension plans. So what we ended up doing there was taking a bulk of the monies, through the revenues that we had generated through oil royalties, and put it towards the pension plans to ensure those pensioners who have paid in all their lives, who had done their service for the people of this province, were able to be guaranteed that they would get their pensions.

We wanted to ensure those were in the civil service who signed on to support and be the servants of the people of this province would also have a viable insurance through their pension plan down the road. We also wanted to ensure those 100,000-plus Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who don't, unfortunately, have a pension plan, didn't have to carry the pension plan for everybody else on their backs through taxes. So we invested in that process to make it fair and equitable.

Tuition and student debt: That was very important because we wanted to drive our economy by ensuring that our citizens, and particularly our students, our young people, were the best equipped, the best trained. To do that, we had to make it affordable so it wasn't an elitist program where only those who could afford to go to post-secondary went there. So we did that by not only freezing tuition but rolling it back in a number of cases and putting in programs and services through our student loan process that would be equitable and accessible for all. We did that.

We also did it by drawing down on promoting what we did nationally and internationally, that foreign students or domestic students would come here that would not only benefit us in our society, but we generate revenue from it. What also we've noticed happens, some of these people stay here after they're well educated and contribute to our own society as employees and stay here and help grow our population. So it was a very positive thing. That got us up to \$25.3 billion.

Then we look at – and I actually had some Members, which shocked me as former civil servant, but maybe I got a vested interest, criticizing that we gave civil servants these big increases. Of course, we did. After nine years of zero – and don't forget, it's not only zero. I remember being part of the unions and when the Wells administration came in, we were going to roll back, and the unions at the time were fearful about the number of layoffs, and there were a substantial number of layoffs. And it said we're going to roll back wages and then after, it wasn't a rollback but what there was, was another employment tax.

While we didn't directly lose it off our cheque that way, that we rolled back what our base salary would be, our gross salary, we did lose it because when the deductions were there, we ended up having to pay more. That's every civil servant, that's the hundreds of thousands who have gone through over these periods of time.

So our civil servants were the lowest paid in the jurisdictions in Canada, yet they were doing the same jobs, they were doing it in more remote areas, they were having responsibility for larger areas and it was just the right way to motivate them, to get them to be able to do their jobs better, to be able to ensure that they had the proper resources and that to do it. So what we did, we did put monies into the public service because we wanted to make it attractive. We wanted to get the best people who could provide the service here. We wanted to ensure that the people in Newfoundland and Labrador didn't leave and those who had a skill set – we didn't want to train them in this province from post-secondary then give them some experience in doing their respective responsibilities and jobs, and then be taken off by some other jurisdictions, some other province, and lose that skill set. We didn't want to do that.

What we did over periods of time, negotiating in good faith of the unions – and we give credit to the civil service and the unions who co-operated with us when we were in times of restraint, realized that everybody had to try to do their part to get us over that hump. We did that, and there's no doubt maybe that's the same situation we're in now, maybe the unions here – obviously I'm hearing that they are open for discussion, but they want that dialogue and discussion. They don't want things to be imposed on them.

As part of that, we gave back to the civil service. Because when we give back to the civil service, not only does that money go back into the general populous, gets spent and stimulate the economy, but it also entices the civil service to stay here and provide quality service that people in this province are entitled to.

So we did that, and that was another \$1.5 billion. We took \$1.5 billion over a course now – this is a course of nearly 7½ years. It wasn't like we just threw that out there. The pension plan

money went back into the pension plan which, in turn, meant we had to contribute less; that \$1.5 billion went into the local economy. The same civil servants who have a few extra dollars in the sense of disposable income bought cars, renovated their houses, went to one of our local parks, went to one of the local restaurants, did all of the things that you would normally do as part of that whole process.

When we look at where we are, right now we're up to \$27 billion, up to \$28 billion that we talked about that we supposedly squandered while we were in government. This shows here and I'll get to where the other billion went.

Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to speak to this in the near future.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

It is nice to see you again, Sir.

CHAIR: You too.

MR. K. PARSONS: It's a pleasure to stand up here again now this morning, 8 o'clock. I took a little break, but back again to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Chair, it's amazing, to tell you the truth. It really is amazing because I got home last night and I looked at my Blackberry. I had all these strange people that want to be my friends now on Facebook. It's pretty good. I was trying to look at some of the names and see where they're from. They're from all over the province and everywhere.

I think we've made a lot of friends over the last couple of days. I got a lot of requests, like I said, on my Facebook for all these new people that want to be my friend now. It's pretty interesting to know that people are – and sometimes we're not really sure, as representatives here in the House of Assembly, of how the public are

engaged with what we're doing and how the public sees what we're doing. To look at the messages I got last night, I was amazed. I really was amazed. The people are engaged. There are so many people that are saying you're doing a great job, keep it up. You're speaking for us; you're talking about the right things.

I had a message from one lady on the libraries. She just said: I listened to you last night talking about the libraries. You said what I wanted to say. That's important. That's so important. Sometimes we don't realize it because we're in here and we're speaking, but I have to thank the people that are doing it because it kind of – I have a little jump in my step here this morning because I know I'm doing the right thing.

People want to be heard. Every message is what people were saying; we want to be heard, we're not being heard. We protested, we've done this, we've done that. We've contacted our MHA, we contacted the Premier's office, we've done all these things and no one is listening.

I think all my colleagues – I know the Member for Mount Pearl North has a list. He does something a little different. He takes everybody's email that emails him and he just reads them out. We were talking last night afterwards and he said it's amazing that so many people – he doesn't announce anything, he doesn't need to go back on an email and say I'm going to do your email next or I'm going to do this one, but he does the emails and just minutes after he does the emails, he'll get a response from somebody saying thank you very much for reading out my email.

For us in here again, sometimes we don't really know that people are watching. I know if the hockey game is on or if there's a baseball game on, people may not have the tendency – but it's a good feeling to know that, and I thank everyone that did it last night because I was kind of blown away by it. I was late getting to sleep because I was reading most of them. It was interesting to know that – and they were from everywhere. All over the province, people were trying to contact you and saying you're doing a good job, keep it up; I want to be your friend.

So I'm glad I'm getting all of these friends now, and it's nice. We, as elected representatives, and

I really believe this from the bottom of my heart, and I'm sure most MHAs do, that we're here to represent our constituents first and foremost. There is nothing more important than the people that elected you. The people that brought you here are the people that we have to get up and speak for. That's what we're doing.

People will look at this and some people will say, oh, it's a waste of time. What they're doing in there is a complete waste of time. But when you get emails from a person that says you said what I wanted to say; you said what I wanted them to hear. That's part of my job. That's my job as an MHA. That's my job as an elected representative here in the House of Assembly, to speak for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, I speak for my district first and foremost, and I advocate for my district. I have a good rapport, I think, with all the ministers on the other side. I have no problem going, if there's an issue in my district, to talk to a minister or talk to someone in the department. That's part of my job, but this whole process may be – and I know the people will look at it and they'll say I don't know what a filibuster is.

This filibuster is a little different. I've been involved in a couple over the last number of years, and sometimes they're on a specific issue. It is a specific issue, I guess. The budget is a specific issue, but it's a wide range. There's a wide range of topics; there's a wide range of concerns. When you have a budget that came down this year and the effect that it's having on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and sometimes again – and I thank the people that are doing the emails. I thank the people that are trying to contact us, people that want to be our friends. I thank them for that because sometimes we forget what we're doing and sometimes an issue to me may be very important –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: I can hardly hear myself here; I think I have them all riled up again.

Anyway, the concerns that people have, we ask them to contact us, let us know what their issues

are because sometimes my issues may be a little different than somebody else's. Sometimes you will find that something that may seem very small can be very huge to the person who has the concern.

Again, we're here on the budget and the budget bill – this bill is Bill 19 – and we're willing to stay and we're willing to do our part so the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can be heard. I think when you listen to what the people are saying to us, that's a big problem. That's the problem that they are finding out. They are saying we're not being listened to.

There was one change in this budget so far, one change, and it was the levy. I like the change in the levy. I wish there wasn't a levy at all. I wish there was no levy. I can't see us putting a tax on people's heads. I think that something else should be done other than a levy. We shouldn't have to pay a cover charge to live in Newfoundland and Labrador, no matter what your rate of pay is. There are ways of doing that through income tax and a fair way to do it.

I only have a couple of minutes left and I am not even at this page; I should put this down because that never started. Anyway, the levy itself, and this is the thing that amazes people: How did they come up with the levy? Where was the train of thought? I don't think that they ever realized what they were doing. They said, okay, here is \$20,000, we'll start there and we'll give this crowd \$300, that crowd \$450 and the next crowd \$900.

When people looked at it and said, my God, this is unfair. This is so unfair. How can they justify this? Then they had a second look at it and said, oh God, when we go back to our constituents and we talk to them and they're asking us questions, we can't justify it. Now, they did it a lot better this time. They moved it out and it's a sliding range and it's a lot better than what it was, but I still don't believe it's a fair tax.

Yesterday morning on VOCM when Fred Hutton was talking to this gentleman, who was a tax expert in Canada, he said it was one of the most unfair taxes that he has ever seen. I can see that. It really is an unfair tax.

Other than the levy, this government hasn't listened to anybody. That's why this filibuster that we're doing is so important. It's important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that Members are getting up and they're reading their emails. They're reading what they want to tell government. They're trying to explain to people why cuts – why increases in taxes.

This whole budget that was done is just based on tax, tax, tax, tax, tax and then cut, cut, cut, cut, with absolutely no plan in place. The only plan I've seen and the only plan I think I've heard of is a plan that down the road in four years' time, we're going to have a huge unemployment rate. People are going to be unemployed; they're going to be on EI. That's the only thing that this says. That's the only plan that's in this budget. There's absolutely –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Sir, get up and talk. You had all night long, come on. The Member for Terra Nova, I invite you to stand on your feet and say what is on your mind, tell the people what you're talking about.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that his time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Good morning, Mr. Chair.

I believe we're in hour number 43 the last time I checked. My math is slightly better than Ross Wiseman's, so I think that's an accurate depiction of reality here this morning. It's great to see my colleagues once again. We've had a bit of a shift change here. A few of us have had a couple of hours of sleep, a chance to get a quick shower. No time to shave, but time to at least put on a fresh suit and fresh pair of socks and come back to participate in the debate again today.

I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has already provided the Legislature with some morning updates on what's happening in the world outside the House of Assembly, so I appreciate that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Keep it down a little bit now, boys. See, they're wired because they've had a little bit of rest.

I'll forego the morning updates, although I heard as I was getting a quick shower that the VOXM Question of the Day relates to the filibuster. The question is, more or less: Is this all a waste of time?

Well, I have to tell you, Mr. Chair, that I am convinced that there is nothing about this filibuster that's a waste of time. How do I know that? I know that because I am still, as of minutes ago, receiving Facebook messages, tweets and emails from people across this province that are still deeply concerned. They're outraged. They're fearful because of what's contained in this Liberal budget and because, on top of all of that, there's a major scandal going on involving Nalcor, the Premier's office and the Minister of Natural Resources.

On top of that, Mr. Chair, many, many budget promises have been broken. On top of that, the vast majority of people in this province have lost confidence in the Liberal government that has only been in office for six months, and thousands and thousands of people are calling for the Premier's resignation. In the world of Newfoundland and Labrador politics, it's almost a perfect storm. It is a situation that is quite troublesome for many people in the province.

Why this filibuster is so important is because there are a lot of people who are concerned specifically about the budget, and we're debating Bills 14 and 19. We're currently in a debate on Bill 19, which is going to jack up people's home and auto insurance costs by 15 per cent, costing the typical family close to \$1,000 a year on top of the levy that many of them will have to pay. So people are really concerned about that. People are upset. They are now starting to believe the Liberal government did not have a plan and they're having a hard time believing – I respectfully say, Mr. Chair – anything that the Premier is saying in recent days and in recent weeks.

Now in the last 48 hours he hasn't said anything. Yesterday in Question Period – well, it's still

today in the House of Assembly – the Premier refused to answer a single question. He would not answer a single question from Members of the Opposition in Question Period, which is a critical half hour in this Legislature on a sitting day. We're not going to have a lot more Question Periods before the summer break and there are a lot of things going on in this province, as I just outlined, that people do have questions about.

Then on top of that, he refused to go outside those doors and speak to members of the media for the second day in a row. He sent out the Justice Minister. Now granted, there were some questions in Question Period that were very much related to the Department of Justice. So the Justice Minister would be a logical person to respond, but on the limited days that the House of Assembly sits, following a Question Period it's a fairly well established tradition that the Premier of the province, if requested by multiple media outlets who sit up there in that gallery –

MR. BROWNE: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: Yes, he was requested, I say to the Member for – I want to say Burin – Placentia West but that's the old name of the district.

MR. BROWNE: I'd love for him to be able to say that, but it's Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. KENT: Placentia West – Bellevue. Yes, he was requested by the media, I say to the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue. I'm having a hard time learning all the new district names. That will take some time.

There's a crisis in confidence. To the VOCM Question of the Day: Does this matter? Is this a waste of time? This is definitely not a waste of time because there are so many people who are concerned about all those issues and they're concerned that they don't have a voice in this process.

The people we're hearing from are saying, I've brought my concerns to my MHA – and granted, for a good number of those people they have received some response from the MHAs opposite. As I have mentioned at some point in debate last evening, there's a huge volume of correspondence coming at all of us, so

sometimes it takes a bit of time. I know for me, and I'm in Opposition, the responses can't be instant because of the volume we're dealing with.

I accept that Members opposite in government are doing their best to respond to many of their constituent's inquiries but people feel they haven't gotten the answers they want. They feel that people aren't standing up for them. Our job is to hold government accountable to whatever extent we can to make sure the questions get asked, whether the Premier wants to answer them or not. Also, to make sure that people's concerns get brought here to the floor of the House of Assembly.

So that's what we've done in the last 43 hours in this House and that's what we'll continue to do today as debate continues, because we feel a sense of responsibility to the people of the province to make sure that these issues get raised and to make sure that people feel they have a voice.

For this segment of the debate – I've already used up half of my speaking time. We're still going in 10 minute intervals, but in a half hour or so I'll be back. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands is chomping at the bit to get up and say a few more words. I want to acknowledge the role of the independent Member. He has been particularly helpful to the Official Opposition during this debate. It has been a team effort in that sense, and I really appreciate his contribution to the debate as well.

Members opposite like to heckle about the relationship I have with the MHA for Mount Pearl – Southlands. We've worked together – I believe the Member was elected to Mount Pearl council in 2001, roughly.

MR. LANE: No, 2003.

MR. KENT: 2003. I became the Mayor of Mount Pearl in 2003 and I believe the Member was elected in the by-election that followed that. So we've worked together for a long time. Regardless of where we've sat in this Legislature – sometimes we've sat on the same side, sometimes we've sat on opposite sides – we've always put our constituents first. The challenge in this budget debate is that I feel there

are a lot of people in this Legislature who haven't put their constituents first, I'm sad to say. Well, we continue to do so.

I'm pleased to say that many of my constituents have taken the time to send me messages that I've been able to present in this House of Assembly on their behalf, but I'm also honoured to have an opportunity to present views from people right around the province who don't feel they've had a voice in this process. Anyway, we'll continue to work together through this process, but beyond this process, more importantly, we'll always put our constituents first, and that is absolutely critical.

I have a few minutes left, so I'll read another message into the record here. This is a note that came in at around 11 p.m. Monday night. I recognize the name of the individual from Twitter. The former Member for Gander used to refer to Twitter as the Twitter box. I think Paddy Daly continues to keep that expression alive. Now, there you go, it will show up in Hansard tomorrow once again.

The budget is rotting me. The Liberal government promised the people a spending budget six months ago when our current fiscal crisis was pretty obvious. The Auditor General has been talking about the government's decreasing revenue, overspending and growing debt for years, and now they are pretending they didn't know. There are a lot of people working at making these numbers known and it's ridiculous to pretend they had no idea. This crisis has been building for a while and it needs to be dealt with, but this budget is overkill and will just make it worse.

At the House of Assembly, the Member for Exploits blamed the people of this province for the fiscal crisis because we have a culture of entitlement. This is such BS. It was not the people of this province who mismanaged our riches and put billions into debt. It was entitled politicians who rewarded themselves with lower personal and corporate taxes and reckless spending.

How is it that we have \$6 million to give Ed Martin, \$4 million for the Anaconda Mining Company, billions for Muskrat Falls, yet we are closing libraries, courthouses and Advanced

Education and Skills offices in our rural communities? This government has no vision. It has lied to its members time after time and does not have the confidence of its people. It must resign.

Now, I don't support all the sentiments in this email, Madam Chair. I do acknowledge that our financial situation has been building for some time, and I do acknowledge that it has to be dealt with. I would say respectfully, Madam Chair, that for the last three budgets, prior to this one, the previous government was taking steps to deal with the fiscal challenges that we faced and we would have had to go much, much further in *Budget 2016*.

We would argue that this government has made the wrong choices as it pertains to *Budget 2016*. When we talk about lower personal and corporate taxes and spending, people all over Newfoundland and Labrador over the last decade have benefitted from some of those decisions. In hindsight, could we have done some of those things differently? Perhaps, but I haven't heard people complaining over the last 10 or 12 years about lower taxes and about the critical investments in infrastructure that we've seen in just about – well, in every region in Newfoundland and Labrador and in dozens and dozens of communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Whether I like everything that this individual has said or not, I've got a job to do and my job is to bring forward these concerns to the House of Assembly. I would challenge Members opposite, we've still got hours, maybe days of debate to go, bring forward concerns on behalf of your constituents. Even though you voted for this terrible budget and even though up to now you haven't taken a stand for your constituents, there's still time in this debate to take a stand and share concerns on behalf of the people that you're paid to represent.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand up once again and debate the budget. Specifically, we're on to the insurance bill. We know that the levy bill is still outstanding. I guess the reality of it is that we're debating the budget in general. It will be these two bills that we must get through at some point in time.

I've spoken on this now – I can't count the number of times, but it's been an awful lot of times in the last couple of days. Although I'm a bit sleep deprived, I plan on going on for quite some time yet today before I take another nap. We have to do what we have to do to fight this budget and to try to convince the government to make some changes, which is what the people are asking for.

As has been said and I've said a number of times, we're continuing to receive feedback from constituents. Some of them are our constituents; some of them live in other districts. I have a couple of emails I've been asked to read. I'm going to read these.

The first one starts off a little bit not too kind to the MHAs, so I'm going to leave that part out: I'm a senior, 71 years old. Thanks to the mess that the Premier – and there's an adjective in front of that I won't say – and his staff – and there's an adjective in front of that too which I won't say – have now got us in, I honestly don't know how my wife and I are going to manage with the extra burdens this budget is going to place upon us.

This so-called budget is not only going to hurt seniors, hurt our economy, ruin our province and drive the price of food so high that not only will our seniors starve, but our people with young families are going to suffer big time as well. The Premier and the rest are not listening to the people of this Island. Thanks to all of his untruths, the inability to govern, we have lost confidence in him and his government. As a taxpayer and now a huge one, I call on the Premier to resign. Please pass my comments on in the House of Assembly. Thank you, very frustrated, and he leaves his name.

I have so many here, but another one I have: Hi Paul, Butter Pot Park is a place where people can go to enjoy the outdoors. Camping, hiking, swimming, canoeing and kayaking in the

summer. In winter, the activities don't stop. Winter camping, hiking, skiing and snowshoeing keep Newfoundlanders active and healthy. The government wants to shut down Butter Pot for winter activities. Winter camping does not cost the government anything. Snowshoeing and hiking are zero cost. Skiing costs a bit, due to grooming; however, if you weigh it against the health benefits, it actually works well for the government and the health care system.

Why is the government going to shut down this place where so much healthy activity takes place in winter? Shutting down the park and not having duty rangers in place to patrol the park will lead to more illegal activities like snowmobiling, ATVing and poaching in the park.

There are four votes in my household who voted Liberal. We will not be voting Liberal next election if the cuts to Butter Pot Park aren't lifted. The person leaves his name. He lives in a district in the St. John's area; I'll just say that, because I don't want to go putting any Members specifically in an uncomfortable position.

Now, I have a lot more emails here, but I'm just trying to do a couple at a time. There's a bunch more and they continue to come in. I have never, as I just said – I know I'm sounding like a broken record, but we need to keep driving the message home. I have never received so much feedback in my life. This is just phenomenal, the feedback that we're receiving on this budget. It's because people are concerned, they're frustrated, and they're angry, Madam Chair. People are looking for some changes in this budget. Quite frankly, as I've said, there is no point in saving the province from so-called financial ruin while, in the same breath, you're going to drive the people of the province into financial ruin.

Yes, there are some people who can absorb it. Yes, people know they have to pay more taxes, they expected it, they're willing to pay their share; but, for some people, for a lot of people, arguably for most people, it's just gone too far.

This budget is about choices. We hear Members opposite say, we didn't have a choice. There was no choice. There were choices. There were choices in this budget. All these cuts to education didn't need to happen. It is not costing

us – this is not a money issue. The education cuts are not a money issue. We never had full-day kindergarten to begin with. Yes, it's a good thing. Everyone knows it's a good thing. No one is saying it's not a good thing and there will be some people who will benefit because it equates to daycare. We know that, but the bottom line is you are harming the system that already exists to put in something that doesn't exist.

People are saying hold off until you can afford to it and you can afford to do it right. That's not even a money issue. That's not a money issue. Then we look at the \$30 billion – or the \$30 million, sorry; I wish we had \$30 billion – the \$30 million contingency fund. As I said earlier this morning, make it \$29 million and you can save all the libraries. We're saving a million dollars. Shutting down all them libraries in these districts to save a million dollars and you have a \$30 million contingency just shoved aside. Make it \$29 million and save all the libraries. That's not hard to figure out.

I don't know what the tax on books is going to be but that's something that could be saved by using some of this contingency. To say that there's no choice, is simply not correct. There are choices. The will needs to be there to make those choices, to make some changes. That's all people are asking for, to empathize with people and their situation.

There are people that are literally living from paycheque to paycheque. As somebody said to me in an email that I read 2 or 3 this morning, whatever it was, that it is not just low-income people that are living paycheque to paycheque. There are people who have amassed huge student loans and they have a house and a mortgage, car, kids and they are literally living from paycheque to paycheque. They just cannot afford the cumulative effect of all this taxation. That's what people are saying.

You have the levy and then you have the tax on insurance, which is a huge one and you have gas, which is another huge one, and you have the HST and you have all these fees on everything that you could imagine. Every time someone turns around, it's a new fee or an increased fee for something. You have the cumulative impact on that.

Then I talked about, sometime this morning, whenever it was, the fact that we have this other hidden tax that nobody is talking about. That hidden tax is the fact that all the businesses are going to have to endure insurance increases on their businesses and tax for their vehicles that are part of their fleet for a lot of businesses, and all of those things, and HST and all the supplies that those businesses use. Guess what they're going to do? They're going to have to increase the cost to the customers. The customers are going to have to pay more for all the goods and services. The businesses are going to have to pass on all these taxes to the consumer, so the consumer is getting hit twice.

They're getting hit by the pass on from the businesses and then they're going to pay tax on all of that again. Nobody is talking about that. That's a huge one. That is a huge tax when you think about it. Everything is going to go up and no one is talking about that.

I'll tell you who is going to be talking about it. It's going to be the person who got to go and purchase these goods and services. They are the ones who are going to have to talk about it. And who are these people? They are not fictitious people; they're not names on the balance sheet. They're our constituents; they're the people who elected us. This is their House; we're only here because of them. If it wasn't for them, we'd have no right to be sitting here.

These are the people that are going to be hit with all of this. These are the doors we knocked on. We knocked on doors and the people put their faith in you. We made promises, and now we're seeing a complete 180 from what was promised at the door to what is being delivered. Is it any wonder that your emails are going mad and people are upset? I can't blame them, and I will support them.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's good to get up again, of course, to talk about this bill, this budget. I guess the conversation has been broad ranging. I'd like to concentrate a bit more on the education piece in general. All Members, on this side anyway, have been bringing up various points during Question Period and during debate on the cuts to education. Each district is affected pretty well the same way, but in my district there are a lot of concerns about full-day kindergarten.

I've stated previously, and I'll state again, it's not a matter of full-day kindergarten being a bad thing; it's probably not the right time. It's equivalent to some other things, investments that the current government has made that we feel, not that it's bad, it's just the timing is off.

Full-day kindergarten, I know one school in particular in my district – and really, there are probably a couple but there's one in particular. The school is maxed out. It's over capacity. Some portable classrooms, modular classrooms I guess, were put on last year. There was an actual extension done to it maybe six years ago and it quickly expanded that we needed a further extension. The kindergarten classes in that school – the school is old. I suppose it's not old compared to some but the classrooms are designed for what we called our half-day kindergarten, designed for 10 to 12 kids. My children actually went there.

I've gotten a lot of feedback from residents about the fact that you are going to put 28 kindergarten children in a cramped classroom with possibly two teachers. The response to that has been pretty strong from the education, from the teachers themselves right on down to parents, to anyone that's involved in education system. Sometimes we kind of forget that it's not only just the parents and grandparents, it's family members and it's putting a lot of stress on these families.

I know there are two sides of the equation to our argument too. I had some parents that were saying, realistically, I can't see how they are going to be able to implement full-day kindergarten at this school. St. Edward's is the school in particular I'm talking about now. In the meantime, I have to make a decision on my

child care, my daycare. If they are only going a half day, they have to make arrangements for child care because it is such a demand.

I know up in CBS it is hard to get daycare provided. You have to book it earlier. You can't just decide a month in advance that you need it because most of them are at capacity. So I had a lot of people who were saying I can't see how they are going to bring in full-day kindergarten while these schools are not ready, the expansions have not been done. They are worried about their children going there and not having the proper gym times, the activity.

I know in St. Edward's school, for instance, where it is at capacity, it is a struggle. I've been up there during busy times. I don't know if it's over; it shouldn't be over, but it's pretty close to it. You are adding these extra children and you are putting two teachers in a classroom. These are strong concerns parents have.

We've said it all along and we'll keep saying it, when this government here, the former government brought in the full-day kindergarten, something that we believe in, but again it didn't have to be in 2016; it easily could have been pushed for another year. It would have given parents lots of advance notice. They would have had arrangements made, like any other year, for their children with daycare and whatnot. Most people, a lot of parents out there support full-day kindergarten, but when I spoke to a lot of them, they also would rather it be delayed. At least then they can let the school district have the proper work, proper preparation done in all of our schools, especially the Northeast Avalon where that's the majority or the vast majority of where our schools are facing capacity issues. As you know, most of the builds and extensions, the vast majority of them happen on the Northeast Avalon because where it's the largest chunk, most dense population in the province.

Also on the education piece, it's been brought up a lot, Intensive Core French. My two daughters were fortunate enough to partake in that. I think it's done them well; most children who have been involved in that, it seemed to be a very successful program. We've heard stories here about throwing names in a hat. You have twins where one got picked, one never. I've seen stuff on Facebook. Parents are outraged over the fact

that their son or daughter never had the opportunity to get into Intensive Core French when all their friends did. Even though their grades are good and they're capable of doing it and they want to do it, that right has been taken away from them.

On that point, I know Members opposite also like to bring up the fact that in rural parts of Newfoundland we have the multigrade teaching. They downplay the – you know, Intensive Core French not so much, but especially on the multigrade and some of these education cuts.

A lot of rural parts – not all now certainly, but there are a lot of pockets in rural Newfoundland where the school populations are down. If you're looking at a school that's overcapacity and the demand is there for these programs, and then you have another school where there is space in that school, maybe multigrade works in certain areas but not in all. This is a one-shoe-don't-fit-all approach with these education cuts.

Personally speaking I believe that if the demand is there it should be provided. Multigrade teaching, I don't think, is the best approach. I don't think it's an ideal approach in any regard, but if you're in a situation where you have low enrolment rates, if that means that it's going to create big costs – save a lot of money in the long run, it may be okay because your numbers would be down. If you had multigrade you'd have less students and you'd be able to give the proper attention to each individual student.

On the Northeast Avalon, I really beg to differ on the multigrade teaching set-up. It's not conducive, I don't think, when you have a large school population.

On the Intensive Core French thing – I'll go back to that for a second – I'm a believer, you qualify if your merits, if your marks reward you. If you want to do it on the basis of you're taking it based on grades, I could almost live with that. But bringing in a measure with no real thought – which this budget is pretty well the same thing; there was no real thought to this budget. You look at the budget in its entirety, there was no real thought that went into this budget. A lot of these cuts were made – again, we say it over again there in the House; it was like a spreadsheet and they just made the numbers

work. When they all balanced out, this is the way we're going.

If you really sized up what this budget is doing to – and I say it again – each and every person in the province, look at our youth, look at our children, look at our young families, which they're the middle class people with the young children in the schools that got these concerns that are also being faced with the other implications of the budget. I believe that the education cuts, among everything else that's has not been thought out, but the education cuts have definitely not been thought out.

Closing 54 libraries to save a million dollars; taxing books when we have high illiteracy rates; Intensive Core French you've got to throw your name in a hat; multigrade teaching when you've got different grades in a classroom; full-day kindergarten when you've got 28 kids in a classroom that's designed for 12 – I don't know if there's anything I just listed there that's conducive to a good education system. We have, in my opinion, one of the better education – we had one of the better education systems in the province. I'm not so sure we do today.

The debate on the curriculum, that's another matter that, sometimes, that's always a work in progress. Professionals do that and that's their role. Government's role is to provide the proper facilities, the proper programming to give our children the best opportunities. So I think we went from having one of the best education systems in the province – it's still good now, and I wouldn't want to say it's horrible, but with these cuts, I don't see how our children are benefiting, how this can be considered good decisions made a government.

The emails and the phone calls and the messages and the conversations speak volumes. Whenever you run into a young family, those are their concerns. They're against it. You hear it in the House over and over again and the Minister of Education gets up and tries to defend it, but there's no defending these budget decisions when it comes to education.

Thank you very much.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm happy again to stand, and here we are, it's 13 minutes before 9. Some of the schools have already started; some people's places of work have already started. We've been at this now all through the night and it's been a very interesting night. Again, we have to look at: Why are we doing this? Is this important?

I believe it is. I believe it is important because there are some very, very specific corrective measures that need to be taken here. The government has instilled fear, has instilled despondency, has taken away people's hope by pounding away repeatedly, repeatedly, about the dire situation, the financial situation of the province, and how it's never been to this point before – which may be true. There are elements of truth in that. We all know that there is an incredibly difficult financial situation that the province faces. Part of it is because the government's addiction to oil and the previous administration didn't do a whole lot to do diversification in communities across the province.

We're suffering the sins of a few administrations, Madam Chair. That's why we have become so vulnerable and so vulnerable to the global movements in the price of oil, in the price of commodities. That's what we are dealing with.

We're also dealing with the fallout of Muskrat Falls. Let's not kid ourselves about that. Over \$700 million every year in the past few years transferred to Nalcor for the Muskrat Falls Project. In this budget, \$1.3 billion – not \$1.3 million, not \$10 million, not \$100 million, but \$1.3 billion that the people of the province are responsible for, transferred to Nalcor for Muskrat Falls, a megaproject that is out of control, that is falling off the rails. We hear about it daily. Madam Chair, that's what we're dealing with.

But, in spite of that, regardless of what kind of storm we are in, government's role is to provide leadership, to assure people, to look at the resources that we do have in the province, and the resources that we do have in the province are the people of the province. Government's role is

not just to be a clarion call telling us that the arse is out of her; that's not what government's role is to be. Government's role is to say yes, there are problems. Yes, we have challenges. However, these are the solutions that we have going forward.

Government's role is to ensure that people are strengthened – our greatest resource: our people. That our people are strengthened, that our communities are strengthened, that there is stimulus in the economy, that they will strengthen our public services and strengthen our private enterprise as well so that we can weather the storm together.

That's not what this government has done. This government has taken away every bit of hope that the people have had. A year and a half ago, young people were having babies here and planning to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador; young families, working families who had moved away were talking about coming back home and establishing their lives here again. Now people are talking about leaving.

I'm not going to say people are leaving in droves. I'm not going to say that, never have and I won't say that. I am absolutely amazed at the number of emails that I have received in the past few days of young working families who are saying we're going to have to look at the possibility of moving. Why? Because they see what's happening to our education system. They can see the growing unemployment. They can see the extra fees. They can see the deterioration in our education system. That's primarily what they're worried about, the education of their children. Then I'm also hearing from young people who were going to come home with their families and are not doing that. That is a shame.

We have such great potential here in our province. We have a province rich with natural resources. We have hard-working, resilient people and this government has ground it all to a halt. The other thing, Madam Chair, that I find particularly objectionable is the constant hammering home of the message that we are in such dire financial situations without a corresponding message that we are going to work through this and get through this storm together.

They've done nothing to prepare people. They've done nothing to harness the energy of people. They've done nothing to coordinate and facilitate the people of the province working together to get through this storm.

I would like to read another message that I got just minutes ago: I've never used Twitter and only signed up to say thank you for your efforts. My family and I just moved back to Newfoundland and Labrador after being in Ontario for six years and spent many days and nights dreaming of being back in Newfoundland and Labrador. After being here for a year, and being hit with this budget, we are thinking about moving back to Ontario.

That is so sad, Madam Chair. I am hoping that the Members here in the House are listening to this message. This is a message that a citizen of the province has asked to be read here in this House. I'm hoping that the Member for Mount Pearl North actually might be able to take his chatter elsewhere so I can finish this.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sorry about that. You don't have to be rude about it.

MS. ROGERS: I'm not being rude, Member. I know that you want to hear every word on this.

He said after being here for a year and being hit with this budget, we are thinking about moving back to Ontario. We haven't felt the taxes yet but I've seen some of the effects already. Concerns over summer trip expenses, cancelling our road trips to see parts of the Island we haven't been to, and seeing a young motorcycle accident victim with a potentially broken pelvis be told he had to take an ambulance two hours across a horrible road to another hospital for X-rays because it was 5:30 p.m. and the hospital he was at could not call in the X-ray tech.

He goes on to say: I know I'm not the only one with these thoughts. There are many others I work with discussing leaving Newfoundland. Thank you for your efforts. I hope the Liberals listen to you on behalf of the population who is going to suffer under the budget. Thank you.

This is a young working family that moved back here, who had dreamed of being able to move

their family back to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, what we are dealing with is the actual direct effects of the budget on people, and also the perception by people of the province. Again, let me stress, it wasn't the Official Opposition who caused this hopelessness. It wasn't our party who caused this hopelessness. It's wasn't our party, nor the Official Opposition, who caused this despondency. It was the messaging of this government that things were so bad that they could not provide what is necessary for the province to thrive. Their message is not about how we are going to create jobs. Their message is – even in the budget on page 5 – that the unemployment situation is going to get worse because of the measures that government has taken.

This is not the role of government. This is not what government should be doing, and I challenge government. Madam Chair, it's time that this government do something about changing this in the province. People have to have a sense of hope. People have to have a sense that this government is going to do something about the high unemployment, that this government is going to do something about diversification, that this government is going to do something about our school system and also do something about our health care system, that they are going to look at modernizing approaches to our health care system and to our school systems, but they haven't given any of those messages at all.

Again, the message they have given is one of absolute desolation, one of absolute doom and gloom, and the people have believed it, and why wouldn't they? Because that's the only message this government has given. This government has given no reason for the people in this province to hope that things are going to change, because there's nothing concrete in the budget. There is nothing concrete in the messaging of this government that would give people any reason to hope that things are going to get better, and I believe that is shameful.

We are a province with hardworking people. We are a province with people who have undergone adversity before and it's incumbent, absolutely incumbent on this government to turn this

around rather than allowing people to spiral into despondency.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I look forward to standing again and speaking to this bill.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand in this House, this early in the morning as people get into their regular routine on a Wednesday, to debate and discuss some of the issues that are facing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

For the 9 o'clock viewers, we're now debating Bill 19, which is a bill that imposes tax on our insurance policies, home and auto insurance. It's a 15 per cent levy that will impact everybody who has to drive a car, who owns a home, who owns a property. It will be a significant increase in taking out of their pockets of any disposable income they may have, and it's something they hadn't budgeted for.

A number of years ago when we saw that people in Newfoundland and Labrador had been overburdened by taxes, we wanted to find ways to encourage them to ensure they were protected through proper insurance plans and securities, but at the same time, ensure that people had monies in their pocket. We did that by taking the tax off insurance, car and auto insurance particularly.

What I've been doing for the last number of times, because I've been answering questions from some of my colleagues from the other side and the general public, and some of my own constituents about what we did when we were in power when we had all the royalties from the oil regime and how we used it. As one person once said, did we spend like drunken sailors or did we put it in the right places. Because it was the things that were needed to be done so that we'd have a better place and a better ability to

stimulate the economy and ride any bumps in the road that we may have, and we're in a bump in the road.

I want to outline to people exactly what we spent, and why there's still an ability to get through this fiscal challenge because of some of the things that were put in place. Some of the things that are not necessarily, that need to be done now, because they've been already addressed, or can be put off for a period of time because we've done enough preventative measures in the past to ensure people are still safe.

I talked about \$10 billion was equalization. We went from a have not to a have. The federal jurisdiction no longer had to give us money based on that formula and we could contribute back so that other provinces that had some financial challenges could reap some of the benefits and ensure their citizens had programs and services.

Infrastructure; \$6 billion went into schools, roads, hospitals and all the infrastructure needs so that we had a better way of providing services for our citizens. Better education, better health care, better safety, better infrastructure.

Poverty reduction; \$1.2 billion went into taking us from the worst when it came to how we treated our low-income individuals, our people with some challenges, to ensure they had a leg up and not a handout, so that they could get back into society, find a way to be better engaged, be more productive and be able to provide for their own families. We did that. We went from the worst in the country to the best. There's still much more to do, but we've made some strides to ensure more people have access to programs and services. We try to eliminate some of the challenges they face.

Tax reduction stimulus; \$4 billion went back in the pockets of individual Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. No matter what tax regime you were in, you got a break. That money went back into people's pockets so they could spend it back into the economy, keep stimulating the economy here, creating more jobs, creating new types of businesses, new entities.

Services we never had before were now being offered by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because this is money that went back into their pockets. It was a win-win for everybody in this province. We, in turn as a government, got most of that money back through different avenues through taxes, employment tax, tax on goods and services, production tax; all the other things that are relevant to how we sustain our tax needs by collecting those taxes. We did that.

Debt reduction; it was important for us to pay down, particularly the unfunded pension liabilities, to ensure that our bond rating didn't drop. The minute that drops and we borrow money, we borrow at a higher interest rate. We're paying more money at the end of the day and getting nothing to show for it.

So we found a way to pay down our pension plans to ensure they were solvent, so that our former pensioners, our present pensioners and future ones would have something to look forward to and have some security. By doing that, it put us in a better place to get top standard classification that we ever had, an A classification for borrowing, which meant we could borrow at extremely low rates, in turn pay less interest, more money into programs and services for the people.

Tuition to student aid; we knew if we're going to be in any way successful in this province we need to stimulate our education system and encourage more people to go there, make it affordable, accessible, make sure we didn't burden them with massive student debts. Plus at the same time, open up our college system, our university system and our private college system also to students from other parts of our country and international students to draw them here. So having it affordable by drawing them here, they spend 10 times their tuition costs in living, in purchases, being engaged in the communities. A number of them, after they're educated, stay here. So it helps drive our population growth. It keeps a qualified skill set in this province, and it makes us a more multicultural province, all win-wins for people in this province.

The public service employees benefits there. We gave our employees, over a course of eight years, some increases to ensure, one, that we kept the key civil servants here, the people who

have been trained for years, that we didn't lose their skill set to some other province because people paid more wages.

For nine years, there were zero increases. Not only were there zero increases, but people fell behind. The cost of living increased, we increased employment tax, so each week people were seeing less and less on their paycheque. So we said it's time we caught up. It's time we thanked them for helping move the province forward, as we did for every other taxpayer by giving them tax breaks.

And we did that, to bring them at a point where they were competitive. It also gives the ability, when we are in fiscal times, that we can negotiate their support in helping us get over that. If they know that they are at a pinnacle point now where they can still sustain it for a period of time, until we're in a better fiscal time frame to be able to relate back to giving back their just reward for being co-operative and being very supportive and running the programs and services for the people of the province.

The last category – all of this added up to \$27 billion. We had talked about, the agreement by everybody – some were saying it was \$25 billion. My research shows we had \$28 billion of additional oil revenues that we put back into the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador in different ways to provide services for our taxpayers. It's their money. No matter what regime would have been in there, what political party, who was premier at the time, who were ministers, this was the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador's money. It was the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador's money. It was the citizens who have yet to pay taxes, those young people. It was those who paid taxes all their lives who are now retired. This was their money.

We wanted to ensure we put it back into services that would provide a better standard of living, a better quality of life for them, but also would ensure that either them, as young people, would be able to be provided with better employment opportunities. If it is people of an older age, that they would have better health care, better services in their later years. There was a balance here of how we invested our money. We ensured

that we had infrastructure so we could continue to drive the economy.

The last category that we put substantial amounts of money into, Madam Chair, was business industry innovation. We put nearly a billion dollars into that, hundreds of millions of dollars that we invested in particular things around research and development. Newfoundland and Labrador went from we may have touched a couple of areas that people thought that we had an expertise in to we dramatically increased our research and development process. We helped develop Research & Development Corporation, which meant that there were a number of things that we could do; one, because of our geography; one, because of the skill set we had here; and two, because of the partnerships we had developed around research and development. We were drawing tens, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, worth of investments to do research and development work here in Newfoundland and Labrador creating jobs, paying taxes.

Innovation strategy, we did that around our new innovation technologies, how we engage that, how we promote that, how we draw corporations and other entities to come here and invest. Our ocean technology strategy, we've become a world leader when it comes to ocean technologies and ocean research. We continue to do that to this day.

Venture capital, we found ways to invest in particular entities here so that we weren't always reliant, that we diversified our economy on one stream of income. No doubt we were reliant on the oil industry and always will be to a certain degree, but we started to ween ourselves off that to ensure that we had other things here that were attracted to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Investments in aquaculture and agrifoods – dramatically. It has gotten to a point where the aquaculture industry is worth nearly a billion dollars. Moving that forward, creating jobs, sustaining places in rural Newfoundland and Labrador because the fishing industry wasn't working that people thought would be dead, people would have to move out. We did that to the benefit of the people of Newfoundland and

Labrador. Everybody benefited from what we did there.

Investing in the fishing industry, arts and culture, tourism – the tourism industry is worth a billion dollars. We took the monies that we had, the people's money and said, you know what, we want to invest it so that you can get more out of it, that we have some longevity here, that this generation, the next generation and generations to come can benefit from what we've done.

We've seen what we've done in the arts; The *Republic of Doyle*, the multitude of other movies that have come here and shows that have come here. That's a testament because we supported industries that put 20-fold.

The best cliché in business, if you can do a 3-1 ratio, you did great. In a lot of our investments, we did a 5-1 ratio. In some cases, we did even more. What we did is great publicity for this province.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll have a chance to speak again in the future.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

Good morning, Madam Chair. Welcome back to the Chair.

It's another lively morning in the House of Assembly. I got a little carried away a few minutes ago. I got an honourable mention while the Member for St. John's Centre was speaking. If you're watching the webcast or the telecast you can only see the speaker that's speaking and sometimes the person that happens to be behind the speaker or immediately adjacent to them.

I was engaged in some banter with Members across the House and didn't mean to distract the Member for St. John's Centre. There's lots of passion in this debate, particularly on this side of

the House. There are a lot of issues that we want to raise. We're not afraid to challenge some of what's being thrown at us either, although it's been pretty quiet on the government benches for the last number of hours.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not a word (inaudible.)

MR. KENT: Not a word, no, that's accurate. I had a little nap a few hours ago, so I missed some of the overnight proceedings but it's been pretty quiet over there.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not a word.

MR. KENT: Yes, not a word.

That's how these filibuster things seem to go. I wouldn't be surprised now in prime time, later on today, if we see a few government Members pop up, but they're tired. Everybody is tired. It's clear they don't want to hear what we have to say at this point and they'd rather us not keep this going, so much so that they've changed the message track again, Madam Chair.

The new message track being spread by the Liberal caucus and even Cabinet ministers is that this is expensive. This filibuster is expensive. Democracy is expensive, Madam Chair. It's important, it matters, it's worth fighting for and it's worth standing up for. Yes, there is a cost to the House of Assembly being in session. If we sat for another week, two weeks or another month, there's a cost to that as well.

And yes, when we do have overnight sittings, there is a hard cost to that. One government Member tweeted recently that it's not a cost-neutral event, basically implying that this is expensive, so we shouldn't be doing it. I take exception to that, Madam Chair. I take exception to it because I've heard from – I won't go as far as saying thousands – hundreds and hundreds of individual citizens who feel that this is a really important process because they don't get to have a say in this debate on budget issues otherwise. They don't get their views brought to the House of Assembly otherwise.

So, yes, this costs money, but every time the House of Assembly is open it costs money. That shouldn't be used as a rationale to keep the House closed for longer than it's already closed.

Democracy is expensive, but it's necessary, it's important, it's about our freedom, it's worth preserving and it's worth standing up for. It's worth fighting for, Madam Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: I hear the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville saying hear, hear. I appreciate your acknowledgement, Sir, of the fact that this is an important process. And regardless of the fact that there's a cost associated with it, it pales in comparison to the cost this budget will have for families and for individuals throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, which is another reason why this debate is so very, very important. So I take exception to a Minister of the Crown tweeting that it's not a cost neutral event and implying that because it costs money to be here, we should shut the filibuster down and stop the debate on Bill 14 and Bill 19. Well, I don't agree.

Now, the Members opposite are entitled to their opinion, and maybe some of them would like to stand. They haven't stood in a while. So maybe they'd like to stand and explain why they think we shouldn't be here because it costs money to be here, but I don't share that view, Madam Chair. I know there are some people out there that do.

I've seen a few messages on social media where people are saying this is potentially not a good use of time and money, but I respectfully disagree. I think it's essential that we keep this conversation going and bring people's views to the House of Assembly, like the ones that I'm about to share.

As I said when I was up last time, the question has even come up – it came up in the preamble on the *VOCM Open Line* show in the last 10 minutes or so. It is the *VOCM Question of the Day*. Is this a waste of time? The question was raised about the cost of the filibuster in recent discussion on the airwaves. Well, I would argue that that message being spread at this point by the Liberal government is an attempt to silence us. It's an attempt to create some pressure inside the House and, more importantly, publicly to say: simmer down, give in, give up, stand down.

Let these bills pass, let the debate and discourse about these issues cease.

I understand why government may feel that way and want that, but I respectfully submit, Madam Chair, that we can't stand down. We can't give up and give in. We can't just stop the conversation because we're continuing to be bombarded with correspondence from people all over Newfoundland and Labrador who are outraged by the actions and decisions of this government. Yeah, democracy isn't cheap, but it's a system that's worth preserving. It's a system that allows us to bring these concerns to the floor of the House of Assembly.

All of that said, Madam Chair, I'd like to take a moment once again to thank the people that are working around the clock here with us to make this possible. It is costly, and it's having an impact on the people that are required to be here with us. Those people include our Table Officers; the staff that help keep this House of Assembly running here on the floor of the House of Assembly. We have young Pages, some of whom have had several sleepless nights this week because they've been here to help keep the House running. We have a Broadcast Centre downstairs that's working around the clock to keep the webcast going and to keep the television broadcast going.

We have a crew upstairs in Hansard that has the unenviable task of transcribing every word that's said in the House of Assembly. I've often joked that it's hard enough to listen to it for a little bit, but for the folks that have to hang on our every word and capture it in the record for eternity, that's –

AN HON. MEMBER: Poor people.

MR. KENT: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: Poor people.

MR. KENT: Poor people, says one hon. Member. Yes, I think I share that sentiment; it's not an easy job. They've been working around the clock as well.

We have Commissionaires, many of whom have done incredible service to this province and this country, and are now here serving the people in

the House of Assembly. They're working around the clock to make this debate possible.

We have RNC officers that are here to protect the House of Assembly, to ensure decorum and order and to ensure that there's adequate security in place. I want to thank them as well.

I'm sure I've forgotten people. For everybody that's involved in keeping the House of Assembly open – and now we've been open for several days around the clock – on behalf of the Official Opposition, I want to express my sincere thanks. I know that all Members – and I see some nods across the way from the government. All Members in this House appreciate what people are doing to keep this debate going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you.

Let's not diminish it, let's not make light of it and let's not be disrespectful of it by suggesting for political reasons that it's expensive and this is somehow a waste of money. Bringing people's concerns to the floor of the House of Assembly when they have legitimate concerns that need to be heard, that's not a waste of money and it's not a waste of time.

I encourage people to keep contacting us and we'll bring your concerns forward as long as government allows us. Keep contacting us, because you deserve to have a voice. Call the *Open Line* show and express your view, vote in the VOCM Question of the Day, contact your MHA, post on Facebook, send a tweet, write an email, whatever it takes, get the word out there and help us make sure that your concerns are heard and are listened to.

I want to thank our own staff as well. We have a small contingent of staff in the Opposition. The New Democratic Party with only a couple of Members would have fewer resources, and the Independent Member would have fewer resources again. Our staff people have been working round the clock.

I share a corridor with the New Democratic Party and with the Independent Member, as all of my colleagues do. We share hallways and

coffee pots and washrooms. We're seeing firsthand how hard our staff are working, but the public doesn't get to see that of course. I know I've seen them in the hallways as well. There are staff working for government Members that are working round the clock to keep this process going as well. They deserve to be recognized.

In fact, I discovered that one of our staff is a chef. So I was really pleased after grabbing a quick nap and a shower this morning and putting on a fresh pair of filibuster socks to see that we had a hot breakfast being prepared in our caucus room this morning. So, I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for the efforts that everybody is making to keep this critical debate going.

Let's not silence democracy. Let's not complain about how expensive it is, Madam Chair. Let's keep this debate going.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

What a pleasure to be here, this being – we're well into the late hours of, still I believe it's Monday. Is it Monday?

AN HON. MEMBER: No, it's Tuesday.

MR. BYRNE: It's Tuesday here in the House of Assembly, because of course the clock continues. The calendar still appears as though it were on the day that the debate started. What an excellent debate it has been. Because this of course being a money bill, anything related to the finances of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is relevant to this discussion.

Now I want to jump quickly and right into the fact, to the notion that the MHA for Mount Pearl

North, I believe it is, has raised the spectre about the cost. There seems to be a little bit of a nerve that has been struck because there is a discussion that has occurred in social media about the cost of these proceedings.

Madam Chair, I'll raise this point quickly. It was not anyone from within this Chamber, currently within this Chamber that raised this point. In fact, it was his former colleague, former Minister Charlene Johnson, who in a Facebook post had presented a budgetary proposal that suggested that late night sittings of the House of Assembly should be suspended because they are expensive.

That particular proposal received great positive reaction on her social media post, from Charlene Johnson, that House of Assembly sittings should be better organized, could be better organized, in her opinion, to suspend the procedural capacity for late night sittings because they did incur additional expenses due to overtime for many of the officials the Member for Mount Pearl North had noted, such as the House of Assembly Broadcast team, the Hansard team, the desk Officers here in the House of Assembly – who we very, very value and appreciate their hard work; a very small team of House Officers, Madam Chair. In order to be able to maintain the procedure and rules of the House, they are required to sit at the Table. Even though it's a small team, they've done incredible service for each and every one of us.

Above and beyond that, of course, there is the custodian staff, there's the security team, the Commissionaires. An unbelievable team of people, team of resources here in the provincial capital here in the House of Assembly that maintain the functioning capacity of the House of Assembly to sit.

I would not want to leave out an absolutely indispensable team and crew which are our Pages.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: I want to say thank you to each and every one of you for the work they've done.

Madam Chair, with that said, there has been a notion that has been put forward on the floor of

the House that the government deems this as an irresponsible expense. Absolutely not, Madam Chair, this is democracy.

In fact, I'd actually rebut by another situation to say that – I won't mention to the presence or absence of Members here in the House because of course that would be against our Standing rules. It will be not unnoticed in the Hansard that some Members have not been speaking from the NDP and the PCs over the late-night hours. Of course, that may or may not represent – I'll leave that to your judgement, Madam Chair – their presence or absence in the House, but that's Hansard, that's a different matter altogether.

You may wonder, you may ask yourself the question if there's not a full team of Opposition Members that are present, are they fully engaged in this. That's another matter. That's a totally separate matter. What I will say to this is I think you'll agree that it's inevitable that the media, those of interest will want to inquire about the cost of all of this. That's their right as well. That's an inevitability as well.

Listen, every time the House of Assembly sits you have MHAs that come from Labrador, from the West Coast, from Central, from the Avalon Peninsula, every time –

AN HON. MEMBER: Burin Peninsula.

MR. BYRNE: The Burin Peninsula in particular.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Do you know what? It costs money. Every time the House of Assembly sits and every time a caucus, whether it be the PC caucus or the NDP caucus, get together and meet as a group there is a certain cost that is involved. Democracy is expensive. This is a money bill, so part of the debate here today, it is totally valid and totally appropriate and totally consistent that you'd analyze those costs and consider just raising some of those items.

When the Member for Mount Pearl North raised this and he listed out very diligently, very dutifully, all of the people who are involved in all of this, he did actually speak the truth. He

spoke the truth. That's what is involved in all of this.

I would harken back that Charlene Johnson, his former colleague, actually called for an end to this. I'd like to hear the Member for Mount Pearl North and get his reaction as to whether or not he agrees or disagrees with his former colleague, because when Charlene Johnson came on Facebook –

AN HON. MEMBER: A former Finance minister.

MR. BYRNE: That's right, a former Finance minister. She called specifically for an end to this. I'd like to know whether or not he'd like to contradict his former colleague and say no, she's wrong. She's absolutely wrong. I don't know what the answer is that he'll provide, but it will be interesting to hear.

So, Madam Chair, that's where we are. I certainly feel as though this has been a fantastic experience. I've gotten an opportunity to spend time with the Member for Mount Pearl North. I've gotten an opportunity to spend additional time, beyond the microphone, behind the curtain as it's called, in side chats with the Member for Conception Bay South – Bell Island, Cape St. Francis and other districts. It's been a real, real positive experience for me.

It provided me with an opportunity to share a few laughs, engage in a debate – sometimes we agree to disagree, but to actually share a laugh, to exchange some ideas without the microphone. You find that there are a lot more commonalities than there are differences. That is something that I think if we spent a little more time at, informal discussions and not always formal discussions, we'd probably be able to advance the agenda and advance the discourse even farther.

It something when I served in Ottawa, when I served as a Member of Parliament, we always took a little opportunity, a little extra time, to be able to spend time with members from across the aisle and it always proved a very, very worthwhile exercise.

One of the things about Standing Committees – you may want to raise this. We spend a lot time here on public accounts, but you don't get a

chance to travel with that as much as you probably like. When you spend time with each other you really, really do get a better opportunity to get to know each other and understand each other a little bit better.

If I could say one thing, this particular filibuster – sitting at 3 in the morning and whatever Members are present from the NDP and from the PCs, I always like to try and cross the island and spend a little time. I think on social media there were some that noted I was doing a few antics with some karate kicks and a few other things. That was not actual – that was not a robust engage; that was not a threatening pose. That was more of a get to know you. When we do that we always serve, I think, each other's cause. It does allow us to get to know each other better.

It will be interesting because I think that is part of the – the Member for Mount Pearl North may protest and want to wrap this up to suggest that this is the government now trying to bear pressure, to put a spin on this that this is our way of wrapping this up. Absolutely not; this is democracy in action.

The Opposition wanted this to occur. It is their right to have it occur. It is within the spirit and the letter of the law of the Standing Orders for it to occur and it does cost money. It costs significant money. This is a budget debate. It is proper for that to become an element of a debate about a money bill. To expect anything less, Madam Chair, would be unrealistic.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

My apologies, the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: No problem, Madam Chair.

Conception Bay East – Bell Island is beautiful as well. It almost borders mine but I like Conception Bay South; I really love it actually.

Madam Chair, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills made some good points there. I agree, as we sit through the long hours here, there's been a lot of debate, but it has been respectful. We've had a bit of humour in between, but around the humour comes the reason we're all here. We're not here at 4 in the morning because we love each other that much that we want to spend the nights together.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: Some people do. Yeah, we don't all feel that way.

We're here for a reason. I guess the ultimate reason we're here is people's voices are not – I guess people feel their voices are not being heard as much as they'd like them to be. To me personally, I've been around politics for a long time, budgets come and go, issues come and go, people will have their say, and sometimes there's engagement to different levels.

When we go through an election process, we also want to have people engaged, engagement of our youth. Just our voting electorate in general, we feel they're not engaged. We all have stories; when you're campaigning you go to the door and someone doesn't know it's an election or they think you're running for council. You leave and you kind of chuckle.

I know a former MP, a former colleague of the Minister of AES told me one time, he said it's only a small group of us political people that really think it's life and death. Most people are not engaged. That's a true statement.

If I could probably draw one positive, and I try to find some positive. I'm a positive thinker. If I could find one positive in this budget – and it may be a negative but it can turn into a good thing – the electorate have been engaged.

Last month, prior to the budget vote, Facebook, social media took off with – there was a revelation that the 40 MHAs get to vote on the budget. Any of us around this Chamber who has followed politics always knew that was the case and it's party politics. Every individual MHA is counted. I found it really fascinating that there was a lot of the electorate who didn't realize that.

Again, I go back to the former MP who told me. When he said it to me it was true, but we get caught up in it sometimes, we say the bubble. This budget is after bringing all of that – everyone are brought out of that train of thought.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. PETTEN: The Minister of Municipal Affairs likes to heckle. He tries to throw you off, but I'll get back. I'm not going to lose my train of thought.

It is after engaging the public. The public now are engaged like never before. I know the message managers for the government side – every government has them, their communications people try to keep them on task. I know, because I've seen it back in the day with this former government. I've talked to lots of people in politics, ride it out, ride it out. I don't know how easy that's going to be on this one because the engagement on this is not a sector; it's not a pocket of people.

I've said this before, I'll say it again. This is after bringing the public engagement – I mean we have an Office of Public Engagement now of course and we try to bring on more thoughts throughout. That was brought in by this former government actually. It's after engaging the public like I have never seen. People know the ins and outs. People are watching the House of Assembly more. They're following their MHA. They're speaking their mind. They're expressing their concerns. They realize the role that MHAs have. They want their voices heard.

That's where, when I started off about their voices. I have never seen such an outcry of people wanting to get their voice heard. We've had lots of disputes, but it's always been a pocket of people, and whether it be the public sector, fishermen, and I say Bill 29 because the media seemed to be the only one engaged. We had consultations and there used to be only two people show up. The rest were media and the Opposition of the day. That was fine.

That bill was changed and all of that. Pressures mounted, but there was no public. It was more the element of people were skeptical because that element of secrecy was put out there. You ask a lot of people today if they know something

about Bill 29, it really don't mean anything to them. Today, people are so engaged because they're upset. They're mad. They're frustrated, every group.

You have a young family with two small children. We went through that. My girls are near – I'll say they're never raised but they're getting close to it. Those days are so hectic and busy. A lot of times those families don't have time to read the news, let alone absorb what's going on out in – they're so busy with their children and life. As we say, life gets in the way.

Those same families that were always too busy to turn on the news or to engage or to really to process anything, they're probably the most vocal now because they feel desperate and they want people to speak up for them. So when we're in here, and I listen to it the radio, people are speaking – this filibuster, we all know that government carries the majority, but people are glad that we are collectively, on this side of the House, speaking up for them. This is not about winning a vote. This is about getting their voice heard.

Other times you bring in a big piece of legislation that's controversial and it's opposed by – in a filibuster, you oppose because you think it's wrong. Muskrat Falls was filibustered but 68 per cent of the people supported it. The Opposition of the day didn't like the legislation and they filibustered. Sure, they got some support or probably air play. This is a case of, the average common man and woman and child are almost thankful that their voices are being heard.

As we sit here, we're putting in a lot of hours. We're on day three now. All the Members on this side of the House have read emails. We're not reading them to punish the government side. You all get those emails as well. We're reading them because we're trying to speak up for those people who are asking us to speak up for them. Most every email I've gotten budget related, it ends with can you please (inaudible), can you please bring this issue.

You talk to former Members that have been in this House, I've spoken to them, they've never – certain issues, they might get a scattered one here and there – they're amazed with the amount

of engagement, amount of people that are coming to us. Even people from government side, because they send the emails to their Member, and their Member will not get up and do what I'm doing and what my colleagues do here every day. Even when we're not filibustering, when we're in debate, when we're doing petitions.

I know some Members have done petitions – I respect that, actually, I really do. I find it odd, but I have to say I do respect that fact. That's not an easy thing to do, to stand up when you're in government and present a petition against your own government. So any Member that's done that, and I don't know if anyone over here has heckled it. Actually, we commend them, because I think that's admirable. I'd say every Member on the government side could have presented a petition, every minister could have if they listened to their people.

This is the problem, and this is why the public engagement is so raw, is that people feel like their voices are not being heard. It's pretty simple; you could throw all of this, what we're at here – all of these legislation things is all part of the running of government and running of our society. We need laws, we need regulations. People just want to be heard. It's the common man – like it's a man, woman, child – everyone needs a voice.

You're elected, whether you're an MP, an MHA or a councillor, whatever level, when people vote for you – I should say when they exercise their right to vote, regardless of who they vote for. Every person – that's why it's so important for people to get out and exercise their right. They want their voice to be heard. They know the system. They voted for whoever, and they feel – and I see it in emails – I went to the ballot box, now I helped you, I want you to help me – or I just voted. I don't know who they voted for. They want their voices heard, and I can't stress that anymore. I've got reams of information here that I'm sure we'll have a long day to talk about.

Just on the surface of speaking for people, so we should never ever diminish the fact, the reason we're in here. Forget about the cost. Forget about all that stuff. This is the people's House, this is the Chamber, this is Parliament. People want their voices heard.

All 40 elected Members of this House of Assembly, we would not be here other than the people that elected us. They want us to speak up. I understand that it's difficult on that side of the House, but I do commend MHAs who've gotten up and spoken up for their residents. We on this side of the House – and I've stated publicly in my last 10 seconds – if this budget was brought in by my party, I would be sitting as an Independent over here. That's my view. I've said it publicly and I'll say it again.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I'm just going to stand for one minute. I'm not going to stay long; I'll just stand for one minute.

I heard some of the comments earlier about the emails. We have been getting a lot of the emails also and it's everybody's right to do it. What I've been noticing are people reading emails and passing them back and forth, the emails, and making sure that they're getting read two or three times. That's fine; I have no problem with that. That's everybody's right.

For the Member to stand up and say the information that we're getting, we're not bringing forth on behalf of our constituents, it's just not true. I have no problem when you get up and make statements in the House about your own party. That's fine, I understand. I understand what's happening here, but you can't accuse people on this side of the House of not bringing forth the concerns.

We had people standing up in petitions; Coley's Point school. We had a lot of petitions. So I have no problem, but what I can't stand, Madam Chair – and a lot of Members say that we're not bringing forth the concerns of the residents of our constituents. It's just absolutely not true.

I understand what's happening here. I understand totally, but you can't say that the people on this side of the House of Assembly are not bringing forth their concerns, they won't bring forth their concerns, we're getting the

emails and we're not passing it on. That is absolutely not true.

I'm just going to sit down, but any time there's something like that – and I've been through a filibuster. I've been through a couple of them. I have no problem when you stand up and make your statements. When all of a sudden you throw a big blanket over everybody on this side as if we're muzzled, as if we're not allowed to speak, as if we never brought up any concerns, if we're not allowed to go into a caucus room and express our concerns, I just ask you to temper it a bit, that's all. Speak on what your side is doing, which I agree with. I respect democracy. I respect your right to do it. I respect your right, but please don't throw a blanket just trying to put everybody up here in a big corner.

Madam Chair, I can see it's 9:41 a.m. I'm still waiting for that \$400,000 that a certain town lost since yesterday. The Member was going to get me a letter saying there's \$400,000 lost from a town six months this year. Most of the information – he said a town lost \$400,000. Most of them aren't even in place yet. The information is not even – for the insurance, it's not even in place.

For him to say the town already lost \$400,000, it is not true. So I look for the Member – it's 9:42. I'm sure a simple phone call, because he said it's already done, to show why the town lost \$400,000, how they lost \$400,000 and six months is not even up yet. For the six months for this year, I'll just ask the Member that if you are making statements, I'd just love to get a copy of it.

I'm just going to sit down, Madam Chair. Any time there's statements made that is a reflection on our duties as MHAs and putting our reputation, I'm just going to stand and reflect that it's just not true because we have a lot of outspoken people. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands understands that. I have no problem speaking in caucus. What is said in caucus stays in caucus, I'd be the first one to say it and I respect all that. As he knows, everybody gets a chance to speak in caucus. Everybody expresses everybody's views. We might not agree with everybody's views, but we still express it. That's the way democracy works and that's the way a caucus works.

For the Member to stand up and say that we cannot express our views on behalf of the constituents is absolutely, categorically false. Just because we disagree with the Member, that don't mean that we are totally wrong, he's totally right. We understand the frustration that people are going through. Madam Chair, I'll tell you one thing right here and I didn't mean to go on long with this, I guarantee you one thing, I'm getting calls even from the Member's district and everybody's district, when are we going to get the capital works out because we need water. We need sewer. We need some of that \$180 million spent in the province. We need things that were neglected for years. Route 440, 450, we need it. We have to start getting water.

We're getting calls from your own district, Madam Chair, about water that has been neglected for years. That's the calls we're getting. We understand, totally, the frustrations, but I can pick every Member here – every Member in this hon. House, we're getting calls from the districts. We're getting the calls saying this has been put on the backburner; fire halls have been put on the backbenches.

I just have to put something straight here, Madam Chair. You brought it up last night and I would never say it. The 20 fire trucks that were put forward, 19 were in PC districts. I can tell you one thing when we got in, the 20 that were recommended, there wasn't one that was changed – not one. The former government sent out the letters with no money, with nothing done, contract wasn't signed, the tenders weren't even put out for the fire trucks, Madam Chair. That's what they did.

When we got it, we lived up to the commitment because people expected it for fire prevention. Not one tender did we change, not one letter did we change, Madam Chair, because we respected the people of the province and the letters that were sent.

Madam Chair, I'm going to sit down because I am not going to keep this going too long, but I can look around the room – and people talk about are we representing our constituents over here on this side. Madam Chair, if you knew the caucus we had here, if you knew how many times they were up looking for money for roads, looking for help, even some of the concerns that

were brought forth about this budget, concerns that we're looking at, bringing concerns ahead of the people.

I'm not going to stand here and let anybody stand up and say that the Members on this side are not doing their work, not expressing their concerns. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, he expressed his concerns. We have no problem with it. Never discussed anything that was ever said in caucus. I respect that from every Member and I know that's what's happening.

If we want to sit down and have a debate about the issues, fine, but don't ever stand up and say the Members on this side of this House of Assembly don't express concerns of their constituents inside caucus and outside caucus because I'm just not going to stand for it. If you expect to stand up and just take shots at the Members on this side, I, for one – and I know there are more here – am not going to stand here because there's no one representing the people of the Humber – Bay of Islands better than I can right now because I'll tell you what, their concerns are my concerns.

Sometimes we can't get everything we want because this is a government and this is democracy in action in government itself. Every Member here on this side of the House of Assembly on many occasions has expressed their concerns about their district, about water and sewer, about the roads, about different issues, about broadband.

I know the Member for Exploits – if this Member over here wants to say that Member over there never contacted me with Major Hobbs 50 times, I bet you he never contacted me once about trying to get the work done out in Exploits, Madam Chair.

MS. P. PARSONS: Coley's Point Primary.

MR. JOYCE: Coley's Point school – I was out there and I even visited the area.

MR. FINN: No money for Stephenville in the last (inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: No money for Stephenville in the last four or five or six years; the Member for

Stephenville here is lobbying. I can go through every one.

AN HON. MEMBER: Waste management.

MR. JOYCE: Waste management is another big issue.

AN HON. MEMBER: Harbour Main.

MR. JOYCE: Harbour Main-Whitbourne.

So if anybody over there thinks that we don't express their impressions of what we need for the districts – I know the Member for Southlands can't talk about it, but he can stand up and surely say that these Members express their views in caucus.

I'm not saying what we ever said in caucus. I respect everybody's opinion; you know that. What's said in caucus stays in caucus, but I can tell you, the Member is over there with his head down in shame. His head should be put down in shame, accusing Members on this side of not doing their work.

You may not agree with what's happening, but don't put a dark cloud over these Members because the Members on this side are working hard for their constituents. I can tell you, Judy Foote and the other six MPs are working just as hard as these people right here; they're working just as hard for their constituents.

I can tell you one thing. They're over there now criticizing us for everything we're doing, but I guarantee you one thing, if everything works out with the federal government, you're going to see a lot of smiling faces over there also for things they couldn't get done for their own districts that Judy Foote and the other six MPs in Ottawa and this caucus has pushed forward for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They'll be smiling too. You won't see them over there saying oh, don't go doing that work, don't go doing that work. The Member's head is in shame, and I don't blame him, because you can't put shadows on people. You may disagree with us. I've got no problem if someone is disagreeing with us, I've got no problem, but don't throw accusations that we're not trying to do our work over here for our constituents,

because I would never do it for any Member over there. Do you know why? Because every Member over there is working for their constituents, every Member is –

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – and that's why we've got to respect everybody in this House.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand once again in this hon. House and speak to the budget bill. I'm just going to agree with the Minister of Municipal Affairs that I know that everybody over there is fighting for their districts. I agree with him. They're all fighting for their districts. Why wouldn't they?

I think, Madam Chair, the point that was trying to be – and I'm not going to get in the middle of it, to some degree. I think the point might have been that we've sat here all night and it was the Opposition Members that were getting up one after another after another talking on the budget, and there was nobody on the other side speaking. I think that was the issue that was trying to be made.

I also just want to reference that the Minister of Municipal Affairs did talk about in Hansard there's some petitions being passed back and forth. I can't speak to all the petitions – I can speak to two, for sure, and I even said it at the time when the Member for Mount Pearl North read them. I said, I already read those. They weren't passed along, but what it was is that we both received an email from a resident of Mount Pearl, actually lives in my district. She sent two emails, one about the schools and one about the budget. She sent it to both of us. So I read the petitions and then when he came in later on, he didn't know I read it and he read it. But it was addressed to the two of us, so that's why it happened.

Now, if there are other ones there, I can't speak to that, but that was the reason. We're not certainly sharing. But if someone from Mount Pearl – generally, what happens in our community, and I know probably the same in other communities, is that people in Mount Pearl generally they're saying, well, we've got two MHAs. So a lot of times when they have a concern, they'll send it to both of us. That's what happened in that case. Now, if there's other ones shared, I know nothing about that. I'm only reading the ones I'm getting it.

Speaking of emails, I said I would continue to read these. I do have one from a lady; I don't know what district she's from. She is referencing costs. I realize the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills was sort of half done or three parts done when I came in, but he was talking about the cost of democracy. I have no idea what this is costing, but this particular lady here asked the same question. She is wondering, what is it costing the taxpayers to keep this House of Assembly open for this period of time to broadcast this and to run it and so on? My answer to her was: I have no idea what the cost is but whatever that cost is – I don't think it would be a big lot because we're all getting paid anyway. The House of Assembly is here; there is heat and light anyway. Yes, there are some staff. I don't know if they're on salary or if they're on overtime or time off in lieu, but there is going to be some cost; there is no doubt. But we cannot stifle democracy because it is going to cost a few dollars to do it. That's like saying we won't have by-elections; we'll have an election every 20 years because we don't want to pay for an election every four years.

There is a cost to democracy and that's just the way it is. I don't know what that number is. If somebody knows that number and wants to put it out there, that's fine, but I'm prepared to stand up for the fact that we stood with the people who are contacting us and if it costs a few dollars to keep the House open, well so be it. That's my opinion and I told that lady so. I told her I would put it out there because I'm not going to just read the good emails, so to speak, that they are all onside with everything that we are doing. If there are some that are the other way, that's fine, I'll read that too.

The next email I have here is from a lady – she is not from my district; I'm not sure where she's from. Anyway, she wanted me to read this one. She said: I am so sick of hearing people argue that anyone who makes a decent income will be okay. This is an issue that I've raised a number of times actually about people living paycheque to paycheque are not necessarily low-income people.

She said: I'm so sick of hearing people argue that anyone who makes a decent income will be okay. I'm going to lay out my situation for you in black and white so you can show them that always isn't the case. My household has an annual income of \$182,000. That's a big income. I guess it would be equivalent if you had two teachers that are married, or a teacher married to a nurse or whatever or a small business owner, that's quite common.

That's a lot of money to a lot of people, no doubt. We are a combined family – this is important – and have six children between us; three that live with us and three that don't. Here is what we pay out and here is why we won't be okay.

They are paying out \$72,800. That's \$1,400 a week in tax, CPP and EI, so \$72,800 in taxes; \$22,080 a year is their mortgage and mortgage protection insurance; \$36,000 a year to support three kids, and that's by law – I guess there was a divorce and that's child care by the courts – \$12,000 a year in child care, again, by law; \$2,600 a year in extracurricular activities, which is their percentage of those three kids that they have to pay, again that is court ordered by law; \$13,104 a year vehicle payments, which is needed for work; \$8,940 a year in student loan payments as most people who make this kind of money have, which is true; \$3,810 in insurance with the new increase, that's the insurance increase; \$13,000 a year in gas just to and from work in Long Harbour – okay, so they work in Long Harbour, at least one of them works in Long Harbour –\$6,240 a year for our sick child's medications; \$4,560 per year for our power bill; \$3,600 for our cellphones for work, and then that also includes Internet, cable and house alarm; and \$9,600 a year in debt payments. A lot of people have loans, credit cards and whatever the case might be. That's

reality. Whether we think people should manage their money better or whatever, that's reality.

She says that already puts us at minus \$26,334 annually. How do we take more? This didn't even take into consider the fees we have to pay, the levy, groceries, medical expenses, sick days, house upkeep, children's school lunches, clothing and the list goes on and on. How do we save for our children's education? How do we get ahead? We cannot save to retire. We cannot live forever going backwards and our dear government seems to be demanding we will be okay because we are in a higher tax bracket. Then she puts in capital letters and exclamation point: No, we won't! We won't be okay!

With the new busing schedule, it will impact my business of child care due to the times of getting my own children off to school. So that's going to impact their business because of this new arrangement with busing and all that stuff, I guess. I may even have to consider closing my business down. Next Thursday I fly to Ontario to look at the housing market. My husband is currently applying for jobs there so we can get out of here before we drown. This budget affects my household financially by a minimum of \$5,000 a year, not counting the new 2 per cent tax hike. And then she breaks it down: \$504 annually is the insurance hike; \$1,950 annually gas increase – and she said it's just for work, not for leisure, that's just for work; \$1,800 annually for the levy, I guess that's two of them at \$900 a pop; several hundred in registration fee increases; school lunch increase due to all-day kindergarten; plus, I may need to give up my business due to the new schooling cuts.

While we firmly believe in supporting our children, another issue needs to be addressed. A person paying child support pays the amount on their income before tax is taken out. The only people who consider this amount is the government. If you were applying for a loan, et cetera, that amount is taken right off the top. We pay out but for all government intents and purposes, that money is ours.

The receiving party does not claim it; therefore, the receiving party has a much lower income than the actual intake annually. This qualifies them for all of the government benefits but, the payer, for none. Government will claim child

support is not income, but this is quite hypocritical.

Any money you spend on your children that you make from work is considered income. It cannot be written off tax time. Intake is intake and if it is going into your household and coming out of the other, it should be considered income and lack thereof for the payer. It isn't fair for us to get dinged every way and – I'm starting to run out of time here, but anyway, you get the point – the receiver can still receive top child tax benefits, GST, income taxes, no levy payments, et cetera, yet they have the money and we don't. Then she says, for blank sakes, we're out here trying to survive. We're not going to be able to survive if nothing changes.

Here's an example of people working in Long Harbour, \$182,000 a year, sounds like huge money but because of their circumstances, they're living payday to payday, they are tethering on the edge and this is going to put them under. So this is just an example.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and I look forward to speaking again.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand and talk to Bill 19, which is a bill that imposes a 15 per cent tax on our auto and home insurance. I've been going through some of the emails and tweets that people have sent to me, and some inquiries regarding exactly what impact it is going to have. For those who are just tuning in, what I've been doing for the last number of hours is getting up and outlining exactly where the monies have been spent. I've been asked by some of my colleagues across and general people in the population to do it. I thought I had completed it and I thought I had gone through, but I've got a number of people saying they've only taken in parts of it. They're now listening in, could I take them right through the \$28 billion of oil revenues that we had during our reign and where those monies went – acknowledge the fact of the labeling that we've been put by other Members that we spent like drunken sailors.

So I'm going to take everybody through it one more time, and then I'm going to have our Opposition website post this so people will have an understanding of exactly some of the things this entailed, and if people have any questions about where we are with it, I'll be more than willing to try to answer them and get them the information.

I want to go back – we've come to an understanding and agreement from the numbers that the Opposition have been saying for the last six or eight months, and even while they were in Opposition, that we had in the vicinity of \$25 billion. Sometimes it gets to \$27 billion; sometimes they hit as high as \$30 billion. I went back and looked at the numbers and I'm comfortable to say there was \$28 billion, above and beyond some of the other norms, your everyday stuff, that came directly from oil revenues.

It's over 30 per cent of our generated revenues, and is very important. It was part and parcel of diversifying our economy from where we were decades ago, around the fishing industry and some of the other small industry, the pulp and paper, some of the other things that we had done during those periods of time, the mineral industry, to ensure that we had another stream of income. While it was very successful and very important and always will be and should be, the reliance, unfortunately, got us to a point when a commodity goes down in price, particularly a commodity we have no control over like the oil industry, which has affected everybody globally, then obviously it has a negative impact on what we do here. So we need to adjust accordingly. That's hopefully where we'll move over the next number of years to diversify it but, at the same time, understand that the oil industry is very important to us and the monies that are generated need to be spent in a manner where it benefits the citizens.

I just want to talk about the \$28 billion. First and foremost, people need to understand, for decades, ever since Confederation, we were reliant on Ottawa. It's a realization. Equalization was one of the key things. It was a staple of our economic viability and it was our general account funding that paid for things as we moved forward. Unfortunately, it wasn't an exorbitant amount of money, so we could only

do the bare minimums. It's why we had infrastructure problems. It's why we didn't have programs and services. It's why Newfoundland and Labrador, unfortunately, fell behind in a lot of categories when it came to better services for people. Be it education, health care, supportive services for seniors, these types of things. It was the reality of not having the resources to do it.

So as we became a province, as we became less reliant on handouts from Ottawa and more reliant on our own revenues that we were generating through our equity stake in the oil industry and our royalty regimes that we had negotiated, then it meant that the transfer payments and equalization payments from Ottawa stopped. And there's a formula used there, and that's fine, as a result. We paid in money to Ottawa, which went out to our brother and sister provinces so that they could help sustain programs and services, particularly when they have economic downturns. So that's fair; that's what we do as a family. And we did that very well.

So \$10 billion that we would have had, that normally came in our coffers, had to be replaced with our oil monies, and that is what we did. Infrastructure of \$6 billion; I outlined key things were around our infrastructure in health care, around education, infrastructure around bridges and roads, and infrastructure around other services and amenities that needed to be done. So we invested \$6 billion into that to ensure that our infrastructure was up to par from a safety point of view, but also from a point of view that it would be sustainable.

And there were one-time investments in certain areas, still much more to do, and the Minister of Transportation knows he could use millions more to be able to move that forward. But we've done that, so now there are certain things already taken care of and we hit the key challenges that we had to ensure that was done. One of those was around schools. There was mould in schools. We were losing X number of days. There was a health issue around children, not acceptable this day and age, the same thing around health care, so we invested dramatically in that.

Poverty reduction: \$1.2 billion we invested because there were people who had challenges

in life, financially, who just really could not in any way, shape or form be able to perform the day-to-day duties because they didn't have the supports. They needed things to help them get through that, to help to get them, as I call it, a hand up, not a handout. We engaged the private sector. We engaged the not-for-profit sector. We had thousands of people work on this entity, some of the best staff people, the civil servants, the best qualified, how do we develop a program of service. And we did something that nationally and internationally now has been touted as one of the best approaches to poverty reduction. We went from the worst to the best.

With that being said, there's a caveat here, Madam Chair; that we still need to do lots more. There are still people who fall through the cracks. There are still services that need to be done for people. We need to continue that, and we're going to be pushing this administration to continue doing things like that.

Tax reduction: \$4 billion went into the pockets of taxpaying Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so they could put it back into the economy, stimulate the economy, use it to promote business ideas, use it to engage themselves, be more productive as citizens. It is a good investment because we get the majority of that back. As a government, we get back those through tax regimes, which mean we have more money to put back into the other key things, if it's around youth recreation, around health care, around education.

Tuition and student debt: We talked about how do we engage our post-secondary students to make it affordable and accessible. We did that by putting freezes on tuition, by doing rollbacks, by putting a better loans program in place to make it affordable, so people weren't burdened with debt when they graduated. They could stay in Newfoundland and Labrador, work and contribute to society, be engaged, a win-win for everybody.

Debt reduction, \$3.6 billion. Our issue was around unfunded liabilities in our pension plans. By putting the \$3.6 billion on those, that secured the pension plans until we could come up with a working process, which we did with the unions 18 months ago to ensure the viability of the pensions forever and a day. That's where that's

moving, but it also ensured that our bond rating – the best it had ever been under our regime – was at an A level, which meant we could borrow at the cheapest rates possible. It meant we paid less interest, more money for programs and services.

Public service and employees, \$1.5 billion. We've been attacked at times, that we spent so much money; we gave it to the civil servants. We had civil servants for nine years, zero per cent increases, with the cost of living going up. Also taking on other responsibilities, also having an additional employment tax. So they were losing constantly.

As other jurisdictions were making offers – we had very qualified individuals, very experienced individuals – we were losing some of our best civil servants, and there was no motivation. So we found a way to say thank you. Thank you for providing the services for people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Thank you for staying with us in times of hardship.

Now we want to say over the next eight years, we're going to be able to give back. We're going to try to get you to catch up with, particularly, your counterparts in Atlantic Canada, and we managed to do that. That's why we have so many efficient programs and services that our civil servants on any given day do a great job. If it's about on our highways, keeping us safe. If it's about in our health care system. If it's about in our education system, and every other civil servant who provides the services that people avail of in this province. It's very important to us.

There are times – every administration, we've done it, the previous one have done it, and I guarantee you this administration is about to do it in the fall again, making cuts. What those cuts mean is, not only is it a lack of service for the individuals but it means civil servants have to take on more responsibilities and more work. Obviously, there will be no remuneration here. So what we've done is made it competitive to keep our civil servants, our well trained people in Newfoundland and Labrador to provide services for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We invested in the business industry and innovation because we wanted to grow. We wanted to diversify. We've gotten criticisms for it, that we didn't diversify the economy. We're the ones who moved the aquaculture industry forward; the changes in the fishing industry to ensure it was viable. We're the ones who did major investments and major new approaches to the tourism industry. We did it in the aerospace industry, but particularly in research and development.

If you had asked 15 years ago about research and development in Newfoundland and Labrador, nobody would have known what that meant. There would be no draw for people nationally and internationally to come to Newfoundland and Labrador to look at research and development. By the establishment of the Research and Development Corporation and the partnerships we developed, we've opened up a new industry where hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested here outside, but we get to control a lot of what we do and we get to be put on the map. So it's another part of our industry that we can promote what we do here. What we research here and the development we do here is used all over the world. So we have another industry that is ready to go.

In the forest industry, we've done some major changes to make that a viable industry again, and we've invested with some of our partners there.

So, Madam Chair, my time is up again. I'll get a chance to get up and speak, but I wanted to clarify that as people had asked me for that clarification.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're just debating the speaking order over here, but we're all just so eager to get up and participate in debate.

I'm smiling, Madam Chair, because I've been scrolling through some of the late night tweets for filibuster '16. I'm getting a grand charge out of some tweets by a gentleman named Lee Stewart. I think he's been mentioned in Hansard before. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands has a puzzled look. I encourage you, Sir, to check it out as well because you've gotten a few honourable mentions. If you need your day brightened and you need to have a moment of levity, then I encourage you to check out Mr. Stewart's tweets because he's a talented graphic artist, I guess you would say. He's taken a bit of creative licence with some clips from the live webcast.

We're debating the insurance bill, and the one I saw most recently is a photo of the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island in debate. As we debate this 15 per cent increase on insurance, on people's home and auto insurance, which is going to have a major impact on so many people in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Stewart has posted a picture of the GEICO Gecko with a speech balloon that says: pay 15 per cent on your car insurance. So it's good to be able to laugh sometimes because we're involved in a fairly intense, serious debate. I appreciate that people can still have a sense of humour, despite the fact we're obviously talking about some pretty serious issues.

Now I'd like to get back to the serious issues, and there have been many, many pieces of correspondence sent to us. As the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands mentioned, there are some that are coming to multiple Members. As a result, they may actually get mentioned more than once in the House of Assembly, but I'm trying to focus on the messages now that have come specifically to me and me alone, so that I can be confident it's unique content.

On that note, I received a note this morning that's relevant to this debate, so I'm going to share it now and read it into the record. It's related to insurance issues: I've been asked to raise one of my concerns regarding Bill 19 and the introduction of a 15 per cent tax, not

harmonized, but 100 per cent provincial revenue as I understand. It is unduly excessive.

For example, my 2014 minivan costs the same to insure for my family as it does for a family with a lower income. However, the new 15 per cent tax, which is the essence of this bill, has a profoundly greater impact on the working poor who need to insure a minivan for their family and to get to work and school than me, who makes a good livelihood. Like the levy, especially before the amendment, it disproportionately affects the working poor. This may cause families to make terrible and illegal choices to cancel or fail to review their policies, put their families at risk and put our society at risk.

Insurance is vital and protects all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This is an example of a wrong choice, not a tough choice, and an excessive tax. Sure, we need cuts, sure, we need more revenue, but why does this budget profoundly impact the citizens so greatly instead of looking long and hard at excesses in upper management, travel expenditures and some other excellent examples of efficiencies.

Please, please go back to the drawing board on this budget and Bill 19 specifically. A friend of mine told me that the impact of the introduction of this insurance tax will cost his business \$65,000, which is equivalent to five or six summer or seasonal jobs that they either can't hire or will have to pass on to their consumers.

That's from somebody who is involved in the business community who has talked to other business people and is expressing legitimate concern on behalf of people, on behalf of families, on behalf of middle-class people and also on behalf of the working poor. One of the big concerns we've had with many of these budget decisions all along is the fact that so many more families and so many more people of all ages will now be driven into poverty.

We've come so far. We've worked so hard to get people above the poverty line, to get people off income support, to get people reconnected with the workforce. Now, we're hearing real life examples of why people are going to be driven back into poverty by the decisions in this budget by this Liberal government.

I'll share some other notes with you, Madam Chair. Here's a note from Monday evening: I'm a voter from Bonavista District. I supported the current Premier in the Liberal leadership campaign. I supported and voted for the current Bonavista MHA. The promises made by the Premier in the election campaign were ones that I was encouraged by, as I am a senior. The promises made by the current Premier helped get the Liberal Party elected.

These promises were just words with no truth, and then came the budget which, in my terms, is brutal for the people of our great province. The Bonavista MHA voted in support of this budget, against the wishes of the majority of voters. He will be remembered for his action and should he come looking for votes next time around, we will show him the door.

Here's another one from Monday evening and it's related to the cost of removing the posters on the Parkway, which was an action taken by government in the wee hours of Monday morning, or Sunday morning?

AN HON. MEMBER: Sunday morning.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, it was Monday morning.

MR. KENT: Monday morning. I think it was Monday morning as well.

If the minister never asked anyone to remove the signs on the Parkway, who did and what was the PO number? Does the company they hired have a standing order to remove any signs that offend the Liberals in the future?

Well, we've managed to confirm, through questioning in the House of Assembly, Madam Chair, that the company that did the work is a contractor that regularly does maintenance work for government. But for the minister to suggest that it's routine business to get this contractor to go out in the middle of the night and tear down specific posters, not all posters, but specific posters from poles on the Parkway, is rather bizarre.

Now, I'm sure that the NL Rising representatives were pleased that their posters were left intact and had been up for several

weeks, yet the posters calling on the Premier to resign were torn down while others were left, and all of this was done at the taxpayers' expense. So it's a legitimate question for sure.

Here's another one from Monday evening, and I will work up – I have got envelopes full of new material and will share it as the day goes on. If you're still taking comments for the Liberals, please remind them for me that a government using public resources to repress and silence public dissent, as they did last night with the posters, is the definition of a dictatorship. Regards, and thanks for giving us a voice there tonight.

Thank you for that, Mr. Murphy.

I have a couple of minutes left, so I'll try and get one more: Thank you for your actions. A filibuster is important to show the dissatisfaction of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Some points of concern: Why does it appear that government has little to no knowledge of the actions of their own departments? For example, the Premier and the Minister of Natural Resources not having adequate knowledge of the contract specifics of Nalcor employees – how can one be responsible to appoint a CEO of a Crown corporation, yet claim to have no knowledge of the remuneration structure?

Another example: Is the Minister of Transportation and Works having no knowledge of his department hiring contractors to remove posters – does he believe we're all fools, or is he incompetent? Who was reprimanded for this inconsiderate obstruction on the freedom of speech? Further, if Prince Philip Drive is considered part of Pippy Park, why then are political signs posted there during elections and never removed? Another good question.

Another item: Why has the government ignored their commitments to provide adequate budgetary resources to the inclusive classroom movement? How are they planning to respond to the NLTA regarding these issues? That is a huge issue. Inclusive education and the resources that are available to support inclusion in our schools has long been an issue. It's an issue that becomes much worse as a result of this budget.

Back to the email: There's a clear lack of leadership, accountability and human consideration within this Liberal government, a provincial and national embarrassment. I'm unable to identify with this version of Newfoundland and Labrador. No-fun-land is a more apt description. Common middle-income citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to have a very enjoyable few years ahead. To be honest, I can't blame or beseech anyone who decides to leave. I can merely be jealous.

That's so sad, Madam Chair. There are many more sad stories that need to be told. There are many people who deserve to have a voice in this debate. I look forward to speaking again in perhaps a half hour or so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Ma'am. I have to fight with my colleagues to get up on the floor here this morning. That's a good thing. It shows you how interested we are in what we're doing.

I watched a little while ago and I watched the Minister of Municipal Affairs when he walked in. I said guaranteed that man will be up on his feet now in a short time and I knew he would. He's after getting up many times and speaking. That's what this is all about. This is about all of us having the opportunity to speak.

When we look at what's happening today and what we're doing, we're speaking for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Their voices are getting heard. This is the House. This is called the House of Assembly, it's the people's House and it's the place where people do have their concerns.

I heard a comment this morning and I'm not going to go to where it was or who said it or whatever, but it was the price of democracy. It just struck me, the price of democracy. I don't look at the price of democracy in a dollar cost. I look at the price of democracy – and we do it here now. I think after today actually, it may be

the last of the names that are going to be called for where we get up and we represent the people that died in the First World War and the battle of Beaumont-Hamel mainly. That's the price of democracy. The price of democracy has been paid by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's the price people pay all around the world. You look at what the price of the young men and women did over the years in war and battle for us, that's the price of democracy.

I believe – I really do and I say this in all sincerity – that we live in the best province in Canada and we live in the greatest country in the world. I believe Canada's the greatest country and I believe we're fortunate to be living in it. I also believe that the price of democracy – and I thank them for the price of democracy. I thank them for giving up their lives for us. That's what I talk about, the price of democracy. It's not a dollar value; it's definitely not a dollar value. The price of democracy is the ultimate price, and the price that people paid for us to be able to be here today, to be able to speak freely, to be able to talk freely, to be able to express ourselves. And we'll all not agree, we'll all have a different opinion, but at least we've got the opportunity to be able to do that. That's what democracy is all about for me.

We look at what's going on here with our, we call it, filibuster; it's about having the right to be able to speak. Obviously there are rules and regulations and there are certain rules in here that we have to follow. Most of it is to do with respect. I respect the Members across the way, and I hope they respect me. I get up each time and I really do try not to do anything to demean anybody on the other side. I wouldn't do that to you. I respect what they do. We all have a role to play in the House of Assembly. When a person mentions the price of democracy, the price of democracy was paid for me. I thank the people that did it. I thank their families. I thank the young men that went over in the First World War and lost their lives.

Most of them, you'll hear stories that some didn't tell the truth about their ages so they could go and serve. At the time, I know probably back in the First World War people thought they were going on this great adventure. Most of them didn't know they were going to go and do the ultimate sacrifice for me. I stand proudly in

this House of Assembly every day since we started naming out the names, and each Member gets up and reads out 40 names. I stand proudly, and I thank them every single day for doing what they did for me. When we talk about the price of democracy, that's the price of democracy, it's the ultimate price.

Madam Chair, I want to just talk a little bit today – and I'm going to do it again. I have different themes that I'd like to talk about, but I'd like to talk a little bit today – and I always do mention him – about our seniors. I know some Members on the other side will talk about how we can't let our children pay for what we're doing. We can't let our children down the road, the cost to our children and everything else, but I think sometimes we forget. We really do forget about the cost and the stress we're putting on seniors with this budget. We always talk about a balanced approach, and there should be a balanced approach. There should be a balanced approach so that we do not put added stress on people.

We all know that this budget affects everybody. It affects young people, old people, middle class, upper class, lower class. You name it, it affects everybody. That's the reason why so many people are engaged in what's happening now and why so many people are calling us and texting us.

I know Members on the other side are getting the same thing. I respect what they're doing, okay. I respect what the Members are doing on the other side. They're saying this is your filibuster, fill your boots. Go ahead, fill your boots. We're not going to say anything. We're just going to listen to what you have to say. Hopefully, sometime we'll get tired and that will be the end of it, but we're not going to get tired. We're going to continue to do what we have to do because it's important that democracy is heard and it's important that we speak for our seniors.

Our seniors, when we look at this bill here, we're looking at a bill that's going to bring in 15 per cent on insurance on their homes, 15 per cent on their vehicles. In 2008, when this bill was the other way around, we brought it in that they didn't have to pay the 15 per cent. I can imagine most of the seniors with grandchildren.

Some people in this House of Assembly have grandchildren, and when they get up they really speak passionately about their grandchildren.

I can imagine in 2008 when seniors in this province realized they could save 15 per cent on their insurance and 15 per cent on their car insurance, and looked at the added money that was going back in their pockets, I bet you, any of them with grandchildren, the first thing they thought of is maybe I can get something for my grandchild. Because that's the way they are.

Now, today, once we reverse it around the other way, just look at the stress that's put on them. This is not added money. This is money they're going to have to try and figure out. Here is a senior now that's going to say, okay, my car is up for insurance in July. Last year my monthly payment was \$100. That's very low for a person, it's \$100. They're going to add 15 per cent on it. Now my payment has gone up to \$115. This is what this is about. It's about what we're doing to people in our society, the stress that we're putting on people.

I speak to seniors. I was down to the Lions Club down in Pouch Cove Saturday night and I spoke to nearly everyone in the place. I had a grand old time. It was an 80th birthday. It was a nice time. I must say everybody was enjoying themselves.

I spoke to a lot of seniors at that function and they all told me: Listen, Kevin, we don't know where we're going to get the money. Where are we going to get it? Where do they think we're going to get the added money?

Why we're here today and why I'm here today is I'm pleading with the government across the way, I'm pleading to make some changes to your budget. Just step back and have a little look and see what you're doing. See what you're doing to people that are in our society and have a second look. There's nothing wrong with having a second look.

There are things in this budget that really don't make sense to me. When I look at a \$30 million slush fund, a contingency fund that they have there and we never had it before and they just put it in this year, maybe that can relieve some of the pressures that are on individuals out there, take away from some of the stress.

That \$30 million was never in the budget; 2001 was the last time something like that was put in. So why are we doing that? Maybe have a look at that and say, listen, he's right. The people in the province are right. The people that are emailing me, the people in my district that are talking to me are right. Can we have a look at that? Instead of getting your backs up and saying, no, the Premier said what's in the envelope is in the envelope. That's it, there's nothing else in it. That's not democracy. That's not listening to the people.

Again, I'll mention what the Member said earlier. He said the price of democracy was paid by people that gave us the right to have the freedom of speech. That's the price of democracy. There's no price on democracy, there's no price on it whatsoever.

Let's have democracy, let's be open and let's say, well, perhaps we can do that. Maybe we should have a look at that. Maybe we should take a million dollars out of that fund and have 54 libraries not close. Maybe we should take a million dollars out of that fund and not tax books. Maybe we should take a couple of million dollars out of it and give seniors a break on their insurance. That's all we're asking here.

That's what we're doing; we're speaking for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, asking you to have a look at it. That's all I'd ask.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I'm just going to stand. I don't mean – because I know the Members, it's their filibuster. The Member opposite, as I said, with the libraries in the towns, I'm meeting with the towns to see if there's any way we can work out with the towns.

I can assure you, and I said it before to the Member with the library boards – and here's how the conversation went. It was Terry French and it was Clyde Jackman who called this mayor up in CBS. He said we have a deal for you. What are you talking about? We'll give you \$238,000 to put a library in your – signing for 25 years, \$238,000. If your government, which you were a part of at the time, were concerned about the library boards, why didn't you put it out to tender so you could save \$150,000 so you would be able to keep all those libraries open?

Once you say it's up to us with the library boards, it's your government that made all these sweetheart deals. They were sweetheart deals. They weren't put out to tender. They were on a phone call and said we have a deal for you. If you go out and add how much \$238,000 is – what you should do, and I'll ask the Mayor of CBS: How much are they paying on their debt for the new town hall? How much? Check that out. Just see how much they're paying. Just check that out and see how much of this \$238,000 is going towards that. Just check it out, with the new town hall.

I say to the Members opposite, when you look at the libraries, when you look at those types of deals, \$238,000 – I'm not saying it's not a good spot. I'm not, but when you take it and not put it out to tender, not try to save funds. It was on a phone call. It was a phone call that this person got from two ministers who said: b'y we got a deal for you. Because Terry French was getting a lot of flak about the library. I like Terry French, but that is exactly what happened. That's how it went down. That's exactly how it went down, by the way. That's how it went down. They picked up the phone and said we got a deal for you.

When you want to talk about the problems with the library boards and the money going from government here, putting it through the library boards, giving it through the town, it was not done. It was not done by the library board. It was done by two Members of your government who made that phone call; that made that commitment to put the money through the library boards to give it to the town. When you want to stand up and you want to talk about us with the libraries, you have to look at the past.

Madam Chair, I don't want to do this. I can stand here for the next two days in this filibuster and read emails. I won't do it; I won't do it. Now that's everybody's right to do it, express everybody's concerns.

I'll just read one, just one. I'll just read one that I have, Madam Chair. I'll just read one email: Eddy – Madam Chair, I don't usually do this because I understand it's your filibuster. I understand you guys want to express the rights of the people that are writing you. I have no problem. If we want to stand up and talk about emails, here's an email I received now.

I can stand up, Madam Chair, for the next week and read the emails I'm getting, but no, people want to express their views, let the people go ahead: I couldn't listen to this any longer without having my say. The self-righteousness of the PC Members involved in this filibuster is astonishing.

As a concerned citizen and a loyal resident of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am completely devastated by the current situation that our own prosperous province finds itself. The lack of attention by the previous PC government that was run by four premiers – two unelected, by the way – has put us in a truly unfortunate situation. We find ourselves crippled under a mountain of debt and an economy that was totally devastated, squandering our money like mad men with no regard or concern for the common Newfoundlander. We are a proud people and today I'm embarrassed with the situation that the PC government has put us in.

Your administration was left to make choices that I know you didn't want to make, yet they are necessary. I would rather that our province was in a better financial position and this wasn't the only option, but this is not the case. These measures are a direct result of a flawed and arrogant PC government who are only concerned with themselves and their friends. I applaud your government for having the guts to make the choices that the PCs refuse to make.

I know that these are tough times and tough times call for everybody to help out and make sacrifices. Keep up the good work. Our province is in good hands. We will see prosperous times once again as long as your government stays

prudent and keeps us living within our means. Please mop up the mess.

I can stand here and I can read emails like that I'm getting. It's all I have to say, Madam Chair. I'm going to sit down now because I know it's their filibuster. When you stand up and you want – when they put the library board in this type of situation and they look at here –

AN HON. MEMBER: How much in CBS?

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: How much in CBS?

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, \$238,000. When they do that and they want to take money, put it to the library board and say you're cutting the library board, it should have been looked at when this decision was made and decisions like this were made. When the Member wants to stand up and say all about the library boards, you should get the information, how we got in the mess and the library boards wouldn't be in this mess.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Sometimes during these filibusters you sit down and you're trying to channel your thoughts, where you go next. This budget is after opening so many doors that we can pretty well pick any door. It's like the game show. You can pick any door and there's something good behind it – not good for the people of the province, but good to bring up and remind the government of their decision.

When Members like the Minister of Municipal Affairs gets up and he gives his – he likes his rants and I have to say sometimes I enjoy it. It's a bit of banter and all part of the game; I understand that. But he seems to be the designated – there are a couple of them over there, the Minister of Education also; they seem to be the designated duo that kind of get up every now and then. All night long it's been pretty quiet, but I want to bring up just one thing –

there are other things I'll bring up to that he mentioned about my district. He seems to know a lot more about than probably what most Ministers of the Crown would know, but that's interesting. I probably know the reason for that too.

This is not our filibuster. This is the people's filibuster. I caution you, Minister, in all due respect, this is not our filibuster. This is for the people, whoever is watching, people walking the streets and working today, the hard-working people of this province, this is their filibuster. We're doing it on their behalf, and I think you're fully aware of that, Minister, as most Members opposite would be. You've experienced this before and you spoke for the people of the day, and that's what we're doing here.

As a matter of correction, I really believe it's important that we are here for the people. The hours are long; this is draining. We went most of the night and Members opposite hardly rose, so the Opposition and the NDP and our Independent Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands carried the night, and we'll continue on today. But it's not our filibuster; it's the people.

I have a few things I was going to mention and the minister lured me back to a topic that I've kind of stayed clear of because, at the end of the day, as the Member for CBS, the MHA for CBS, where I've there all my life and I know the district quite well, I know the ins and outs – I won't get into a lot of that stuff here because it's not the right forum for me to bring it up, but he seems to have a lot of deals. I know how he has those details and that's another issue. But you go up and you walk the streets of CBS and people on the streets know what is going on, so that's something that others will have to work out and I won't go down that road, but I will get on this road.

The people in CBS were promised a library. I have never, ever once been on record of saving whether it was – they like to tell us and the Minister of Education likes to tell us the cost and how the agreement was reached. There was an MOU signed with the town, between the town and the government. You don't go to tender on an MOU. Once the MOU was signed, the town was then tasked with doing the documents, the

design build, whatever channel they were going – like any other government money, whether the minister has money in his district, it's an agreement between the government and the towns and they work out the details after.

So to say former Members of this House never went to tender or anything, that's patently wrong. They didn't break the *Public Tender Act*. They signed an MOU with the town. I will not get into the cost value of it; I didn't negotiate the deal. You like to bring it up.

In bringing that up, a deal is a deal, but the town now say they're willing to rework the deal. So where you're going with that, I don't know. At the end of the day, I've said publicly and I'll say it again, as long as the town gets a library of some sort, if they want to work out a better deal, that's between the town and the province. Fill your boots. And I've said that publicly and I'll say it again. I'm representing again, I'll go back to the people – and the library board for CBS area have come to me and I say the same message to them, listen, I don't know what, at the end of the day, you'll have. Hopefully, you'll have a library. I'm not sure where it'll be, what it will be, but the plan is we're going to have a library. The mayor's committed to it; the Minister of Education is committed to it. At the end of the day, that's what I want.

So I won't play small politics with how we arrived at it but I will do a couple of corrections that the former Member for the area and the former minister of Education – they signed an MOU with the town; details of the MOU, that's for them to decide, not for me. I can just say my goal is to look out for my district, to make sure we do get a library. I will not get into the weeds. The Minister of Fisheries is over there jawing about the amount of money and all that, but he won't get up and speak. At least the Minister of Municipal Affairs will get to his feet, and I respect that. I don't necessarily agree with everything he says, but I will say he will get to his feet, and that's something some Members opposite should probably take a page out of his book for.

I'll go back to my district again. That's my vision on the library. About what we owe on debt payments, the town owes on arenas and all that, I'm very proud of my district. Like I said,

I've lived there all my life, I worked with the former Member closely, and the Member before that – I've been involved in the behind the scenes, and in many aspects of the town. We went from a bedroom community and now we've expanded. It's a community that I'm quite proud of, and we've grown and expanded. We're the largest town in the province. Borderline, probably the second-largest municipality – we're close. So any investment that the town makes, it's 27,000 tax-paying people up there to pay – and I'm one of those taxpayers – and we pay our way. We get cost-shared ratios with the federal and provincial governments. But I'm proud of the facilities and infrastructure we have and there's still more work to be done.

I won't go down the road of what owe and what – it's almost a smoking gun because there's not. At the end of the day, we advocate or I advocate as the Member to fight for the people of my district whether it's on this budget, whether it's on infrastructure, whatever it is on, that's what I was elected to do and that's what I'll continue to do.

I won't go down the road and easily could get down the road of cherry picking or picking apart stuff that was said. That's where I stand with this and I'll leave it at that. I'm the MHA for the district, I'll fight for the people of the district, and I'll do what I'm elected to do. I'll move on from that.

I want to read an email now in my last three minutes I have: I am writing this morning regarding concerns of the Liberal *Budget 2016*. First and foremost I'm a parent, a single parent at that. The increase in taxes and levy will make it extremely difficult for me to make ends meet and provide the life my three children deserve without having to penny-pinch.

Although it was a good move to not impose the levy on individuals earning less than \$50,000 annually, the Liberal government neglected to look at the whole picture. What about the two-income household making almost \$100,000 between them? They are freed from the levy, while I make less than that, but I still have to pay it – not fair.

Secondly, I'm an educator. It's beyond frustrating to see the cuts that are happening in

our schools and the impact it will have. Implementing combined classes with little or no training for teachers is wrong. Are we truly prepared for full-day kindergarten? Is the necessary infrastructure in place?

Many schools are already busting at the seams. We have extremely dedicated and effective teachers in our province. However, when these changes are made without appropriate planning it increases stress; stress on school staff, stress on students, stress on families. This, in turn, negatively impacts both the learning and the working environment. How much does the Liberal government truly value our future? Thank you for continued support in the House of Assembly.

This brings me to the point of this is the people's filibuster. They want this stuff read. That's what they feel. They could care less who is controlling this here. They want their Members in here speaking up for them. It's what we're going to continue to do. We're not going to stop doing this, by the way. My colleague for Mount Pearl North says he got his filibuster shoes on. It's too important an issue to let go. It's affecting every single person.

I'm down to my last minute. I have another email, but I'll leave that to my next time up. These people want us to speak up for them, no different than individually in our districts on a day-to-day basis. They ask for their Member to meet with them, discuss their issues, to advocate for them; but this is more of a concerted effort from people in the province. This is their only channel to get their questions to the floor.

They don't have any other avenue. They can't all pick up the phone or email all in the one day. This is their opportunity to have their voices heard in a collective manner, which we all do – we all get up as individual MHAs, individual Members, and speak in this filibuster; but, at the end of the day, every single Member is getting up here on this side of the House, we're speaking for everyone in the province, not just for our district, collectively across the board, and we'll continue to do that, Madam Chair. It is what we set out to do and we will continue to do it.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to rise and add to the debate. I would just like to put into context around the filibuster and then more specifically what we actually are discussing right now. This is Bill 19, which is the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums. I understand it's a money bill and further understand that gives the Opposition and, therefore, anyone in government, for that matter, the ability to elaborate on anything related to money. And, of course, most, if not all, matters with respect to the operation of government will relate to money.

Having said that, though, the importance of discussing this particular bill is, in fact, for the reason it exists. The reason this bill exists, along with the budget, is a direct result of some of the inactions over the last 12 years.

The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, the Member for Corner Brook, had raised a good point and there was some debate back and forth across the House between the Member for Corner Brook and the Member for Mount Pearl North around the filibuster: What is the filibuster? Is it cost neutral? Is it important? Is it expensive? There are a few tweets floating about right now online with respect to, how expensive could it be? Is it expensive? Is it important? I believe there was a PC Opposition tweet specifically stating: Well, how important is democracy?

I'll give the Opposition Members credit; democracy is certainly important. Then, just a moment ago, the Member for Conception Bay South reflected to the fact that it's our filibuster and, moments later, it's the people's filibuster. Well, I suggest that you're the one who put us in the filibuster mode, and I have no trouble with that. No trouble with that, no trouble with supporting democracy if that's the case, but one thing important for the filibuster, because it's around Bill 19, how about you add some suggestions – how about you add some suggestions?

I've heard lots of chatter all evening. Right now it's 10:50 in the morning, I've been here since 1

a.m. I have still yet to hear one single suggestion, Madam Chair. Not one single suggestion have I heard, either in relation to Bill 19, the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums, or with respect to the budget in general.

Now, we just stated last week –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

MR. FINN: Hang on, to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands. You had a lot of suggestions about some things that we should now try and save and this sort of thing, but I still have yet to hear a suggestion on how we're going to achieve solving this deficit. I've yet to hear one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: Last Thursday, we passed a bill to borrow \$3.4 billion, the highest amount in our province's history. You're using all these things saying the tactics in our budget are crippling the economy; they're going to make people go bankrupt and everything else. I'm not going to suggest – I don't know, that's a pretty lofty statement; time will tell, I'll tell the Member.

Do you know else? I'd like to point out, and specifically to the Member for Cape St. Francis, in referencing the seniors – because the Minister of Transportation and Works gave a very passionate speech last night, as he does quite often, and he referenced his grandchildren. He's looking towards the future and he referenced that.

The Member for Cape St. Francis got up and acknowledged that. He said I respect the passion that the Members bring to the House; I certainly respect that they have passion for the grandchildren of the future, and then immediately said but what about our seniors. Well, I'd like to point out that just last week, we introduced a private member's resolution asking all Members of the House to support the fact that we would be increasing our Seniors' Benefit to the highest amount that it has ever been.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. FINN: You can laugh – I don't think any seniors are laughing right now. I thought that was a great motion. What's even more ironic –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: – I'll tell the Member, what's more ironic is you stood up –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

What's more ironic is every single Member in Opposition – they called Division, so the record will show you voted against our private member's resolution. Then, just yesterday, the Minister of Finance introduced a bill – I spoke to the bill – with respect to the Seniors' Benefit and Newfoundland and Labrador Income Support Benefit.

MR. LANE: They voted for it.

MR. FINN: Exactly, you voted for that one. You had to vote down the private member's resolution but you had no trouble passing the bill. The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island got up and he spoke quite articulately to it. He thought it was great. We have no trouble supporting it and then I tell the Member –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: – for Cape St. Francis that you got up and went on against it again, but at the end of the day you voted for the bill. Which one is it? I don't think you can have it both ways – I don't think you can have it both ways.

So to get up and say we're crippling our seniors – now, there's one thing about seniors that's important. In the next 20 years, we're going to have the highest population of seniors that our province has ever seen in the country. The aging

demographics in our province are going to be the highest in the country. So when you talk about the future of our province, that is what this budget is based on: the future of our province.

We're currently spending 40 cents of every dollar on health care. Do you think for a second – I'll ask the Member for Cape St. Francis – that our health care costs won't rise in the next five years, 10 years or 20 years? So every intention behind getting this province back on track is for the future and is for looking after the seniors, of which we'll have the highest older demographics in the country.

So if we don't plan long-term now – you think the hospital wait times are bad now, you think your roads are bad now, you're advocating to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for water and sewer, municipal capital works, you've got problems in your district now, what if we kept going and borrowing money? You're over there saying all we did was tax, tax, tax, cut, cut, cut. All you did was borrow and spend. You borrowed and you spent, and you put us exactly where we are today.

I could go on and on. I won't belabour the point. The point I was trying to make when I rose – and I felt like I made a few good points here – I tried to make two points. One of them, this is your filibuster; number two, this is about Bill 19. It's a money bill, talk about anything you want. The Leader of the Opposition got up this morning and told us about the weather, told us the Blue Jays lost the baseball game, there were three moose on the Outer Ring Road and everything else in between. You're talking about a money bill. Is this important? Sure. Offer some solutions to the conversation. I challenge you to offer some solutions to the conversation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. FINN: And you'll get your time, don't worry; I won't heckle you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. FINN: You can continue to heckle me, Member for Cape St. Francis, no worries. You'll certainly get your time.

The whole point is that we're charting a course now for the future; it is detriment to the future. You talk about our seniors and I just got to shake my head because we want to build long-term care homes. We want to. We want to have the money to do that.

Is there a measure in this budget that you wouldn't have taken? I'm sure there is. Are there some measures we would have like to have not taken? Absolutely, but add some substance to the conversation. If you want to call it keep calm and filibuster on, and you want to talk about the moose on the Outer Ring Road or whatever else you want to talk about, you have every privilege to do that. Add some substance to the conversation.

We're currently held directly to the Order Paper, which actually says Tuesday. We're discussing Bill 19, the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums. So I would greatly respect your input on that particular bill, what you would have done differently with that bill, and perhaps why you eliminated it in 2008. Why did you eliminate this particular tax in 2008? You can go right ahead and tell me; I'm delighted to hear it.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

I thank the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands for giving me the opportunity to get back up again because I really wanted to get up after that. I respect the hon. Member across the way and I respect what he's doing here today. I'm going to give him a couple of suggestions now that he asked for.

What I'd do, if I were your government, I'd take your \$30 million slush fund and I'd say I'm not going to put that there and I'd use it to help seniors in the province. I'd use it to make sure

that their costs weren't – I'd take a million of that and I would put the libraries back in.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: You asked for my suggestion and I'm going to give you my suggestion.

I'd take a million dollars out of that \$30 million that you have there that we never had before and I'd put it back into the libraries. A lot of people that use our libraries are seniors. Seniors go to the library and they use it. Today, as we all know – one time you just went to a store or you went anywhere, but you can do so many things online now. Seniors are getting into it. They realize that it's a cost savings with Motor Registration and different things they can do, so this is what they do. I know in the small Town of Pouch Cove, that's what a lot of people do.

Seniors love to read books, so what I'd do with the \$30 million slush fund, I'd take some money out of that and I'd eliminate – because we're adding taxes, the only province in all of Canada that are putting taxes on books. I would take some money out of that. I'm not sure the revenue that we're getting from taxes on books, but I would take some money out of that slush fund and put it so that seniors or other people in the province wouldn't have to pay taxes on books. Those are a couple of little suggestions.

Then I would take some, whatever was left, and I would see what way I could eliminate some of the burdens, the stress that we're putting on people. I had a senior the other day – and you talk about as we're growing. I had a senior the other day call me. He's 85 years old; he's in his own home. He gets a shot every three weeks. His doctor comes to his house. He goes up to the drug store, he picks up the shot, he comes back, the doctor comes to his house and he has it every year.

He's 85 years old and he told me his wife and him, the little medical issues that they have – he said: Kevin, how do they expect me to pay for this? Now you want to talk about seniors, this is the reason – I'm passionate about seniors, very passionate. I got up in this House and I told you who the seniors' advocate was down in Cape St.

Francis. I'm very passionate because I will do anything. I appreciate what they did for me.

Here's a senior that went to the drug store and was told that now you pay \$12.16 for that shot. He said: Kevin, where do they think I'm going to get the money? For me, and probably for you, and the majority of people in the province, but for a lot of our seniors that \$12.16 means a lot. So here is what else I'd do: I would not bring in that over-the-counter prescriptions that people were getting for nothing – let me tell you, I will take the money out of that slush fund so seniors don't have to go up to the drug store – I bet in your district, and I bet in other districts in this province, you're hearing from seniors having the same problem.

I heard on *Open Line* the other day a senior – again, it doesn't seem like a lot of money, but he takes the pills and he needs stool softener. It used to be covered. His doctor covered it. It was \$4.50. You asked me what I'd do with the money. I hope you're listening to it because this is what this is all about. We're hoping that you're going to start listening to these things.

That senior – it may not seem like a lot of money to you or to other people. I know \$4.50, I could come up with it, I know I could and so could most people, but that senior had a concern, so much that he called *Open Line* and he said I have a problem and here's the problem I got. I used to go up to the drug store and get this and it cost me \$4.50, now I got to pay for it.

Last night when the Minister of Transportation got up, I applauded him. I really thought it was a passionate speech. There's never a time that I'll get up in this House of Assembly and say anything about anyone over on that side for getting up and speaking for the people and expressing their opinion, because that's the right we all have. But I will tell you one thing, when I'm challenged to talk about seniors or when I'm challenged what I think I should do for seniors, I'll give you suggestions. I just gave you about five suggestions that we could do to help seniors.

Will you listen to them? I think they're reasonable. I really believe that taking some money out of the slush fund and eliminating taxes on books – and that's not just for seniors,

that's for everybody. We're the only province in the whole country that does it, so why are we doing it when we don't need to do it?

There are solutions. What the point is on this whole budget – and we're not saying that you didn't need to do the things – everybody in the province knows and I hear Members get up and sometimes they'll say if we did nothing. We're not saying do nothing, but what the people are telling us and what we're getting through all of these emails, responses and everything, it's too much. The fear that is out there in society now is real. Please listen to the people that are real. The senior that has to go up to the drugstore and pay an extra \$12.16 for a shot that he was getting for nothing, that's not fair. He is 85 years old, his wife is in the house – last week they celebrated an anniversary, lovely couple. Do you know what? It was stress. For him to pick up the phone and call me, can you imagine how much stress was on that man? He's paid his dues; he's did his thing.

The gentleman that called *Open Line* because of \$4.50, please listen to him. That's what we're doing here. We're trying to get you and the government to listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There is nothing wrong with making changes. You can make changes.

There is money in your budget. You have to remember that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are more intelligent than you give them credit for. This budget this year, there is more money getting spent than what we spent last year. You come in here and say oh, you're drunken sailors; you threw the money out through the door – no. I tell you something right now. When the Minister of Municipal Affairs gets up or the Minister of Transportation gets up, I will never get up and criticize them for spending money in any district – in any district in this province. I won't criticize them.

We, as a province, in the last 20 years, you have to remember where we came from. We had a lot of hard times in this province. I am not saying it's Tory times or Liberal times or anybody times but in the '90s and '80s, we had schools that were mouldy. We had infrastructure in the ground that needed to be replaced. We had no

protection when it came to fire services. We had nothing. We had a long ways to go.

Are we there yet? The \$28 billion that we had over the last number of years, are we there yet? No, we are not. But will we get there someday? Hopefully, we will. Hopefully, we will get there, a day that we can put money away that we can protect our children. I want to have grandchildren someday. I want someday to be a proud poppy; that's what I want to be.

The minister, he put his thumb up, and I know you are and I congratulate you for it. I just want to say you asked me for suggestions about seniors. Do not hit seniors so hard. I have an 80-year-old neighbour that called me and said: Kevin, when is the insurance bill coming up? When is that 15 per cent going on my taxes?

What you have to understand –and, Member, I know you do understand because you talk to them just like I do – is that these people are on fixed incomes. When you are talking seniors, they can't just go and get a second job and say I'll get another little bit of extra income. They can't pick up the phone and say, listen, I'm not going to do that anymore; I want a raise. They are not going to get a raise.

Normally what a senior and people on fixed income and most people that run their household – the Member just read out an email from a single parent. And we're all alike. Most people take their paycheque and they say, okay, here is what I have to spend. What this budget has done, it's added so much stress on people. It's added so much for the people to say, listen here, where am I getting the extra money to do this? If the people had the extra money to do it, they wouldn't mind. That's why they're calling *Open Line*. That's why they're calling their MHA. That's why they're calling you.

I'm not in here to argue who's a better advocate for seniors, me or you. Or what your version of a senior is. I'm in here to advocate for the 85-year-old gentleman who has to go pay \$12.16 more. I'm in here to ask you to reconsider some of the decisions you're making.

I talk about that \$30 million fund that was never in the budget before. I believe that we can take

our money, make our choices – the Minister of Education got up last night and he said it was only \$13 million for full-day kindergarten. I believe – and this is my belief and you can believe yours – the choices we make in this budget and how it affects people are what this whole filibuster is about. It's about your choices that you made in the budget and how it affects seniors.

You gave it to me about seniors, but I tell you I respect our young people. I want to do the best I can for the young people in the world. I don't want seniors stressed out because of what this budget is doing for them and that's what this is all about.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair reminds the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired and acknowledges the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure for me this morning, or getting close to high noon, to have a few comments. I may not take the entire time, but I just thought it was important for me to relay some of the messages that I'm getting. You would think that – if you're listening to the Opposition – they're the only ones getting emails and they're all negative. We're getting emails as well, Madam Chair.

My good colleague and friend who talked so passionate about the young people, I think it's very important to us because we are an aging demographic. I don't have to look very far. I just look around myself; we're becoming an aging demographic. My good colleague over there, I'm sure he's a lot younger than I am, but certainly not fitting into that category yet.

One of the things I was passionate about last night, because we are becoming an aging demographic, a lot of people in this province will be on fixed income because of pensions, if you're lucky enough to have a pension. What's happening, our children and our grandchildren will be working actually to pay into the Treasury, in a lot of cases, for pensions that we have. Not only that, now, in addition to all of that, Madam Chair, they're straddled with this

debt – a debt that will take years and years to get out of if we don't turn it around.

Madam Chair, I just wanted, for the record, to mention a couple of messages I got. This one is from Carson. Carson says: I watched your speech last night in the House of Assembly. You spoke so passionate, so truthful, and from the bottom of your heart. I was very proud on how you spoke. It wasn't scripted; it was simply telling it like it is.

That's one. Another one I have here, Madam Chair, is from Brenda. She mentions my name, which I won't repeat. Just seeing you on the House, great job; I feel the same way as you. I'd rather suffer myself than see my little boy suffer as he gets older. We can't be in the hole forever. We have to get out of the hole. We have to be proud Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I would like for my son to be living comfortable.

That's just two, Madam Chair, from the positive side. As I said before, I know what the Opposition is doing. It's is great airtime for them to repeat all the emails they're getting, particularly the negative ones. I'm sure if people are listening, they're saying the only thing we're ever hearing is negativity, negative, negative. So it's important that if people are, in fact, sending emails – and we are getting emails from the positive side as well. As I said, and I think my good friend, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as well said, it's not the type of politics we want to get into. It's not something we take pride in doing. But I felt it was important for us and for people that are listening to understand that there are – we have to make tough choices. I think there are a lot of people that are making tough choices.

One of the other situations, Madam Chair, a lot of times when we offer ourselves as politicians, our families are being impacted. In particular, I know my wife has been impacted over the last number of days when you talk about the budget. So I had to have an open discussion with her. She is much more sensitive than I am when it comes to these things. Not that I'm not sensitive; it's just a matter that if they're negative things said about me, I can handle it because I'm the person that have presented myself to be out front. So I tried to tell her, one of the things about it you have to realize is – and I think all of

us as politicians have to realize – that not every single person out there thinks we're great. If they did, we would have got 100 per cent of the votes, right?

I said to my wife when I ran in the last election, I think I might have gotten 2,600 votes or somewhere like that. Two of my competitors – I think the Third Party put someone on the ballot but two of my other good friends that ran against me, one of them got 1,100 votes and the other got 900 votes. So I said to my wife if everything was status quo and if we did nothing, if there's nothing out there, there's at least 200 people out there that did not have confidence and I'm going to represent them.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAWKINS: What did I say?

AN HON. MEMBER: You said 200; 2,000.

MR. HAWKINS: There are at least 2,000 people out there that, right away, did not have the confidence that I was going to represent them. So that's politics, that's the way it is, and we have to understand that. We've got to temper the fact that, as politicians, not everybody loves us. We might want and feel that way, but they don't.

So a lot of times we have to take that into perspective and we have to think about that. Then what we have to do, we have to balance that out because not only am I representing the 2,500 or 2,600 people that voted for me, I also have to think about the 2,000 or so people who didn't. We've got to balance that and I think that's where it becomes a challenge from time to time, as politicians, that we have to really understand that and we work for all of our constituents.

Madam Chair, I just wanted to point those couple of things out this morning. I think it's important that not only do we hear all the negative stuff, there are some positive things, and I just want to thank you for the opportunity to do that.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand once again and speak to this bill. Madam Chair, I listened to the last couple of speakers opposite. I'm glad they spoke. Personally, I'd like to see every single Member over there stand up and speak and tell how they feel about this budget. And if they feel they can defend, that's fine. I would like to see everybody speak.

I say to the Minister of Transportation and Works, I agree that not everybody is going to agree with any of us and not everyone is going to love you, and that's a fact. I certainly would say to your family and so on, I don't condone any of the negativity that you might be getting. I've gotten it in the past and, myself, I know what it's like. I know how it can affect family. I would certainly encourage everybody out there if you have an issue with the budget or anything, stick to the issue, not to the individual and certainly not to family members. Family don't sign up for this; we do. I think it's important for that to be said.

I was listening to the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, I think is the name of the district – I could be wrong. If I am, I apologize. I am glad to see him up speaking. I have to say he is one of the Members who does get up on a fairly regular basis and speaks his mind, and I absolutely appreciate that. I would say to suggest that there has been no suggestion offered is absolutely false.

I would say there is a difference between hearing and listening; those are two different things. You can hear what I'm saying, but that doesn't mean that you are listening to what I'm saying. That's how the people feel. I'm sure a lot of people that they are heard – they have to be heard because of all of the open line shows, the emails, the Facebook, us conveying the message. They know they are heard, but they don't feel like they are being listened to. That's the difference.

We have offered suggestions. The Member for Cape St. Francis just brought up a few. We've all brought those up. And it is about choices. I

don't know how many times I am going to have to say it – I will say it again because I've said it so many times. I don't understand why you're not getting what I'm saying. So I'm going to say it again and maybe this time you'll understand what I'm saying.

Full-day kindergarten – I'll say it really slow, full-day kindergarten, that's not a budgetary matter. It's part of the budget, but it's not a cost-saving thing. If anything, it is going to cost us more money. It's something new that we never had before, ever. I acknowledge, everyone acknowledges, it's a good thing. We all acknowledge that there will be some people that are glad that we are going to have full-day kindergarten because it's a good thing. There are some people that are going to be glad we have full-day kindergarten because it's going to save them on daycare costs, so it's a cost saving – not necessarily the right reason to support it, but it is reality because it is in the pocketbook.

But we've never had it before, and how can we justify putting in full-day kindergarten at this time, at the expense of existing programs? We are drawing names out of a hat for French. We have children with special needs that don't have the proper resources that are required. We're jamming kids into classrooms. We're doing multigrading. We're doing team teaching. We're doing all these things. We don't have to do it.

I mean, that is a choice. You are asking me, what would we do; what would I do? I would not implement full-day kindergarten at this point in time. Not until I was in a financial position to be able to make sure that all of the programs we have now are running properly and are properly resourced, that we have the appropriate amount of space for the children, the schools are configured in such a way that we can hold all the children and they can have all their programs and it's all done properly. Then if all that was in place and we had the money to do it, then I would implement full-day kindergarten. Until then, I wouldn't do it.

Now, that's a choice. That's a big choice that is impacting a lot of people right now. A lot of the anger that you're hearing is around that particular decision. It's not all of it, but I can tell you if that piece was taken care of, that would solve a lot of the anger. Not all of it, but a lot of

it for a lot of people, I can tell you that now. That's one thing I would do different.

As the Member for Cape St. Francis said, we have a \$30 million contingency fund. I'm not calling it a slush fund. That's only political rhetoric to get into that old stuff, no more than the Liberal levy and all that. I'm not getting into that, but there is a contingency fund.

Nobody here is arguing that a contingency fund is a bad concept, but we haven't had it since the '90s. If there was a major forest fire or something that I think the Minister of Finance talked about, or a major fire, there are programs in place with the federal government. If we had to put out a special warrant if it ever happened, I guess we would. It could be done, but you have the \$30 million. Right off the bat, that's money that could be put towards reducing some of these extra costs on people. That's something that could be done.

You talk about the Labrador link study. I am not against Labrador, before anyone says it, because that's only more political rhetoric. It's not about being against Labrador but the Labrador link study; \$750,000. That's three quarters of the way – I'm told that we're saving a million bucks by shutting down all these libraries. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars almost saves those libraries.

As was pointed out – and I pointed it out because someone pointed it out to me – if we did that link study this year and it came back that this is viable and it's a good idea, where are we getting the money? It's going to cost a billion or \$2 billion or whatever – I mean, I don't know, but I'm guessing it's going to cost a lot of money, whatever it is. Even if someone says, yeah, that's a good idea; we don't have the money to do it right now. It might be 10 years out. We're saying seven years before a surplus, so it's going to be at least then until we get the money to do it. Why would we do a study this year and take that study and put it on the shelf for seven or eight years down the road when we possibly have the money to do something about it? That money could save the libraries, or save most of the libraries.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs talks about – just sticking to the libraries – that they're

dealing with the towns. The towns can take them over. I'm not sure what his plan is there, but I'm not against that idea either, to be honest with you. But, as opposed to throwing it on the town, maybe you could go to the town and if they have available space in a town building or something, or we could put a little piece on the building that exists or on the community centre, maybe we could throw in some money to do the renovations so that the small library could be put in that centre with the help of the provincial government. Maybe that could be done as an option. That's another thing that we could possibly look at doing.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, we've got Nalcor. The Minister of Finance talked about – or at least it was put out. I don't know if she said it. I'm not going to credit her, but it was put out there, whether she said it or not, of going to the department to save 30 per cent over the next three years, as I recall. Whether she said or someone said it, that's what was out there anyway.

So, assuming that is true – maybe it's 20 per cent over three years; I thought it was 30 per cent. But why can we not do the same thing? Why can we not contact Stan Marshall at Nalcor – he's a very smart man, very capable – and say, Stan, you find 30 per cent at Nalcor?

We got the Auditor General coming in there now to look at the contract, why not expand it? Say to the AG do a value-for-money exercise at Nalcor and tell us where the waste is to there. I've been told there are all kinds of waste. I don't know if that is true, but I was told by people who are involved there or know people that told me that there's lots of fat that can be trimmed at Nalcor, big-time salaries – you talk about the sunshine list, big time; that's what I was told. A lot of them were political appointees by a former administration and everything else. Now, I can't say for sure, but let's have a look.

When was the last time the AG or anybody went into MUN, just as an example? A great institution, I'm not arguing it but they are self-governed; they do their own thing. When was the last time someone actually went into MUN, outside of MUN, and said let's do a value-for-money audit there? Let's look at what's going

on throughout all that to see if there's money being spent in the right way.

So there are lots of things and there are lots of suggestions of things that could be done to avoid some of the measures that have been taken here. Let's look at corporate tax. If we got to raise some tax – and I don't mean small business but for the big guys; maybe the big guys could pay a little more and that could help offset some of this. So there are lots of ideas. There are other things we could look at doing. I'm going to continue to make suggestions as we go along.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to stand for another few minutes because, as I said earlier, when you hear statements, we try to put out the facts of the budget. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis and the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands were just talking about – this is great for debate and it's great for the people of the province, when you talk about the \$30 million contingency fund that you could use it for other things. You can use the \$30 million for other things to put towards what's in the budget.

I'll just explain – the Minister of Finance did it and I'm sure she can stand up and do a better job of it than I can, but I just want to explain because this may take away some of the statements that have been made and explain some things. This \$30 million contingency fund is not cash in the bank that we have. What this \$30 million contingency fund is when you go through your line items, there's \$30 million there that we put down, if we have an emergency, that we can go borrow this \$30 million. We have to come back to the House to say why we used some of this \$30 million.

There is not \$30 million sitting in the bank account. What we did, as a government, trying to be prudent – I give the Minister of Finance credit on – what we're saying is instead of having to go out and get special warrants, if we

need them, come back and say we have to get special warrants and wait for the House of Assembly to table the special warrants, what we did is we put in a line item so if we have an emergency or catastrophe in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we put in the budget \$30 million that we would have to go borrow to take in to pay for that catastrophe. Once you pay for that catastrophe – I think it's three days you have to table – you have three days to table it in the House of Assembly.

I heard the Members opposite talk about this \$30 million slush fund – and I know the Member opposite didn't say that, and I thank you for that. I just want to let the people know there is not \$30 million sitting right here in your drawer that you can take a million and pay for this, take a million and pay for this. It's just not there. It has to be borrowed.

At the end of the year, please God, if we don't use \$30 million, our deficit will be \$30 million lower because we didn't use the \$30 million. That's the way it is. If we borrow the \$30 million because of a catastrophe, our deficit would be what it is right now, as outlined by the minister. But if, for some reason, there is no major catastrophe in the province and we didn't use that \$30 million, which is budgeted in that we are saying we may have to use it, our deficit would be \$30 million lower. So there is not \$30 million in the bank, contingency fund, that we can use to start paying for all these small things around.

I repeat again to the people of the province and, hopefully, this is going to help with the debate. What it is, over the years – and I give you some examples: Igor. There is no doubt we are getting funds back and we did get funds back from the federal government for Igor – no doubt. But what happens, the province has to pay for it, then you submit the bills to the federal government of the disaster relief; I think 90-10, 80-20, depends on the size of disaster.

What happens then, we go borrow that money and give it to municipalities. If you have some major road or some catastrophe, roads washed out, water and sewer washed out, some of the water reservoirs are being flooded and contaminated, you would go borrow the money, put it in that \$30 million contingency fund, then

you would pay the bills, go borrow it, and that would be included in that. That is how we put this \$30 million.

I just wanted the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to know – and I know this is going to help with the debate. I know it is. When you say, well, why don't you take some of this money? If you do, it's adding to the debt. There is no cash there.

It is not that the Minister of Finance or the government or anybody on this side has \$30 million over here in their wallet and say let's start paying this out. That is not the way it is. I just wanted to explain to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we – I know the Member for Cape St. Francis would love to hear this, talking about the \$30 million slush fund. There is not \$30 million. It is money that we put aside that we would have to borrow. You are saying it is a slush fund. There is not even \$30 million there – not even there. It is money there that we would have to borrow.

I know the previous government will say, well, that's all right because they are used to borrowing. They are used to that, just take it and borrow and start giving out money. This was a very prudent measure put in by the minister that has to be tabled in the House of Assembly. If any of those \$30 million are used, it has to be tabled – I think I already said three days that it has to be tabled in the House of Assembly.

MS. C. BENNETT: Or as soon as the House opens.

MR. JOYCE: Or as soon as the House of Assembly is open, it has to be tabled.

I hope this is going to add to the debate because it is easy to stand up and say, \$30 million, we need a million for the libraries; we need a million for this and we need a million for that. I hope that that is going to add to the debate. I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis when you stand up, with all due respect – and I'm sure that if you wanted a briefing with the Department of Finance, we'll even offer a briefing for that. I'm speaking on behalf of the Minister of Finance; she's nodding her head to me. We'll even offer a briefing of the \$30 million, to explain it, so that when we have an educated and informed debate

we all know exactly, when we stand up, what we're talking about.

The Member for Cape St. Francis, I trust now that he has the information and I trust – because I respect him and I know he's an honourable man. I know that. If you keep calling it a \$30 million slush fund, I'm offering now, and I'll say it to all the people and I say it in Mount Pearl – Southlands – and the Minister of Finance is confirming that we will give you a briefing on how the \$30 million works. When we have debate in this House and the Member for Cape St. Francis is talking about a slush fund, you can do this, do this, do that – there's no money there. It's potential to borrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: No, it's included if we borrow it. It is included, but there's no money there. The only way it's there – I said it earlier – the Member for Cape St. Francis, is that at end of the year if we don't use it, the deficit will shrink by \$30 million because we never used it. There is no cash there, absolutely none.

To use it, we have to go borrow it, go to a bank somewhere and borrow it. Igor is a good example. A lot of the bills that were paid in Igor damages were paid by the province and we had to try to get reimbursed by the federal government. That's the kind of stuff that \$30 million that –

MS. C. BENNETT: The budget gives us the authority to go borrow it.

MR. JOYCE: The Minister of Finance just informed me, all that does is give us the authority to go borrow up to \$30 million in case there's a catastrophe in the province. Just for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I just want to let you know we're offering a briefing on the \$30 million. A briefing from the Department of Finance is offered now for anybody here who wants a briefing on the \$30 million.

If you stand up now and start saying that it's just a \$30 million slush fund that you have in your little drawer that you can hand out, obviously it's being political. I just want to let you know. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands even said that I don't know the full story of it. Here's the story on it.

There's a briefing being offered so we can have a really informed debate. I have no problem standing up and listening to people passing on the concerns of all the residents, all their concerns. When you stand up and start saying that we have a little slush fund over here, it's absolutely, categorically not true.

What do you call that, Madam Chair? You call that prudent management. Instead of having to come back and get special warrants, how many times – and I know we all see it – you come back, well, what's this special warrant for. Now you're saying give us authority to do that; we'll table it in the House of Assembly as soon as we use it. If we don't use it, none of that \$30 million will ever be used, if there's no catastrophe in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Every cent that's in that \$30 million has to be borrowed somewhere – has to be borrowed.

So I just want to put that out there, and I trust now the Member for Cape St. Francis will take us up on the briefing or any other Member of the caucus also will take us up on that briefing. The Member for Cape St. Francis said he will, and I welcome that. I'll walk over and see you right now and set a time. Does the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands want a briefing? I'll walk over right now, so when we have a decision here –

MS. C. BENNETT: Maybe the Member for St. John's Centre as well.

MR. JOYCE: And maybe the Member for St. John's Centre would like to have a briefing, because you were talking about a slush fund we had. Do you want a briefing?

MS. ROGERS: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Okay, I'll tell you, I'm making the commitment here now. I'm going to walk over to those three Members now. We're going to arrange a time for the briefing that we can

have out here in the Clerk's boardroom so we can have a discussion on this \$30 million contingency fund which needs to be borrowed. So I'll take it upon myself right now, and I'll ask the Minister of Finance to give me a time. I'll walk over with a time later this afternoon so we could have the briefing. So when we have the debate, it will be an informed debate, which I have no problem, because in the budget there are things that we could have a good debate.

So I thank the three Members for that, and I'll arrange that briefing now in a few minutes, as soon as I can, and I'll come over with the date and the time this afternoon for that.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm happy again to rise and to speak to Bill 19. It's been a very interesting 24 hours, again, talking about issues that are affecting the people of the province. The last few times I got up and spoke, Madam Chair, I was focusing on the spirit, what is happening to the hearts and souls of people in Newfoundland and Labrador who are gripped with a sense of despondency and no hope.

They didn't create that. Here on this side of the House, we did not create that. Basically, government and the Minister of Finance, after she was elected and after she had a chance, as she said, to look into the books, the drumbeat started and the drumbeat about it is so bad. It is so bad. It's never been this bad before. Again, I believe, and I think that it's absolutely right that the role of government is not simply to look at the financial situation, although that's a very important part of it. The role of government is also to ensure we have a way forward where people and communities are strengthened, where we can weather the storm. That's not what has happened here with this budget, Madam Chair.

It's not only the budget in and of itself, but it's also all the rhetoric that surrounded the budgetary process. The rhetoric again was blaming the past administration. I believe that the past administration must shoulder a good portion of the blame – absolutely. They were at the helm a long time and they were at the helm when we had our most incredible prosperity ever in the history of the province, yet here we are.

Now, it's not their fault that the price of oil went down, but they can shoulder the blame for the incredible drain on our resources that Muskrat Falls is. They can shoulder the blame for not truly diversifying our economy. They can shoulder the blame for not strengthening some of our programs to ensure that our people were the best educated that they possibly could be, for not strengthening our rural communities as much as they could have.

So yes, they shoulder the blame; however, this government, this current government, worked like dogs to get elected. They worked hard. They went all through the province and made all kinds of promises, promises which they've subsequently broken.

But, since they have taken power, they have continued to blame the past administration and then to say how bad the economy is, how bad the situation is, that it has never been this bad before – and people are believing them. And why wouldn't they? Rather than taking up the mantle of leadership that they reached out for because they won that election; they said we want this job.

So their role is not just to go through a budget line by line by line to make some kind of accounting exercise, but to come up with a vision to be able to say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador yes, our financial situation is dire; yes, we have unprecedented debt and deficits; however, we have a plan to get us through, not just that we have a plan to return us to surplus in seven years.

So the people of the province have nothing to hold onto. This government hasn't played a role in leadership where they are saying we are going to harness the energy of the people, we are going to harness the resources of the province and we are going to find a way forward, and this is how

we are going to do it. That's what people are reaching out for: (a) people are reacting to the direct impact of the budget in their lives and in their communities. That is very real, but they're also reacting to the rhetoric that surrounded this budget, the doom and gloom message.

Government has accused this side of the House for spreading doom and gloom. We were not the ones who started that rhetoric, nor have we taken up that rhetoric. What we are saying is you have to take responsibility now for turning that around, because people believe the rhetoric that you have said. People are telling us they're not so sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, young working families who have moved away, who have said they were going to come back, are saying now that they are not going to come back because they know the unemployment situation is bad.

In the budget, anybody can read in the budget where government itself says the unemployment situation is going to get even worse because of the measures of government. Young people are saying I'm not so sure I can stay here. I'm not so sure I can see a clear future for me. They see the chipping away at MUN, the cuts at our wonderful university, Memorial University, and they're concerned about that.

In fact, what should be happening is that institution should be strengthened because we know one of our ways back into prosperity is to make sure we have a well educated population and that people are able to develop diversification in the economy, that they can be innovators and creators. In fact, what this government is doing is impoverishing our institutions, impoverishing our education system, impoverishing our health care system, impoverishing our very people. That's not the role of government.

The role of government should have been to shore this up, to strengthen this up and to say we have your back and together we are going to have a firm hand and we are going to weather the storm. That's what people are looking for from this government, and that's not what this government is telling the people of the province.

I don't know what else – we keep saying that, and I would hope and I think that the people of

the province are hungering for that leadership. They are confused. They are afraid. They are angry and they feel economically insecure. They feel insecure for their communities. They feel insecure for the financial well-being of their families. They are concerned about their children in our education system that's being chipped away at. They have nothing. They have no reason to hope, and that's because this government has told them they have no reason to hope.

All this government has told them is on the horizon is that we're going to return to surplus in seven years. I do not believe that is going to happen. I do not believe that is going to happen because not only do we have a revenue problem, but part of our revenue problem is we have a huge unemployment problem which government is telling us is only going to get worse.

So the more unemployment we have, the more unemployed people we have, the smaller tax base we have. I believe that government has a moral obligation to get its act together and to be able to communicate directly with the people of the province once they do have a plan, if they can come up with a plan, for making sure that people can get to work. People are willing to roll up their sleeves; people want to get to work. We know that. We have a resilient people, we have a resourceful people. We have Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We have people in the province who are willing to work, who are hungry to work. They will work. Government has to provide that opportunity.

Government has to provide the stimulus so that our people can get to work because nobody else is going to do it for us. There is no outside answer. We cannot simply rely on the price of oil going back up. That would help us. Absolutely, it would help us, but where is this government's plan to strengthen our communities? Where is this government's plan to strengthen our people? Where is this government's plan to strengthen our educational system? We're seeing the opposite.

We know, economists the world over are telling us in times of grave financial challenges that austerity measures do not work. Some people have talked about, well really, is this an austerity budget. It's certainly not a budget that will

stimulate growth in the economy. As a matter of fact, we believe that what is happening, they're cutting spending in infrastructure. We know that Muskrat Falls, \$1.3 billion of the people's money being transferred over to Nalcor. We're not going to see any return from that megaproject for a number of years. We know that the project, the scheduling and the finances in the budget in that project are in trouble.

I beg, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, for this government to get its act together, to get a plan to stimulate the economy, to instill the hope in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. A year and a half ago the people of the province had hope. A year and a half ago people were not talking about I can't live here or I can't come back home.

The government has to turn this around. It's incumbent upon them to take the leadership to ensure that, in fact, they are able to steer us through. Perhaps they can, I don't know. So far they haven't shown us that they can steer us through this storm that is being faced by the whole province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Reid): Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the Chair's position. It's indeed an honour to stand again and talk about the pending budget and the final stages of negotiating exactly what should be in this budget and particularly, what shouldn't be in this budget when it comes to the impacts it's going to have on our citizens.

I've spoken many times in this House about key components here, particularly around the education system. I've continuously echoed the concerns of the educators, parents, students around the impact that changes to our education system are going to have.

As the critic responsible for post-secondary education and Education and Early Childhood Development, I've come to a realization that I don't think we give enough credit to the impact

that changes to our education system, particularly negative changes are going to have on our society, and the importance of using the resources we have to better move people forward.

I want to echo what my colleagues on this side have been saying around particular cuts. There's a multitude here. We'd need weeks and weeks more to get into them all, but particularly one that is disheartening and alarming is the cuts to our library systems. When 54 libraries are going to be cut, I have a real concern, the people of this province have a real concern and those involved have real concerns.

I just want to note a few things before I talk about what people have told me around how this is going to impact their lives. I just want to note the mandate of this Liberal administration and what was outlined by the Premier. He did, I thought, a very eloquent job of outlining to his ministers what their mandates would be. Their mandates would be around their responsibilities to improve people's lives, and to ensure there was going to be a better quality of services offered to people.

Under development, adult literacy strategy was one of the key components. Dated here, this is in the letter he sent: The 2012 program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies survey found that the adults in our province score below the Canadian and International average. No province scores lower in reading literacy than Newfoundland and Labrador. Liberals believe in the merits of lifelong learning and a new Liberal government would develop an adult literacy strategy.

Mr. Chair, if the first component of that pillar of lifelong learning and a Liberal literacy strategy is cutting 54 libraries, then we're in bad shape and we're going to continue to get worse. The people who want to improve literacy, particularly adult literacy in this province, must be shaking their heads. I know they are, because the onslaught –

MR. KENT: A point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Yes, the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Standing Order 14, a quorum in Committee. At the moment I only count nine government Members. Out of a caucus of 30, there are only nine government Members in the House of Assembly. I'd like to urge the government caucus to get back to work here. They need to maintain some numbers. I'm counting nine of them at the moment. There's almost as many on this side of the House. If we were all able, we would have a majority at the moment.

I'm citing Standing Order 14, and asking government Members to return to the House, please, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Are you calling a quorum?

MR. KENT: I'd like Members to return to the House.

MR. JOYCE: Will do.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, as I was noting here, it was the policy the Liberal administration had outlined about adult literacy would, in my opinion, and I think most people in this province, outline the issue around guaranteeing adults had access to literacy programs and services. Cutting 54 libraries is by far a major, major detriment to being able to achieve those goals, particularly when it's been noted nationally and internationally that we're the lowest in our English levels. What better way to move your literacy skills than having a comfortable, conducive setting, a library, in rural Newfoundland and Labrador particularly, places where people can go to provide those services for individuals.

At the end of the day, I want to reiterate that closing those goes against exactly the mandate of that department and what was set out by the Premier to his line ministers. So there is an alarm there automatically when your first objective and first noted decision is going to be cut 54 libraries.

I've got the library boards who are saying to me – and I've got documentation that they've sent – that library closures will hit children, rural areas, and adults and seniors who want to improve their literacy skills the most. They are talking about: How do you improve literacy skills for anybody if you don't have a service to provide? The flimsy argument that 30 minutes away, 85 per cent would be within 30 minutes. So that's telling me that obviously – and that's 30 minutes in principle to get one way, another 30 minutes to get back. So an hour that you need to be able to find a way, somebody to provide transportation if you don't already have it, to get to this service that existed hopefully in your neighbourhood or within a reasonable distance that you could avail of.

Now you're going into a strange environment. Before you were comfortable because you had access to people you knew probably for decades who were the librarians, the support services. You were comfortable in that setting. You knew what it had to offer. You knew the types of programs they offered. Now they're wiped out – 54 of those are gone. This is supposed to be an avenue for us to enhance literacy.

The minister himself has said over the time: By cutting libraries, we will enhance literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador. That baffles everybody. It's baffled artists, authors. It's baffled the educators. It's baffled the university level. It's baffled everybody, particularly the users of libraries. It's totally baffling. It's alarming, too, and it's been noted – and it was noted by the libraries board – that the Minister of Education, when he was the critic, was a big proponent of libraries and that they needed additional services. He was, no doubt, right about it.

We all should have been able to provide more services and saw the benefits of it. Now he's the big proponent for cutting 54, more than half of them, and saying that this will enhance literacy. It's shocking; it's baffling. It flies totally in the face of what this administration and what the Premier has dictated would be the mandate of that minister and his administration about improving literacy, and taking us from being the worst to hopefully being, not only acceptable but probably being the best. Our people have that ability. They're always committed to doing

things. Our communities support it and not-for-profit agencies always support that.

I received a letter – or cc'd on a letter that went to the Premier. It's from the Canadian Health Libraries Association. It goes through how they're appalled that 54 libraries would be closing in Newfoundland and Labrador, and where they understand the challenges we have around literacy and how we provide services, particularly, in some remote and isolated communities and how libraries were the pillar of providing service, particularly literacy access. They're baffled at how that works.

They're also talking about how literacy access and the programs and services offered in libraries are a benefit for people's health well-being also. It's a social inclusion; it's their knowledge of being able to share information. It's their understanding of what, even from a health point of view, are the best things that they should be engaged in. So they had access to all these things. Now they're being cut without any rationale other than it's a cost savings. It's a million dollars.

I was pleased to hear today that oil hit \$52 a barrel, extremely pleased. You would think in the Opposition we'd want, from a money of point of view, that the government wouldn't have the revenues to do it – the opposite; I'd love for it to be \$150 and that the Liberal administration would have money to do everything. Reverse any of the things that they've outlined that they wanted to cut, put in all kinds of new programs, live up to what they outlined, particularly in their mandate letters, and provide the services that – no doubt, someone over there saw the vision, that's why it's in the mandate letters, of what should be done, what needed to be done, but live up to do that.

Even with noting that the \$52 – and I went back and did some assessment on what was noted in the budget around what the price of a barrel of oil would be based on this budget, and I think it was around \$40, and what the Canadian dollar would be and the Canadian dollar is at 70 cents. So I'm doing a bit of math there and I'm thinking we're almost through the first quarter, we should be financially in a better place based on the dollar figure right now for there.

So the \$1 million – the \$1.4 million the minister had said at one point, then it was a million dollars. Then I got in Estimates and I can only find \$700,000 we're saving. So for \$700,000 to be reinvested after the price of oil is dramatically up from where it was projected to be, that we can't come up with \$700,000 to improve the lifestyle and provide a service that already existed, more importantly, and try to enhance that in 54 communities in Newfoundland and Labrador where the communities themselves are a key stakeholder and a key partner, it's baffling, it's alarming, it's disheartening and it's embarrassing to be able to even say that would be the philosophy of any administration. I'm baffled at it.

So, again, I'm asking – there are additional monies that we just identified; we know because the price of oil is up. Somewhere along that you've got to be able to find the necessary money for, step one – the first thing that you need to do is the 54 libraries need to be reinstated. People need to know that they access to some of these services. Communities need to know that it's a provided service for them, the citizens coming, and that this has been a partnership that should continue. You don't be regressive, particularly with adult literacy, when the rest of the world is telling us we need to catch up. This is not a thing where we're so far ahead we can slow it down a little bit. We need that money, a minor amount of money. Monies have already been identified, additional monies that we can do it for and, at the end of the day –

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. BRAZIL: – a service that the world tells us we need.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to apologize to my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. I was reluctant to rise and try and bring order to the

House, Madam Chair, but I felt the point needed to be made. I didn't want to formally call quorum because I recognize that Members might be out making a phone call, or taking a brief break, or whatever the case may be, but we need government –

AN HON. MEMBER: Or go to the washroom.

MR. KENT: Or go to the washroom; that's fair.

But we need to maintain some order here because if all Opposition Members had taken their places, there was actually a moment where we would have had the majority in the House of Assembly. That could be rather problematic for government, so I appreciate co-operation from Members. Now we have a few more in the House, so that's good to see.

There has been some discussion about the cost of overtime, so to speak, in the House of Assembly. We've been here round the clock now, as I mentioned in a previous speech this morning. But I think it's important to highlight that it was government who brought in the motions not to adjourn the House at 5:30 p.m. and not to adjourn the House at 10 p.m.

I won't speak for all my colleagues, but I, for one, would have been perfectly happy to come back and conduct this debate during normal hours; but, in their mad rush to get out of here, the government repeatedly has brought in motions to not adjourn at the House at 5:30 p.m. and not adjourn the House at 10 p.m. Now, that often happens. Our government brought in lots of motions to sit at night and to sit after hours. There's no doubt about it. That has been a tradition of sorts in the House of Assembly, but to suggest it's our fault that we're here having this debate is not fair, Madam Chair.

There are important concerns to be brought forward on behalf of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's why we're keeping this debate going, but we didn't lay down the motions to require the House to sit round the clock. We could sit debating these matters for the next number of weeks if that was the desire of government, but we'll respect the process and here we are.

I was asked to raise some concerns – I have to open up my phone here – that were sent to me just this morning. This lady asked me, specifically, to raise her concerns at the earliest opportunity in the House of Assembly. I have many more emails that I'll get to but I agreed to get to this one next.

She first starts by commending us for lasting for – I believe we're in the 47th hour now of debate. It's great to see you speaking consistently on behalf of your constituents. This is a lady who has visited the House of Assembly in recent days as well I understand, and watched the proceedings from the gallery.

I am, and always have been, a strong Liberal supporter. You're probably questioning why I'm contacting you in that case. Here's my story. I have a journalism diploma from College of the North Atlantic. I had to take out a loan to do that. I worked at a radio station after completing that course, in which I made \$12 an hour. At that time, my rent was \$1,200 a month. I clearly could not maintain my daily cost making \$12 an hour, let alone the fact I now had a loan to pay back.

After several years of freelancing, I had my daughter who is now three. That's when I decided to pursue electrical, so my daughter could have a more comfortable life than I had growing up. That being said, I've been part of a union for the last year. I have all my certifications. I've been exceptionally proactive and I still cannot find work. In saying that, I reached out to my MHA, the MHA for Placentia – St. Mary's.

I don't believe the district name has changed. Placentia – St. Mary's?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. KENT: Okay, thank you. Placentia – St. Mary's.

She told me she would have someone contact me as soon as possible. They never did. I signed up as a volunteer for the Liberals and I contacted the now Premier directly, back when they were the Opposition. He, or whoever on his behalf, thanked me and said someone would be in contact. They never were.

After the budget, I emailed, called and messaged to see if there was anything now I could do to help and show my support because I truly believe this budget was a good thing for the province. Sure it would have a lot of negative impacts but if it meant my daughter would live in a more prosperous and flourishing province, unlike we know today, I would accept it and support it. Of course, much to my dismay once again, I never heard anything back.

When you stood a few moments ago and said the Liberals haven't been speaking up on behalf of their constituents, I could not agree with you more. The Minister of Municipal Affairs argued saying they have been working very hard, referencing things like Coley's Point and Whitbourne Elementary. Yes, they have spoken up on the big issues where several groups of people have come forward, but as for an individual voice or an individual story they have not done their due diligence.

I have had so much trust and faith in this party in which I have tried to show them again and again. I'm infuriated seeing you and the other Members of the Opposition standing up time and time again talking about how this budget is affecting your constituents and giving them a voice, but never seeing the Liberals taking a minute to speak up right or call back for that matter. I'll be back in the House of Assembly today cheering you on.

Again, Madam Chair, as I've said several times, I'm sure that most MHAs are doing their best to get back to constituents, but this lady contacts me. Really, it sounds out of desperation and frustration, and asked me specifically to bring her concerns to the House of Assembly, which I'm happy to do.

I have a few minutes left, so I'll read a few more messages into the record. This is another one from Monday evening. I have envelopes here from the last 24 hours, so hopefully we'll get to them as well. I am sick of what the government is doing to the public libraries. Yes, changes were needed, but closing 54 libraries and potentially putting me out of a job due to bumping will in no way help illiteracy or the economy. I am so tired of this government and its fake promises that it cared about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They will have

no choice but to help me when I end up on EI and do not have enough money to pay my rent. Thanks, Liberals.

The question to the House from our seniors: Old, cold and hungry, is this our future? We'll have to find a busy intersection to try and drum up some extra money.

I'm trying to find one that I can read in two and half minutes, Madam Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: Take your time.

MR. KENT: Thank you.

I understand the financial crisis that we must all stand together to shoulder the burden. I accept we have a tremendous deficit and can appreciate how the price of oil has impacted our ability to offer service, maintain infrastructure and sustain employment to the public sector and to maintain previous levels of taxes and user fees. In conversations I have expressed my understanding of the difficult budget in a difficult time. It serves no purpose to blame anyone or party for where we are. Nobody could foresee the free fall the price of oil would take.

My position since the budget is that, yes, it is very difficult to make ends meet and the increases in taxes and fees will be extremely difficult for most of us. Maybe there were other options to help us navigate this crisis, but there is no doubt we have to take a strong course of action.

As a father, I would rather endure the hardship now than to pass along our problems and a paralyzing debt to my children. We have to address the issue now, and when we see better times again we have to learn from this, and that we must be better prepared for future challenges in the price of oil, diversify the economy further and think long term for when the oil may run out or the world no longer relies so heavily on fossil fuels that it may not be feasible to continue to develop oil projects.

That all said, the levy to be a resident of this province is one pill that I find difficult to swallow. How must the world look at us for imposing a levy to live here? I offer that it would have been more palatable to have added

the revenue generated from the levy into an extra percentage on our income tax or the additional gas tax rather than a separate Deficit Reduction Levy. If I may ask one thing that the government reconsider from the budget, is that the levy be eliminated from the strategy to improve our financial situation.

Regardless of political party, every MHA in the House is a Member of government. I believe that each of you are there because you believe in the province, its people, and you have an honest desire to contribute to making our province a better place. While parties differ on opinion, beliefs and strategy, it is by considering all perspectives and options that we make the best decisions.

That's a fairly balanced perspective. I don't agree necessarily with every single statement that the gentleman has written, but I do agree strongly with the fact that we need to learn from what we're dealing with right now.

I'm sorry my time is up, Madam Chair. I'll speak again soon.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just stand for a minute. First of all, I want to recognize the Member for Mount Pearl North who could have called quorum. I'll just explain how quorum works, Madam Chair. You have three minutes to get back in the House. I know the Member just wanted to bring it to the attention; he didn't want to call quorum because there were Members out having a tea.

I thank the Member for Mount Pearl North for that and bringing it to attention. That's part of the parliamentary rules. You have three minutes to get people back in the House. That's done on a regular basis. On a vote, we usually have 10 minutes. That's just part of it, but I thank the Member for bringing it to our attention and

saying, okay, let's get everybody back. People were out there having a cup of tea and using the washroom. Madam Chair was saying to herself, I was using the washroom; that's fine.

Madam Chair, I stood earlier and I thanked the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and the Member for Cape St. Francis and the Member for St. John's Centre. There's a briefing today at 1 o'clock over that \$30 million and how it's being used. I thank the Minister of Finance and officials for doing that.

What I'll do, Madam Chair, is I'll stand in this House now and I'll make a commitment – I'm sure I'm speaking on behalf of all Members – if the Members are a bit short, who wants to go to it, we'll continue speaking until you get back to ensure this continues. There will be no break. If everybody wants to go, we'll continue this because I think this is such an important matter that when we're discussing the facts, we have all the information.

So my commitment here to the House of Assembly, Madam Chair, is that the Liberal caucus, myself, the Minister of Finance and all of our Members, we'll stand and continue speaking. If everybody goes, if every Member of the caucus who's here wants to go, you have my commitment, we'll stand and we'll continue speaking to make sure when you come back, you can continue on with the debate. So whoever wants to avail of that.

I thank the Minister of Finance and the officials for doing it. I look forward to the Member for Cape St. Francis and the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and the Member for St. John's Centre to go down and get the briefing on this because it's very issue when we're having this debate.

Our commitment is this debate will not stop at 1 o'clock, if everybody wants to take advantage of it. If there's only one in the House, I'll stand up or I'll ask some Member of the Liberal caucus to stand up to be an intervener. We're happy to do it, to continue the debate, to ensure this continues on after 1 o'clock just so we can get the information.

I didn't want to interrupt. I just wanted to pass that on. I thank everybody who so willingly wants to avail of this here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Madam Chair, I thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for that and the Minister of Finance. It is important, if we're going to be debating things, that we all do have the facts. Sometimes you're going through the budget documentation and you're just taking it for granted what you see there. Unless you're intricately involved in all those numbers and whatever, you don't always totally understand the implications and so on. So if there's something new that we didn't know and we can be educated in it and if it makes a difference, that's all good. I thank him for that.

I would say, Madam Chair, in addition, I'll make the request – I don't know if it can be done right now or not, but I can't see why it couldn't – if we're going to have Finance officials down to meet, I would also like added to that agenda, I would like for the Finance officials to explain to me and other Members what the complications would be involved in bringing in a fast food or a junk food tax, why that can't be done.

I know it was said in debate when the budget was out that it's too complicated and it's too much work; you'd spend more money trying to collect the money and all that. I'd like some confirmation for somebody to explain to me why that it and why it couldn't be done. Because that's another thing that's out there in the public; people are saying, well, you're going to tax books, but you're not going to tax fast food and whatever. So let's get it out there; let's get the facts. I'd like to know that too, and I appreciate if that can be done.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) will be done.

MR. LANE: Okay, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Finance said it will be done. I certainly appreciate the co-operation. I've said from day one here it's not my intention to putting out any false information; I'm only going by the information I

have. I want to keep things respectful. I want to keep it professional. I want to get people's points across, obviously, and there are going to be things we agree to disagree on, but it's important that we all have the facts.

I'm going to continue on now as I was. I've got a whole bunch of emails from people, and I got text messages. I want to thank the people, by the way, who continue to follow this debate. Like I said, I'm still amazed how many people are engaged in this whole debate, and I want to thank the people that keep sending these emails and Facebook messages and tweets and so on offering suggestions, wanting questions asked and so on. I think it's great for democracy, and I think it shows the importance of social media as it relates to our democratic process.

I think it shows us all in this House of Assembly that we got to start changing with the times. Some of us are more engaged than others, but I think this has proven that people do want to be engaged. And if social media is the way to get them engaged, then so be it. Maybe even we need to look at down the road over time, as we try to reform our democratic process, things like people being able to vote online and all those types of things. Whatever we can do to get people more engaged in democracy in our province, I think we need to go there. I'm certainly, as one Member of the House of Assembly, willing to explore all ways that we can improve things so that people participate in voting and people participate in the political process and so on. I think it's very important.

I would say to people, though, I'm after getting a couple of emails and messages saying I never heard you read my email yet, or you never got to mine yet, or did you read it and I never heard you or something or did you do it earlier. I say to people I'm getting through them but there are just so many of them it's a job – and if I missed one, I apologize upfront. If there was a point there that you wanted expressed or a question and I didn't raise it or whatever because it got lost in the stack, then I apologize, but I'm trying to get them all through as I can. Certainly we have lots of time and I look forward to doing that today and tomorrow and, possibly, over the weekend. Whatever we need to do to get this done, we are going to do.

This one here was sent to a number of Members. It wasn't sent to all Members. So if it was read out, I apologize; I didn't hear this one. Fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has been in a deficit crisis for a great part of our history. Our net debt-to-GDP ratio at the present time is 30.8 RBC Canadian, federal and provincial fiscal tables as presented in the House of Assembly during the filibuster – so based on those tables.

Since 1991, the ratios were over 60, 11 times. I am not an economist, so I don't know exactly what all this means but it seems to me we were a lot worse off economically many times in the past than we are right now. The ratios were a lot greater. It is just that the dollar has inflated so much that we are talking billions instead of millions, so it sounds a whole lot worse. Our Liberal government seems more concerned with pleasing the banks than it is with promoting the welfare of its people. The people didn't cause the debt, yet we are the ones who are paying for it.

Wouldn't it be better to make minimum payments on the interest until we weather the storm and, in the meantime, use stimulus measures to create a healthier economy so we will be in a better position to pay down the debt? Now, my understanding is that we actually only are making minimum payments, in fairness, and I'm not going to speak for –

MS. C. BENNETT: No payments on debt.

MR. LANE: Yeah, there is none on debt. What is being suggested here is, why wouldn't we do minimum payments only, and I think that actually is the case. So I'm reading it, but I'm also answering the question because I think, in fairness, that is what's going on here. Again, I don't want to knowingly put out any false information.

As I said, I am not an economist and all this may seem too simple. I just love my province and I do not want to see our people, especially the most vulnerable, suffer the impact of such a severe austerity budget. Please take the time to view the following – they talk about a YouTube video of an interview with Mark Blyth; he is a Scottish political scientist and professor of

international political economy at Brown University and so on. It references a YouTube video. I can't play that for everybody here, but if Members want to view the video it's called *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* by Mark Blyth. So if any Member is interested in seeing that YouTube video, you can.

The next one is entitled education cuts: I'm a concerned parent from a small school, St. Mark's all grade in King's Cove.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair, I appreciate your protection.

I'm a concerned parent from a small school, St. Mark's all grade –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. LANE: I'll try again.

I'm a concerned parent from a small school, St. Mark's all grade in King's Cove. We are losing four students this year and losing one full teaching position. We have met with the Education Minister and he seems to understand our points, but can't promise us this position back.

We are a school that has been multigraded for years and has already been cut to the bone. We have a huge gap in our grade four, five, six math class. Kids are seeking teaching resources elsewhere to learn, not to boost their mark, just to learn. This is math. This is a core subject. That is one gap of many, many gaps.

We have no specialized math or science teacher in our school. We have a declining enrolment, mainly due to all the negativity that surrounds all these cuts. Government needs to put a positive spin on these small schools. Good things happen at our school.

Keep up all the good work you're doing. I think you – anyway, she thinks I'm doing a good job, but I'll leave it at that. The intent is not to go looking for praise here; I just wanted to get the message out.

The next one is around gas tax. This one here says: From what I understand from a brief review of the gas tax – maybe the Minister of Fisheries, not the Minister of Fisheries. Well, the Minister of Fisheries but certainly Minister of Finance, I would ask that maybe she might listen to this one and perhaps she can answer the question.

From what I understand from a brief review of the gas tax, the fishery, agriculture and forest industry are not required to pay the extra tax that's imposed. As well, the road tax on diesel has only increased by five cents per litre. Why are other people who are involved in the transportation industries not given the same benefits of this decrease in their tax? Is this not a form of discrimination to the transportation industry that uses gasoline as their fuel source?

So basically it's only a very small tax on diesel and I guess that would make sense, a lot of our goods come through tractor trailers and so on. He's saying that they have a transportation industry that don't use diesel and there are exemptions for fishery, agriculture and forestry is what the person is saying and how come they get it and others don't get it.

With that said, Madam Chair, I'll take my seat and look forward to speaking many more times.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise again in this hon. House. Socially media is great. It gives us all a great opportunity to interact and to get messages out. I know the Member for Mount Pearl North is an expert in that field. I know from time we get some bantering around in the House and I know my good colleague retweeted the fact that the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North noticed that there were nine Members here and, of course, my good colleague responded that there were only two Members opposite that were in their place.

So they were bantering back and forth, and the Member for Mount Pearl North made a comment, well, this is politics. Madam Chair, I take exception to playing politics. I take exception to that. Now, he might be over there reeling me in. He might be fishing me in or reeling me in.

MR. KENT: Hook, line and sinker.

MR. HAWKINS: Line and sinker, he might be reeling me in. That's not the point I'm making; this is serious what we are dealing with. We're dealing with truth; we're dealing with a serious budget. It is not a time for reeling people in. It is not a time to be playing politics. It is not a time to be getting up and to be making statements and trying to instill in people a sense that this is not important. This is extremely important – this is extremely important.

I have made my comments over and over again in this House, how serious this budget is, how serious the choices that we've had to make. Madam Chair, I don't take that lightly. I don't take that as playing politics. I have no interest in playing politics with the people's lives in this province. I don't think anybody on this side has any interest in playing politics with the people that we represent in this province.

This is serious business. I take where I'm standing very serious. We made some comments this morning with regard to the fact that we do have an aging demographic. We have to look after our seniors. I am a senior; I expect to be looked after as well, Madam Chair. But I don't take any pride in having to kick our debt to our children. I think that's important.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is shocking.

MR. HAWKINS: It's shameful. It's absolutely shameful.

For people to stand in this House and think that's a great thing, we need to take a minute of silence and just reflect upon what we're actually saying. Because what we're saying is that we'll continue to incur the debt, don't cut any services, continue to borrow, continue to borrow, continue to borrow and what are we going to do. We're only paying interest.

My hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands made a mention – he read an email with regard to making payments on your principle. We're not even in a position to do that. We're paying interest. How much more would we have to borrow? We're borrowing now to pay interest. We're borrowing to pay interest. How can that be sustainable? How can we, as a province, continue to borrow and borrow and pay interest and say, well, let everything else slide, let it all go, somebody will pay for it eventually.

Guess who is going to pay for it? The children and grandchildren of this province when we are an aging demographic, when the workforce is shrinking and more and more strains are placed on the working people in the province, our young people. That's a concern I have. I have a concern for my young people, for the young people of this province. I am not in a position to play politics with our young people. It's not about that. It's not a game. I said it before, I'll say it again, this is not a popularity contest. It's not a popularity contest.

People on this side of the House, we've had to make some difficult decisions. Are they popular? Not likely. No wonder the numbers are down when it comes to polling. What would you expect? We're making tough decisions. We're not going to be the most popular person on the block. It's not happening, but you don't run away from making decisions. You don't run away from leadership. You stand up and you make a decision on what you believe is right. Not what you believe is popular, what you believe is right.

We know, Madam Chair, that people are impacted by this budget. We are all impacted by the budget. The Members opposite last night said that our heads must be in the sand. Well, I think there are a lot of heads on the other side that are in the sand if they think we can go on with status quo. It can't happen. We cannot survive.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAWKINS: No, you didn't say that. There was a comment made.

We cannot survive. The course that we're going is not a sustainable course. We cannot be

sustainable. I made reference before, a few years ago, maybe two, three years ago we encouraged all municipalities to do a sustainability plan to make sure they have a plan in place, so that they have a fiscal framework in place so the communities are sustainable. Well, we're no different as a province. We're no different. We have to have a sustainable future. If we're not sustainable, we cannot provide services.

Health care is a huge burden on our budget, and will become more because I know, and my good colleague over here, we know in Alzheimer's, many of our seniors now, it's really – I don't know if we've even captured the impact that's going to have. My good colleague and I, we have attended a number of meetings, and annual meetings that I've been involved in in the Alzheimer's. The numbers are alarming. The number of people with dementia is alarming. It's going to be millions and millions and millions of dollars on our budget. We're only scratching the surface on that.

So as we become an aging demographic with more and more pressure to provide services for seniors with a shrinking workforce of young people, there's an imbalance. There's an imbalance, and we have to find a way to correct that. We have a significant imbalance on our bottom line in our budget.

The imbalance is our expenses are up here, our revenues are down here. That's an imbalance. We have to find a way in which the two of these eventually will come together and our revenues will surpass expenses. That is going to be a monumental task, and it's a task that has to be – we have to look at it. We have to find ways in which we can tackle the debt. We've got to get out of debt, or at least have a sustainable plan in place to get to a point where we're not only paying interest but we can also look at reducing our principle, and that's a challenge.

Some of the tough decisions that we've made, Madam Chair, we have to make for the future of our province and for our young people.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to get up. As a matter of fact, we're in hour number 48 of the filibuster, and believe it or not, for a small group over here, we're almost arguing with each other because we want to get up next. Our resolve is pretty strong.

We're here for a reason. As I've said earlier and I'll say it again, we're here for the right reason I believe. We're here to represent the people's interest. If it were personal reasons we'd be all home in bed getting rested up and doing something else, but that's not what we're here for. We're here to represent the people who elected us and people who elected hon. Members opposite, because their voice are going to be heard. We have avenue in this House and we're speaking what people want us to speak about. We're presenting their concerns and we'll continue to do so for as long as it takes. This is not a game. This is not a matter of – there's no intention of giving in. This is a very important debate. We feel very strong in our resolve and we're going to continue on.

I'd like to just allude to the hon. Minister of Transportation on some of his commentary. I know he jumped up; I know he jumped to his feet and was quick to criticize my colleague from Mount Pearl North on reminding the hon. government that their numbers were way below quorum. I could care less for quorum. Personally, that's your own prerogative.

People are watching. The public are watching this. People see the disinterest that you won't listen to what they're concerned – this is not my concern, these are the people's concerns. If you want to sit over in the corner and turn your backs to what we're saying and ignore it, that's your prerogative. I respect that is your prerogative. You have to answer to the people.

We'll stand in our place here in a smaller number and we'll argue with each other to get up on our feet next. We'll continue to be that way. At 3 o'clock in the morning we're saying I'll go next, no, I'd rather go. That's determination, that's resolve. That's because we are speaking – people want us to speak for them

and we're very obliging and we're very glad. We're honoured, actually, to have that ability to be able to get up.

When you look – and I know when my colleague got up to bring it up, it was only a matter of fair warning, I almost sensed it was a sense of disrespect to the people whose concerns we're trying to present here in this House. I felt it was a show of disrespect. I know there's no intention, I'm not saying you disrespected. It showed you're letting your guard down.

I know it's hard to listen to us getting up here for 10 minutes at a time over and over again. I realize that. It's not my personal email that I'm reading. These are people's emails. I'm reading them from all over the place, not only from my district but from all over the province. To take offence to us calling out the fact – or my colleague calling out the fact that the numbers are down, that's your own prerogative.

I know the Member for – I'll get the name now – Virginia Waters – Pleasantville is very uptight over there and very animated over the fact that was brought up, so much so that he made reference to the numbers on this side. Do you know what? We've been here for 48 hours and we have small numbers. We're getting up 10 minutes at a time over and over and over and over and over. Guess what you're doing? Drinking coffee, having your conversation, nobody is getting up on the floor.

You're letting us carry the day. We're put here for the people. We're doing it for the people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: We're not doing it for you. We're not doing it for us. We're doing it for the people. If you want to get silly and talk about us and our numbers, we're very proud of who we are. We're very proud of what we're doing and we're not going to stop doing what we're doing. I want to remind you of that.

If you want to play your silly games, play them, but we're not giving up any time soon. If you want to take offence that's fine, but my

colleague pointed out that's politics. We're here and we're going to continue on.

MR. EDMUNDS: Madam Chair, a point of order.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member for Torngat Mountains on a point of order.

MR. EDMUNDS: Yes, Madam Chair, (inaudible), the hon. Member across the way just called the Member silly. I think that's unparliamentary. I ask that he retract the statement, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Well, well, obviously I hit a nerve there.

Anyway, my point being, I want to get back to – I want to read another message that someone wants us to read into the record. Certain times I'll get up and I'll talk and I'll debate the issues all day long, and I've got no problem with it. But certain times it spurs you and sometimes you feel like you get poked and you get irritated by it.

I'm not that much irritated, personally, it just irritates me that Members opposite would make an issue of that. Never lose sight of what we're doing here. It's Members on that side of the House that actually done the same thing when they were over here. I respect it, I watched them at the time, and I respected what they did. I commended them for their resolve. We were on probably a different side of the argument. I thought it was admirable, what they did and the reason they did it, and it wasn't easy. There are some Members over there now that experienced that, and they can understand what I'm saying. It is not easy.

If you believe in something strong enough and if you've got the resolve to continue on, which we do, we will not back down. We're going to keep doing this until we can't do it and something

else happens here, because it's too important an issue. You can't go to a coffee store, you can't go to a restaurant, you can't go to get gas, and that's the topic of the day every single day. Every single day, it's where we go; we hear it on the streets, supermarkets.

You can't turn a corner – I can't go now out in my truck and get a bag without running into someone that's going to bring up the budget. This is the forum – we're elected Members of the House of Assembly, we're in this House, we're here to represent the people, we'll continue representing the people. That will not change, and that will be the case until ye invoke closure or you shut us down. And that's your prerogative. But don't criticize our numbers or our resolve. Never criticize our resolve.

I'll caution ye once more and I'll move on to this email in respect to what we're doing. We're the voice of the province here now. Realistically, it feels like you're the voice of the province because they're funnelling their concerns. Believe it or not, they are funnelling their messages through us. Social media is an amazing tool, but it's also a very worthwhile tool. This was not always the way you could do it. Now you have that ability to do it, and they're funnelling their concerns through us. I'm not a social media expert like my colleague for Mount Pearl North happens to be.

MR. BYRNE: You're no rocket surgeon.

MR. PETTEN: Right, yeah. The Minister of AES, he just woke up again.

I'm not a social media person. We are speaking for the people of the province through social media.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have to read this message in because I feel it's important: I have family roots in Newfoundland and last year, I, a 24-year-old single male, uprooted and decided to take a position here

with my employer, despite everybody asking why I would want to move to this province that everybody my age is leaving. I discovered, to move here, my vehicle insurance would go from \$140 a month to \$215 a month, roughly \$1,000 more a year, moving from Halifax to Paradise.

Thanks to this new budget, I can add an extra 15 per cent to that, plus the new gas tax on top of all that. It has turned out to be a nightmare. I rent, own a vehicle, live on my own and I fall in the lower part of the levy income level. This levy, while now it is greatly reduced, when added to the extra charges of owning a vehicle, the cost of travel for vacations and the like and the new increasing fees and charges for everything have made this move counterproductive. I took a pay raise of a significant value to move here, yet I end each month with less money and that's only going to get worse.

Please read this next part: I am living proof the Liberal government is driving the young and those who are able to do so away. I am done my commitment with my employer next year and will be seeking relocation immediately. I am proof, along with so many others, that this government is driving away its future and leaving behind an aging, ailing population who will require so much government support.

Who will pay for that support when the future generation has been forced to leave? I'm not talking about leaving to a rich province or booming area, but just to a neighbouring poor province of Nova Scotia. They have a 15 per cent tax, that's fine, and the Liberal government there is destroying that province as well, but it is still a much wealthier future for me than there is here. So off I go with all my tax dollars, shopping money, gas purchases and everything else that drives the local economy.

It's sad to say because I want to love it here, but I can't wait to go anywhere else but here. Thanks, and filibuster on.

These messages – and we all have them. I have a lot from my district. I've read a lot in and will continue to read them. But I'll go back to the basis of my argument. This person is not a constituent of mine and obviously by the sounds of that won't be a constituent of anyone in this

House soon. But those are real stories. How many more people feel that way? I'm sure there are lots.

Every opportunity we get, we're going to tell their personal story because I think it's worthwhile. Again, I'll say it's very important that they get their voice heard and we're not going to stop any time soon.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's always great to stand and have a moment or two to chat. I certainly respect the confidence in my colleagues in me getting up to speak. I'm going to try and keep my tone down a little. I just noticed the Member for Conception Bay South got a little passionate and fired up there. Albeit just an hour ago, having been here for over 12 hours now myself, I was passionate and fired up, too. Certainly, I think our constituents respect the fact that we are passionate about what we do and passionate about the issues, but I felt it's important to rise now, particularly in reference to the Member's comments from Conception Bay South.

Again, I just want to draw back to the fact that during this filibuster you're filibustering a bill, Bill 19, An Act for the Imposition of Taxes on Insurance Premiums. That's the specific piece of legislation we're referring to now. So give it a money bill, yes, by all means. You have every opportunity to speak about whatever issue you feel relates to you, as most matters in government relate to money.

I just want to point out that in doing so – you're the voice of the people, you said that, and you're reading things into the record from the constituents. You're reading things into the record, that's great, Madam Chair. They're sharing the thoughts of those, some of their feelings on the budget and the budget process, but I referenced just an hour and a half ago, I

still haven't heard anything of substance to this debate. I haven't heard anything of substance.

While I say that, I also need to clarify some comments. These comments were just made. He said we're over here standing up every 10 minutes, after 10 minutes, after 10 minutes and that we're over here drinking coffee and not listening. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. Nothing could be further from the truth, I tell the Member for Conception Bay South.

I've gotten up and spoken several times here in the last 12 hours, as did the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as did the Minister of Transportation and Works, as did the Minister of Finance, as did many others. So don't suggest to anybody listening now, as you lively jumped into the debate here, and God bless you for doing so, but don't suggest to anybody here now that we're not partaking in this debate. Further, don't suggest we're not here in the House of Assembly and that we're hiding and drinking coffee. Our Members are right here. They're right here. They're right here in front of us right now. So I want to put that in perspective. I really take exception to that and wanted to clarify.

Now I'm going to get to some points of substance because I think this is important, all right. The Member for Cape St. Francis, I referenced some of his comments. He spoke and referenced some of mine. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands did the same.

I'm going to come back to it; the Minister of Municipal Affairs certainly took the time to reference the \$30 million contingency fund and some of the concerns around that. Respectfully so, the Minister of Finance has offered to give a briefing to Members opposite with respect to the contingency fund, and that's great.

Other than that, all I could really hear her saying is the concept of the filibuster and we can't stifle democracy. Again, you have every right to do this. We are here, we are listening, we are engaging in the debate, but if you're struggling to understand what's going on with the province's finances right now, you only need to look no further than like I just referenced last week, when we borrowed the highest amounts

on record that we've ever borrowed in our province's history.

The Minister of Transportation and Works just referenced seniors, and the Member for Cape St. Francis was referencing seniors as well. We spoke yesterday – and the Opposition Members agreed and voted in favour of the bill – to give seniors the highest increase ever, in terms of our funding to them with respect to the annual Income Supplement benefit, as well as the enhanced Seniors' Benefit. In addition to that, I'd like to point out that our federal government has also contributed to our seniors in their most recent budget as well. We recognized that and added to that.

The important point I was trying to make earlier as well – and I kind of got caught up as time was winding down – the Minister of Transportation and Works kindly pointed out, with respect to our seniors and our aging demographics, the reason we have to make some difficult decisions now, we need long-term care beds for them in the next number of years. We need room in our hospitals for seniors in the next number of years. These are the things we have to prepare for.

I suggest to you right now, you're stating that we have long wait times in hospitals now. People are upset with our roads. I don't know how we could continue to deliver our daily government services with respect to the amount of borrowing that we continue to do. It's simply not possible.

I'm sorry. What's that, from the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands?

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In any event, we're here in this position right now due to an excessive amount of borrowing and an excessive amount of spending. Most of which was referenced, and warnings were provided to the Members opposite by the Auditor General's office. I need remind them that warnings were provided in the last number of years. Overspending is going to create a problem. We're not going to be able to continue

providing our daily services. We're not going to be able to continue to provide health care. We're not going to continue to be able to be paving our roads. These are the types of things when it comes to future planning.

So when you talk about the future of our province and providing services to seniors, we're putting in measures right now so we can have a borrowing plan that is respectful. We can have a borrowing plan that does not accumulate a whole bunch of debt. Our lenders can have confidence in us, as a government, to borrow money to continue to provide our services so we can have our long-term care beds, so we can have our services in hospitals. These are the things we're preparing for. We're trying to solve a deficit that we've inherited. We've inherited this deficit.

You've suggested all morning and all night – and I'll applaud you for it – I don't like this idea, I don't think we should have done this and why didn't you do that. What are you suggesting that we should have done differently? Name a revenue measure. Name a measure where you would increase revenue.

Name another measure where you would increase revenue or get up and stand up and add something of substance to Bill 19, or Bill 17 for that matter. Or get up and suggest another program or service we could have looked at finding another efficiency in. Don't stand there and just go on and on with no substance to the debate. That's all I ask.

I certainly appreciate you reading into the record information from constituents. I can appreciate that. You are the voice of the people. You are the voice of the people that you represent. As an Opposition Member, it is also your job to add substance to the debate. I have every respect for the fact that you're filibustering right now. I have no trouble participating.

In closing now, I just want to reference the reason why I stood up to begin with. The reason I stood up to begin with is because we were accused not only of not being here –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: – we were also accused of not participating in the debate. That is simply not true. We've been participating all along, I'll tell the Member for Conception Bay South.

Other than that, I respect your right but I also would appreciate if you stuck to the facts and offered some substance to the conversation. With that, Madam Chair, I'll take my seat.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the passion that the debate is bringing to the people in the House of Assembly. From my perspective, I want to bring it back to the conversation that is very important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you challenging the Chair?

MR. KENT: Point of order, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North, on a point of order.

MR. KENT: No, Madam Chair, I'm not challenging the Chair.

I'm just pointing out that there is a parliamentary tradition that we alternate sides. Speakers had risen and I'm just asking that we continue that tradition.

If government Members wish to speak that's fine, but the tradition in this House, Madam Chair, is that government Members alternate and we go back and forth.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Does the Member have a Standing Order?

MR. KENT: No, it's a parliamentary tradition, Madam Chair, that's well known.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair has recognized the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, certainly the Member opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. C. BENNETT: Could I have some protection, please?

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

The Chair has recognized the Minister of Finance to speak and I ask Members for their co-operation.

Thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, since you have recognized me and the Member for Mount Pearl North has indicated he feels there's a tradition in this House, rather than increasing the emotions and as he's busy tweeting his emotions right now, I will say to the Members opposite, should they choose to stand up, they certainly can.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: I want to thank the minister for doing that. It is a tradition here in the House of Assembly that we do go back and forth and alternate with different speakers and stuff like that. So it is a tradition.

Madam Chair, maybe you just missed it and didn't see anyone standing up here, but we're doing it on a regular basis. I thank the minister for that and I know that when I'm finished, I'm sure she'll get up afterwards and speak. We're looking forward to that, because we've been

here in the House – I know the hon. Member for Stephenville – Port au Port referenced, as he got up the last time, about the different speakers getting up. He did mention the Minister of Finance was up several times.

I'll correct him on that. Because I've been here all morning and I was here most of the night and this will be the first time I will see the Minister of Finance get up on her feet. So I don't know if that's because of the time of day or we have people –

MR. KIRBY: Maybe you weren't here.

MR. K. PARSONS: I watched – I left the same time she was here, Minister of Education. While I've been here, I've never seen her. I've seen you up a couple of times, and you know –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Member to direct his comments to the Chair.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay, sorry, Madam Chair.

I'm just wondering is it because there's a few media here today now this afternoon, or if it's the time of day? But it will be the first time, and I look forward to the minister getting up and speaking and having a few words.

I want to get back to where we're to now because this is a very important debate. It's very important, what we're doing. Because it's a filibuster, we're getting the opportunity, and obviously we're getting the ears of people here today, so that's what this is all about. What the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are saying is that you're not listening. I'm glad that you're listening today. I hope that, by listening, we can make some changes and we can make some improvements on this budget that people of Newfoundland and Labrador – and the Minister of Finance, I'm going to look forward to her getting up and letting us know what those changes will be when she gets up, listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I don't know how many times I've been up on the budget so far, especially on this part of it, but I always try to take it to a level where I want to

talk about a theme each time. So I just want to talk about the Liberal budget. The Member across the way actually talked about a plan. Now, I want to talk about the plan too. We heard about a plan to grow and we heard about a plan how they were going to be strong, but this is a plan about decline. The only plan I see in this budget is plan for decline in this budget. I'll ask people –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: It is a disaster plan.

I'll ask people to go to page 17 of the economic – it's a book that we get, and on page 17 you'll see the projections that are there done by government and what they are projecting under their plan. Here is what they're projecting under their plan: The projected number for jobs in the province in the fall will be 233,700; that is 2016. By 2021, their projection – this is their plan that they are planning for the people of Newfoundland for a stronger tomorrow, plan for growth like we all heard about. In 2021, we are looking at 200,700. That's a loss in five years of 33,000 jobs.

Now that's your document, Minister, that you are putting out and that's the plan you have for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador can expect 33,000 jobs to be gone in the next five years. My colleagues and colleagues on this side have spoken about our future. The Minister of Transportation got up here and he talked about his grandchildren and the future, how we got to do things for future generations. In your document, on page 17, it states that you are expecting to lose 33,000 jobs in this province.

Now, I'm no expert or anything like that, but you talk about a plan for growth, so you're talking about 33,000 jobs lost – I don't know how that's growth. Where is it going to be to? You look at other projections that you did – it's on the page; you can see it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Growth at the EI offices.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yeah, growth at the EI offices is right.

Listen to this one now. In 2016, the population of the province is 527,100 people. By 2021, you're expecting 507,200 people. You're expecting 20,000 people less. These are in your document pages. I'm not just digging this up or saying anything; this is what you are projecting. You're projecting that 20,000 less people are going to be living in this province. You talk about a plan for growth. Again I ask, 20,000 less people in the province is growth? I don't think so. I definitely don't think so.

I think that it's a plan that you're having for us so we can decline our population. I think it's a plan that you're hoping people will move away. Maybe that's the plan you're hoping for.

I come back to this all the time, the goods that were sold to the people in the province in November, the goods that were sold, the promises that were made in September. Did you say to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that you're going to expect 33,000 less jobs? Did you tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that you're expecting to see 20,000 less people living here? I don't think so.

I listen to people. I've talked to people and a lot of people who I speak to feel like they were betrayed. They were betrayed by this government. They were betrayed by the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, the brighter, stronger tomorrow – a stronger tomorrow with 33,000 less people working in this province.

The reason why you're doing it – if you look at what happens to an economy when you do what you guys did, when you're cutting all this money, you're forcing these people to not spend – what does that tell people to do? They don't spend money anymore, so what happens to our economy? That's where we're going to lose the jobs because of what you're taking out.

I don't know how you can project that this is a stronger tomorrow. That's what you sold everybody on. The promises that were made, no HST increase, not on my – I know you had to increase the HST. You had to. You should have left the HST where it was in the first place. You should have done that right away.

The big thing was to go to Ottawa and get the big photo op and the HST is gone. That was part of our platform. Sometimes people will say increasing taxes in an election year, how could you do that? That's a stupid thing to do, but we were being honest with the people.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have lost trust in the Liberal government. They trusted the Liberal government. In six short months, the trust the people of Newfoundland and Labrador had in the government across the way is gone. The reason why it's gone – it seems like there's no care. It seems like you just don't care about them anymore, if you're saying the unemployment rate is going to skyrocket in Newfoundland and Labrador and you're doing nothing about it.

All during the election, everybody was looking for this massive plan. We have a plan. The Premier said we have a plan and everyone is going to be happy with that plan. Those were his words. He said we have a plan and everyone in this province is going to be happy with it. Maybe he should give us the plan today so people can turn their minds around it and see where it is. There's no plan – absolutely no plan.

The plan was that there will be no layoffs. That was a promise; that wasn't a plan. I say, no, that was a promise. That's a broken promise. Every time we turn around we look at broken promises. Every day you look at the broken promises of this government.

You wonder why we're doing what we're doing here today, why we're trying to speak for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, why we're getting up and reading emails. People want their voices heard because you're not listening. This is it. The Premier said what's in the envelope is in the envelope and that's what's staying there. We're not going to change. No, that's it.

People are after asking – people are protesting. I credit them; I was involved in a couple at the schools. The protests are so peaceful. People are not out going to throw rocks or anything like that. They're very peaceful. They don't want to see the cuts. They don't want to see the cuts in education.

It's all about choices. It's about the choices you make. The choices that you made are not what the people – you have to listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Please revisit some of these choices. That's what we're asking for. We're asking for you – with a plan to see that 33,000 less jobs are going to be here and our population is going to decline, I say, that's a great plan you have.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. JOYCE: Just on a point of order there, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Minister of Municipal Affairs, on a point of order.

MR. JOYCE: Just that briefing – and I thank the Members. It's 1 p.m. and the officials are out there. If everybody wants to go, we'll continue speaking along the time. I just wanted to let everybody know.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Seeing no point of order, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to get up and comment on a few things. It's interesting to hear the Member complaining that the Minister of Finance was up talking. The Member complains when the Minister of Finance gets up and talks. He complains when the minister is not talking. He just complains and complains. I don't know if he's overtired or something.

The Member for CBS got up and he talked something about Members over here drinking coffee, he observed. I haven't pointed it out, but I could point out the Members, if you like. I have observed Members over there drinking energy drinks out of the can. I've seen Tim Hortons cups on the desk and I could go on.

If there are violations of the rules here, whatever, we can get up and point them all out

on points of order if you'd like. I think there is some observation that we're here long hours and if someone accidentally enters the Chamber with a Tim Hortons cup, like I observed a number of times on your side of the House, then maybe we should just get up on points of order, bring it to the officials attention and resolve it that way. And if that is the way we'll proceed, that's fine with us over here.

Another thing I wanted to clarify, at some point in the debate overnight I know the former minister of Health, the Member for Mount Pearl North, he got up and he said, again – incorrectly – that under this government's watch, stickers and snacks were taken from kids at the Janeway.

As the hon. Minister of Health and Community Services has said, repeatedly, time and time and again, until he is blue in the face, that decision was made last September, last fall. Last fall the decision was made to take stickers and snacks away from children, sick children, in hospital. Now, who was the government last fall prior to the November 30 election? Well, I say, Madam Chair, that Member was not the minister of Health at the time. The Member for Mount Pearl North who levels these allegations today was the minister responsible for Health when the decision was made to take stickers or snacks away from children sick in hospital.

If he doesn't want to accept responsibility for what happened under his watch, then don't – he doesn't accept responsibility by and large for anything that happened under his watch, but don't stand up here and level accusations that have no basis to them against the current government because were not the government of the day. The Progressive Conservative Party was the government of the day and the Member for Mount Pearl North was the minister responsible for that arm of government. If you're not going to take any responsibility for your own actions or your own inaction or what happened on your own watch, don't try to blame it on somebody else. That's just classless.

Now, a couple of other things: I know the Member for Cape St. Francis got up and tried to put words again in my mouth, because this is what the process has been here the last several days. I think everybody here has been quite open that if the Members want to continue to speak on

the budget, then we have plenty of time to discuss whatever it is they want to discuss, to get these things off their chest. I know they're tired and we've been here quite a long time. I know the Members in the Opposition are getting cranky and that's why we're seeing the sort of things that we're seeing, but I ask people to just calm down a little bit.

The Member for Cape St. Francis said that I said all people in the province will be a 30-minute commuting distance from one of the regional public libraries. I did not say that. I'm tired of saying that approximately 85 per cent of the population will be within 30 minutes. If you take 85 away from 100, that means 15 per cent of the people in the province would not be within a 30-minute commuting distance. So when he names communities that are not within a 30-minute commuting distance that makes mathematical sense to me – at present, all people on the Island or in Labrador are not within a 30-minute commuting distance and I'm not sure what they did while they were in government to improve on that – nothing, in my observation.

Another thing the Member for Cape St. Francis said is that I got up and I said that we're laying off teachers and that's okay because they laid off teachers. Well, I just want to correct the record here. First of all, I'm not aware of any layoffs of teachers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: There has been a net reduction of 73 teaching units this year. There has been a net reduction of 73 teaching units last year. What I was saying is that there was a net reduction of 78 teaching units – last year, under their watch, 78 teaching units were cut and two years prior, or less than two years prior, there was a cut of 160 teaching units. So they cut 238 teaching units.

Now, I'm not sure how many layoffs happened, so I'm not going to get up here and make baseless allegations like the Member for Cape St. Francis did. But to get up and talk about layoffs, I didn't talk about layoffs. I talked about reductions in teaching units: the 160 teaching units they cut in 2013; the 78 teaching units they

cut last year versus the 73 teaching units that were reduced this year. I'd also like to point out that there are 32 teaching units that were scheduled to be reduced this year due to natural enrolment decline, and we kept 27 of those positions for teachers who work with children with special education needs.

It is also not the case when he says – I think the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island said there was a cut in special services. There was actually an increase in special services: 27 additional instructional resource teachers and 115 additional hours of student assistant hours for student assistants who work with children with special education needs. So if you are going to get up and make accusations, at least try to use some facts in it because it doesn't make a lot of sense.

The Member for Conception Bay South also gets up and on one hand he is saying I wasn't here – I wasn't here; I wasn't in the government. I wasn't over here spending wildly with the other crowd, just driving us and driving us and driving us down into debt. I wasn't here doing that. He might not have been over here doing that, but I do understand he was an assistant. In fact, I believe he was an assistant to the former minister he is sitting right next to now. Then he goes on and he says look at the schools we built, look at whatever we built. Now, either you were with them or you weren't because if you were not with them, borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing, et cetera, if you weren't there doing that, then I'm not sure how you were there doing the things that you're painting as positive things.

The other thing I just wanted to say, the Member for Cape St. Francis just got up and talked about how we sold the people a bill of goods. For 12 years people in this province – I was just listening to somebody on the radio talking about it, about how for 12 years we were sold a bill of goods.

All the people in the province were sold a bill of goods, that there was a diversification plan that the previous government had that involved borrowing some money from Scotiabank and borrowing some money from another bank and borrowing some money from another bank and borrowing some money from another bank, et

cetera. That was the economic diversification plan which was borrowing ourselves into oblivion where we're teetering the province on the edge of bankruptcy.

If you look at the overall debt in the province right now, in the budget papers it shows something in the order of \$15 billion. Should we continue down to the diversification plan the previous government had, then we would be up to something like \$27 billion in short order. That is the fact. There was no plan. The only plan was just to continue to get the credit card out for everything that they wanted to do. A lot of times you could see, in particular, those things were hugely politically motivated.

Anyways, I just wanted to get up and point those few things out. I appreciate the opportunity to take part in the debate.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's indeed an honour to get to speak again in the House here, particularly around some of the issues that people are facing on a constant basis. Where one time it was on a weekly basis, then a daily basis, now it's hour to hour and we're down to minute to minute. We're getting emails, we're getting Facebook tags.

I'm actually getting phone calls in the House of Assembly from people who – I know their numbers, I know their issue. I phoned back a couple who were actually legitimately giving us information and telling us how it's going to impact their lives and outlining concerns.

This debate here is totally – as my colleague for Conception Bay South said, this is the people's debate. They've asked us to do this. They have concerns. If there were no concerns by the people here, then it would be political posturing. We're not doing that. We don't need to do it. As you can see around, we all have file cabinets of concerned issues that people have put forward. We're echoing them.

Fortunately enough for us, politically, we agree with them. We see the fault in where this budget is going. We see the danger it has for our province. We see how it's going to be regressive. We see how people are going to be hurt. The biggest fear, we see how citizens here are going to pack up and leave. That puts all of us in peril then. We obviously have no future, no ability to move forward. We're not giving up, because there are too many good things that the people of this province have worked for, for the last number of decades to give up on now.

There are some things in the budget that moved properly, will enhance how we move stuff, but there are a lot of detrimental things and they're the things we're trying to point out. It's not an attack. It's a realization that some of these decisions are not in the best interest, particularly around how we provide services, but even from a fiscal point of view. Some of these are going to be detrimental. They're not going to generate the taxes people expect. They're going to cost government more money than they think they're going to save by making those decisions, and they're going to make us regressive, put us back that we're not competitive.

We're trying to play a game here in the international market to draw people here, explain to people that we have an expertise. Our citizens have been well trained. From decades we've invested in our education system and we have an ability to do anything on any category in any industry, but we want to be able to draw people here. If we get regressive on how we do taxes, on how we take away services, how we prevent people from coming from other cultures to be engaged in some of the things we do, then obviously, that's going to hurt everybody in this province.

The Minister of Education got up and talked about he's upset that we make all these allegations. They are not allegations. We outline what concerns people have had, and the concerns are real. They're in your budget. We can just take them off tick for tick, and they are. School closures, that's a reality that's happening. It's happening on your watch now.

You can get up – and you do a dozen times – and talk about what we did. Fair enough, there were things done but not at the level that is

being done now and the outrage from people. So it's obviously resonating with people that these are things that are going to have an impact on their lives.

They're coming to us, and they are people in other districts. That's the thing. If it was only my constituents, well, fair enough. They figure I'm the one who is supposed to be their voice. I've got to stand up for their needs and maybe all their needs wouldn't be legitimately in the best interests of the people of the province, but when they're coming from every district, and they're coming from everywhere from the North Coast of Labrador to the Burin Peninsula, the Bonavista Peninsula, the Connaigre Peninsula, the Northern Peninsula, Central Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northeast Avalon, they're coming from everywhere.

Everybody has a concern about a particular thing. Some of it's generic. It's going to affect everybody, but then there are other things that have particular impacts on particular sectors here, and particularly around education. That's the biggest one I continue to hear day in and day out. It's why there have been protests, numerous protests with thousands of people engaged. It's why volunteer organizations have taken a lead on that. It's why most of the agencies – and we talk about the impacts, the minister only has to read the responses he's gotten from the NLTA, the federation of student unions, the Federation of School Councils and every other organization that would have any impact on the education system, from the busing association.

We're talking about school closures. We're talking about teacher layoffs. The minister has become very good on doing a spin, but we're not laying off because there are going to be some people who are going to retire. There are going to be some people move out of the province.

Yes, we're laying off 300, but we're going to hire another 150 or so for a program that nobody right now feels is the right time to implement. That's fine. That'll offset everything else, even though they're only going to solely do one particular type of program and service in the education system, while the other people who are in the system, the other hundreds that we're losing, were responsible for doing everything else from the 1-12 system. But that's not going

to interfere with our education system, and that's not going to make it regressive, and that's not going to be a concern for people.

Well, I have to make the minister aware. It is a concern. It's why there are thousands of people sending emails. There are parents upset. There are parents phoning and crying to people in the House here. There are young students who can't have access to programs and services that were a given, because they made sense in enhancing their education – but that doesn't count. That's not important here. That's not how we do it.

We have as a focus – all-day kindergarten is going to be our rubber stamp. A program that, no-doubt, everybody supports, particularly me coming from my background in education. I do support it, and everybody on this side, but not right now. I keep saying, and it keeps echoing from people. It's much easier to not do damage to somebody by not implementing something that they didn't have before than it is when you're taking away numerous programs and services that not only do people expect, but are necessary to enhance their own education.

So it's right here. It's a decision making, it's a balancing thing that would be, when the time is right, be able to move it to the next level. That's a decision made by the Liberal government. We've done everything possible, every citizen has done everything possible, every agency has done everything possible to implore you guys, to explain to you guys, to engage you guys to make the right decision and say delay it. When we're ready we'll implement it.

We'll now have a proper school system that has a full-day kindergarten right to 12 and all the services that should be provided and be competitive with any jurisdiction, but that's not the decision making here. Somebody wants to rubber-stamp something else, I guess for legacy reasons; unfortunately, at the cost of the students in this province.

We're talking about some of the other infrastructure projects around schools being deferred or put off. I got up and talked about the \$28 billion that we had in oil revenues and explained to people where it went. I understood people had concerns about it. Particularly, one of the biggest things we were proud of was the over

\$6 billion put into infrastructure. A lot of that money, a fair proportion of that went into building new schools, doing school expansions, doing 1,600 repairs to various schools to ensure they were compatible to today's environment, from access to students with mobility issues to being able to use them for community schools.

We were the administration that brought in community use of schools to engage people more in society and be able to make communities and schools see the value of co-operating on education. All positive things, but now what are we going to do? Changes to this again; schools that have no ability to expand, no use of gymnasiums, no cafeterias, no ability to even supervise kids in a safe manner, no ability to have the students get outside to be engaged in physical activity. That's moving the education system forward. That's not being regressive, according to the Minister of Education. But I know everybody else who has a background in this field is saying it's regressive, and I can guarantee you the parents and the students are saying it's regressive.

Combined classes and multigrade classrooms, and the minister nails it – he banged the table one time and he threw his papers down, he was so upset, it was a tirade at the time, very passionate about the fact we've had and we still have multigrade classrooms.

Of course we have, we've had them for years; and rightfully so, particularly in areas where they are better used. Because rather than lose a resource, the school district and the school administrators and everybody from the Department of Education saw if we combined the classes here, because we're talking, in a lot of cases, in small school areas, remote areas, we could better service the students in those areas, offer a better level of education because we're not overburdening the teachers. The teachers could much quickly adjust to multigrade teaching. The instructors will tell you, the NLTA will tell you, the less number of students you have, it's much easier in a multigrade process for the teachers to be better engaged and be able to offer a better quality of education.

But we're going to offer it in schools that are overburdened, that we're at our maximum cap size, where the classrooms are not conducive to

– in some cases, it's actually tight for one classroom, but we're offering two in them. So we have these challenges here, yet that's the route we're going. That's going to enhance our education system, not going to make it regressive.

We're talking about reduction in Intensive Core French. We're in a bilingual country; we've made major steps over the last generations of getting young people engaged in a second language, French being that language. We've partnered with the francophone society. We've managed to find all kinds of ways of doing it.

We've done additional training for our teachers to be able to offer the programs and engaged French immersion and we came up with a second process, Intensive Core French, so the students who weren't ready to go into French immersion or their parents wanted them to go a different stream, when they're ready to do it, they would be able to jump right into the Intensive Core French. It made sense, but all of a sudden now we're saying no, we're going to take the resources out of that, we're going to cut things relevant to that, we're going to change the cap sizes and we're going to have a lottery to choose who is allowed to get into these systems.

You've seen it in the newspapers, CBC have covered it, a number of media outlets have covered it, students who could not get into a class, when their siblings are into it or their friends from kindergarten up have been in those classes. Outside of that, this is an opportunity for them to move to another career path by being able to be knowledgeable in the French language.

Mr. Chair, I'll have a chance to get up and speak more about our education system.

Thank you.

CHAIR (Bragg): The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

I appreciate the opportunity to stand here. Earlier this afternoon I stood up to make some comments and certainly wanted to make sure that was respectful of the House rules, or, I

guess, the House practice would be a more accurate way because I don't believe it is the rule, but certainly wanted to say to the Member for St. John's North I trust that he is –

AN HON. MEMBER: Mount Pearl North.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mount Pearl North; my apologies.

I'm assuming the Member for Mount Pearl North is satisfied that we have been following what has been the gentle persons' agreement in this House, and I wanted to make sure that he had that information because it is really critical that when things are happening in this House and they are communicated through our constituents and through the variety of forums that we have to communicate, that we do so accurately. I'm sure the Member for Mount Pearl North, without a doubt, will ensure that as he uses his variety of forums for communication that he will report accurate reflections of the House debate here, Mr. Chair.

But, Mr. Chair, I do need to respond to some of the things I've heard in the debate today and, I guess, one of the comments that was made earlier by Members of the Official Opposition – I think several Members actually mentioned it – was that, and I quote, they said: We are also the voice of the people. Well, that's absolutely right. All 40 of the people who have been elected to this House are representatives of the constituents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to share a story, really briefly, of a constituent of our province that I spoke with yesterday morning when I had the opportunity to present the facts about our financial situation, about what our government is trying to do to support growing the economy, but also about the situation and why we are where we are. This young woman, who was very passionate about staying in Newfoundland and Labrador, living here and enjoying what we all want to enjoy for the rest of our lives is our wonderful and beautiful province, she came up to me after I had presented this speech and said: Minister, I am so ashamed of some of the malicious things that have been said to you in social media about this budget.

I understand, she said, that this budget is really difficult for everybody. She also said, I understand and trust that you are doing everything you can to get our province back on fiscal stable ground. She went on to say: Thank you for doing what you can for protecting our province, and went on to say, I'm so glad you're there.

Now, Mr. Chair, I think it is important for all of us to share the stories from our constituents and from the people that we meet, not only on social media but the people that we meet when we visit our communities and we have conversations face to face and conversations on the phone and we have conversations at our churches, our grocery stores, at all the places where we connect with our neighbours.

Let's really look at this discussion about why are we here. As I said yesterday morning in a speech and I said again this morning in a speech, and I have said repeatedly during this debate, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I believe some of the reasons we are sad and frustrated about the circumstances we find ourselves in is, quite frankly, that the situation changed so rapidly.

For years, people of the province believed and were told, and it was reinforced, that things were great. Yet, our province, the provincial government, the Conservative government of the past had known peak oil production in 2007 and known peak oil production meant that the amount of barrels they had available to generate oil royalties was going to hit a peak. In addition to that, as we now know, in hindsight, in 2008 we hit peak oil prices which provided record royalties –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm having a problem hearing the speaker over here.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the protection from the Members opposite, I think, who were trying to have a conversation about the briefing. I'm glad they had a chance to talk to officials.

Mr. Chair, I mentioned peak oil production. We hit peak oil price, which we now know, in hindsight, happened in 2008. In addition to that, we saw our consolidated debt over the last decade increase to the tune of 60 per cent.

Mr. Chair, the speed of which the oil revenue came down because the oil price came down, moved royalties in our province from an all-time high of over \$2.7 billion down to \$500 million or \$600 million which is the amount I believe is reflected in the budget. I don't remember the exact number. I'll have to pick it out from the many pages, but my point is the amount of change we've seen in revenues, coupled with the spending.

Mr. Chair, over a three-year period from 2007-08 to 2009, the gross expenses increased in the province by 37 per cent. That's well beyond the population and inflation growth. If the spending by the former administration had been kept just within the range of where the population was going and also where inflation growth was going to be, if they just kept that line in place, with the oil royalties that we had, we would have realized a \$14 billion accumulated surplus by 2014-15, and that's an additional \$10.3 billion accumulated surplus – over \$10 billion versus the actual \$3.7 billion that was accumulated.

So, Mr. Chair, this situation that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are faced with today and the results of the decisions we've made in the budget, I understand that they're challenging. I really do believe that the Member for Mount Pearl North, he understands that it's difficult. The Member for Cape St. Francis, he has said repeatedly that he understands the fiscal situation of the province is difficult. I think we all recognize that in this House. But I think there are a couple of things about our borrowing that is important to also recognize.

We are not paying any money on debt principal. When we say we're spending more on interest than we are on children's education, that's the cost of borrowing. We are not paying any money on the principal of our debt. We are spending more on the interest and the expenses associated with that borrowing, and we still are burdened with the debt. We have had a debt problem in this province for many years, and the former

administration increased the debt load of this province by over some approximate 60 per cent.

So, Mr. Chair, the other thing is, from a borrowing perspective, Newfoundland and Labrador has been in the bottom level of bond ratings. Alberta is in the bottom level of the top of three ratings. Now, when we think about borrowing, do we really want to look at increasingly borrowing money to spend on interest and debt expenses? I don't believe that's what the people of the province want. I don't believe that.

I believe they're angry. I know they're upset, I know they're frustrated, I know they're disappointed, but I don't believe the people of the province want us borrowing money to pay for debt expenses and leaving the debt for future generations. I don't believe that to be the case.

And that's why I will continue to stand in my place and support the actions of this government today and in the future to get our province back on fiscal, firm ground so then we can do the work we need to do as a province, as a government, to grow our economy in a way that only Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can do: through innovation and ingenuity, and through making sure that we acknowledge the reality of the circumstances that we are in after many years, and a combination of several issues that cumulated in a situation that we are facing today, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to see the Finance Minister reengage in the debate and I thank her for that. I was listening intently to her comments.

There have been lots said in the last hour or so since I've had an opportunity to speak, and there have been some unfortunate comments around who is participating in the debate and who isn't. I remind Members, Mr. Chair, that Hansard is a written record of every word that is said in this

Legislature. So if people want to go online – it's not posted instantly. Obviously it takes time for that to be transcribed, to be edited and to be posted; but it's an uncensored transcript of what takes place in this House of Assembly.

I would encourage the public to go check Hansard when all is said and done, or even tomorrow, go back and see what's happened over the last number of days. Hansard, which will be on the record forever, really, will adequately reflect who spoke and when they spoke, and at 1 a.m., 2 a.m., 3 a.m., and 4 a.m., for the last few nights who's been up and on their feet. So I would encourage people to take note of that.

One Liberal MHA said in his comments today: You borrowed and you spent. Hansard will reflect that as well. Well, if you look at this budget, it is very much a borrowing-and-spending budget. This budget increases spending by \$300 million. Despite all the heavy-handed initiatives that are going to have a real negative impact on families, they're going to place an incredible burden on families, despite all of that, this Liberal government's budget hasn't really solved anything because spending is increasing, not decreasing. Borrowing is increasing, not decreasing. So the comments from the Liberal MHA around borrowing and spending this morning were a little bit ironic.

We were also accused of playing politics. I know that some Members across the House are a little bit frustrated by my continuous messages through social media, but it's important to get the word out. It's important to let people know what's going on right now.

The Minister of Education is shouting across at me. People watching the broadcast, whether they're watching online or on television, can't see that. That won't be picked up in Hansard. But there are some things through social media that we can communicate. If anybody wants to challenge anything I've said, I'm more than happy to stand and defend it, because I can assure you every word I've written is factual and every word I've written is true.

So there is politics that goes along with a debate like this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There is politics that goes along with a process like this. We have a job to do and we have points that need to be made and concerns that need to be expressed on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There's been some discussion in the last hour or two about the \$30 million contingency fund. I know it's not cash tucked away in a pillowcase or cash that's hidden in a bank account. I do understand how financial statements work. But the challenge is it's a budgetary practice that hasn't happened in Newfoundland and Labrador since 2002. And do you know who was in power in 2002? The Liberals, in their dying days.

The problem with the practice is that it gives the Liberal government the ability to spend money that wasn't approved in the budget. It's a contingency fund, and they've suggested if there's a big natural disaster, that's what we'll use the fund for. It's good to have contingency funds, if you can afford to have them. It's a very good practice, and I don't have a problem with the principle of contingency funds.

The problem with the approach of this government in the budget related to that fund is they're doing through the back door what they're not allowed to do through the front door. It allows them to spend millions of dollars, potentially tens of millions of dollars, without seeking a special warrant, without coming to this House of Assembly and saying, hey, we need to make a change to that budget that you spent 75 hours debating. So that's our issue with it.

I know some Members opposite have taken offense to a term that's been used by some of our Members, referring to it as a slush fund. I won't use the colourful language, it's technically a contingency fund, but the problem we have with it is what it truly means and what it truly allows this Liberal government to do.

There are some trust issues, Mr. Chair. The people of the province have some real difficulty trusting, at the very least, certain Members of this government at this point in time.

Another MHA this morning on the other side said: I haven't heard anything of substance in this debate. That will show in Hansard as well. He said: I haven't heard anything of substance in this debate. That's unfortunate, because we've spent now – well, right to the minute, we've now spent 48 hours on our feet in the House of Assembly discussing issues that are of importance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's now exactly 48 hours. We just entered the 49th hour, and we've read countless messages from real people in Newfoundland and Labrador who have real concerns.

So for a Liberal MHA to stand in his place across the House and say I haven't heard anything of substance in this debate, that's offensive. Whether people are following on the webcast, whether people are watching on TV or whether people are following on social media, I'm pretty confident there's a lot of people out there that will take offence to that kind of commentary.

Hansard will show what people have had to say during this debate, Mr. Chair, and Hansard will show what opinions were expressed, and Hansard will show how often people took part in this debate. All of that will be on record forever and a day.

The budget that the Liberals brought to this House this spring is not a plan for growth. It's not a plan to make us stronger. It's a plan for decline.

I just want to respond to some of what the Finance Minister had to say. Check out the numbers on page 17 of *The Economy* document that was released as part of the budget. This is what the government is projecting will happen under their plan.

They project that the number of jobs in the province will fall from 233,700 in 2016 to 200,700 by 2021. So their plan, the plan that we just spent 75 hours debating and the plan that we continue to challenge through this filibuster debate, is a plan that will result in a loss of

33,000 jobs in the next five years. So that's documented. All you need to do is check out page 17 of *The Economy* document that was released as part of the budget process.

Now look at what they're projecting, what they're planning for our population: 527,100 people in 2016, falling to 507,200 by 2021. They're projecting and planning for a loss of 20,000 people.

Now, Mr. Chair, as we've presented countless stories from people all across Newfoundland and Labrador, young people are saying consistently we may have to leave. We don't feel we have any choice but to leave. This Liberal budget, and all of the burden that's going to be placed on people as a result of it, is going to drive us away. This budget will damage the economy so badly that we'll have no choice but to seek opportunities elsewhere.

Therefore, it shouldn't be a surprise I guess, that in their own budget documents they're projecting 33,000 jobs being lost in the next five years and a population decline of 20,000 people in the next five years. That's not population growth. That's not what our plan was. That's population collapse, and that's the Liberal plan, if you can call it a plan.

That is what their budget documents project, and here is the crux. I'd like to quote the Finance Minister's Budget Speech. Here's the quote directly from the Budget Speech, which also people will find in Hansard, Mr. Chair.

"Provincial deficit reduction measures are estimated to account for 40 to 50 per cent of predicted declines in these broad measures of economic activity." I'll read that one more time. "Provincial deficit reduction measures" – measures in this budget – "are estimated to account for 40 to 50 per cent of predicted declines in these broad measures of economic activity."

This budget will be responsible for at least half of the declines in our economic situation in the foreseeable future. That's right in the Budget Speech. I'm quoting the budget documents. The Finance Minister and those around her are causing this to happen by her own admission, in

her seat, while standing in her place in the House of Assembly.

Is this the best budget right now for Newfoundland and Labrador? Is this the right budget right now for Newfoundland and Labrador? Does it make us stronger as we were promised? Does it make us more resilient as we were promised? Does it protect our children for the future? People this morning talked about their grandchildren. Does it protect our grandchildren for the future? No.

Mr. Chair, it makes us weaker. It makes us weaker and it makes our future in Newfoundland and Labrador bleaker, because you can't cut and tax and borrow your way to growth. You can't, and this budget is a budget about borrowing and spending. It's being referred to as an austerity budget because of the austerity measures that are being taken and the hit to the pocketbooks and the bank accounts of everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it's a budget primarily about borrowing and spending.

You can't cut and tax your way to growth. It's a proven recipe for failure. You can look at economies within Canada or around the world to see that, and that's why we're here. It's one of the main reasons why we're here. It's why we're urging the Liberal government to change course. We really, firmly believe that the Liberal government is on the wrong path.

I encourage people, Mr. Chair, to read Hansard. I encourage people – even though it seems to upset certain Members opposite – to take part in the online discussion. I encourage people to tune into the broadcast and see what's happening. I encourage people to take a close look at the budget documents and even the Budget Speech because the Liberal plan, the supposed plan, the so-called plan is going to shrink our economy. The plan is going to result in 33,000 jobs – by their own projections – being lost in the next five years. Their plan is going to result in a population decline of 20,000 people – 20,000 people leaving Newfoundland and Labrador in the next five years, most of them young people.

That is what the impact of this Liberal budget will be, beyond the individual impacts that we've been describing for families and for people in Newfoundland and Labrador. I look

forward to talking about that more the next time I speak in debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to respond to the Member for Mount Pearl North. He was saying I was talking across to him, I was. Again, I was talking about the Member for CBS in what I would observe as unparliamentary behaviour, but that's neither here nor there. Like I said, I could be more specific if he would like, or I could tweet about it, which seems to be his preferred mode of communicating with the world. Either way, I guess I'll go on to just some comments in response to what he just said, or what the last couple of Members said.

First of all, in *The Economy* document last year, what happened was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – because the major projects in the province, the megaprojects are projected to be winding down, that crowd jacked up the numbers in *The Economy* document. I encourage everyone to go back and look at the one from last year, too.

They put Bay du Nord in there, a project for which there was no solid evidence that it would be proceeding. They put Bay du Nord in there and put, actually, workforce numbers in there for Bay du Nord in order to jack up the workforce, the employment figures in the budget to basically fool the people in the province to believing that things were actually different than what the facts were. So that's a fact.

The other thing is the Member gets up and talks about population growth. Well, he had full access to the population growth statistics when he was a Member of Cabinet, when they were spending millions of dollars on contracted advertising, fancy TV advertising to encourage Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to continue

living here. That was their population growth strategy.

They had one strategy they spent over \$2 million on – and I encourage the media to look into this, too – that never saw the light of day because when their Cabinet or when their leadership saw the ads, they said, oh, we don't like these ads. It doesn't matter that it cost \$2 million. That was their way of operating. It didn't matter. They'd just take the money and throw it in a burn barrel.

That's why we're teetering on the edge of bankruptcy today, because they're so footloose and fancy free with the public Treasury. They just raided the public Treasury –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – in the interest of political expediency. Then they put out foolish stuff that they claim was facts with jacked-up employment figures that make absolutely no sense and have no basis in the here and now, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand in this hon. House once again and speak to the budget. It's been a long night but an exhilarating one, and I thank the Minister of Education there for getting us all riled up and everything. I was starting to get a little bit lopy, but now I'm getting a bit of energy back again. I know he got a good night's sleep. I didn't. I'm running on pure adrenaline here, but that's all good.

I just walked in from a briefing there where I was shown how I was wrong about what I was saying about the contingency fund. I really appreciate the briefing because I was so wrong in what I was saying.

I just want to clear up, though, for the Minister of Education, because I don't like to see the Minister of Education fighting with the Member for Mount Pearl North and Conception Bay South over who had a coffee and who didn't. So I'll just put it out there for the record, and I apologize to the House of Assembly, but I

actually had a few strawberries here last night. I had a few strawberries.

I'll put it out there. I know it might be unparliamentary. I apologize to the House, but I had a few strawberries there. I was half falling asleep and the Member for St. John's Centre gave me a few strawberries. If that helps kind of mend things here so we're not getting on with this old foolishness about who had a coffee, who had a glass of water, and who had a pop or whatever, it's not a big deal. We were here all night and everything, and we're all human, so I'll put that on the record and admit I had a few strawberries.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) give you a raspberry.

MR. LANE: Yes, and he'll give me a raspberry, the minister.

I just want to say that in terms of the plan –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I listened to the Member for Mount Pearl North there and he was talking about the statistics, about all the people that would be losing the jobs over the next few years and all the people that would be leaving the province and so on. When we talk about the evidence-based decision making that we heard about, I think the evidence is going to be found at Port aux Basques, at the ferry terminal, and is going to be found at the St. John's Airport by the sounds of what I'm hearing. That's where the evidence is going to be found of this planning, which is very unfortunate.

I heard the minister earlier, the Member for Grand Falls, Minister of Transportation and Works, talking about the seniors and so on, and all the needs. And he's right; there are going to be significant needs in the future when it comes to the aging population, people with Alzheimer's and all those things. I would say to the minister: Who does he think is going to pay all the taxes to pay for all of this? It is fine to say that we have to be able to plan for it, but part of the planning for it is that we have to have the young

people here working to pay all of the taxes to pay for all these things.

We're continuing to hear from people, certainly through some of the emails I received, and other Members and so on and people I've talked to, saying they're seriously considering leaving the province. Some are actually out job-hunting and house-hunting and everything in Ontario and other –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you for your protection – I'm not sure who you're protecting me from, Mr. Chair, but I appreciate it nonetheless, because it was getting a little bit rambunctious here for sure.

I want to thank the minister for the briefing. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for arranging the briefing and the Minister of Finance on this \$30 million contingency fund. What I learned in the briefing, basically, is that everything we were saying still holds true. There's absolutely nothing changed in terms of what we've been saying all along about the \$30 million. Not a thing.

It's still a matter of choice; it's still part of the budget. So basically, yes, there is a provision there that is supposed to be used for emergencies and if they spend any of the money out of the \$30 million, they'd have to come to the House and say what they spent it on. That's all true. So it's a little different than the rest, but at the end of the day it's still part of the budget and it's still part of that \$1.8 billion deficit, if you believe that's what it's going to be. Based on the fact that oil is actually up at \$51 versus the \$40 – which is a good thing, by the way, and I hope it keeps going up – this deficit is probably not going to be \$1.8 billion. We hope it's not; we hope it could be down to less than \$1 billion, obviously.

The point is that the \$30 million that is being set aside as a contingency, which wasn't done before – it was done back in 2001-2002, I think, and then is stopped. The point is we never had it

before and now we're doing it. Nobody is saying it's not a good idea, it's not a prudent measure, but the point is it has never been done before, and if we wanted to – because we asked the question. We said: How much is it for taxing books? By the way, when we're talking about taxing books, we're not just talking about someone going to Cole's bookstore and buying a book or a novel or something. We're talking about university books. We're talking about people who got kids going to MUN. They're going to have pay taxes on their university books. They're already paying the federal 5 per cent, but now they're going to have to pay the 8 per cent – actually, it will be 10 per cent. So that's a lot of money on students.

That's going to save \$2.1 million, we were told. So that's \$2.1 million. Now, the million dollars on the libraries, that's another million. So for \$3.1 million we could, in theory – and again, it's all about choices – save the libraries and we could not tax the books. What would happen then is we would have a contingency fund of \$26.9 million. The minister is shaking his head and saying it's not true –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: And I say to the minister, all the money is borrowed. We asked that question. The money is borrowed.

We just passed a bill here in the House a while ago to borrow \$3.4 billion, I think they said was the most we've ever borrowed in our history and so on. We've already done that. I know it's borrowed money; it's all borrowed money. If we run a deficit at \$1.8 billion, that's all borrowed money. We understand that.

The point is that you could have said put \$27 million in a contingency and kept out \$3 million and you could have saved the libraries and you could have not taxed books. Now, you could have taken more of that \$30 million and reduced other measures that are going to be taken that are going to be taxing people.

Again, it's a choice. I'm not arguing that having a contingency is a bad thing. Nobody is arguing that. I don't think we are, anyway. I'm not. Again, it's a choice. It's a choice you are making to do that. You could have just as easily made

the choice not to do that and to put some of that money toward offsetting some of the taxes. That's all we're disagreeing on.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) it's not cash in the bank.

MR. LANE: I hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs, it's not cash in the bank. I understand that. None of it is really cash in the bank, per se. It is an important point, and I understand that. I understand.

If someone had the impression that the Minister of Finance has a safe in her office and there's \$30 million in unmarked bills inside this safe and every now and then they want some money for something, she's going to reach in and take that money or whatever. That's not the case. And if anyone thinks that's the case or is suggesting that's the case, then they're absolutely wrong. I have never suggested that.

The point is that the \$30 million that's there is part of the budget, it's part of the \$1.8 billion deficit; and if you didn't assign \$30 million there, you could have assigned that \$30 million somewhere else. Or you could have still had your contingency fund, which is a good idea, and said we'll have \$20 million, instead of \$30 million, or \$25 million. Then we could have put \$2.1 million and not tax books; a million dollars, not shut down the libraries; and you'd still have \$1.9 million that, I don't know, maybe seniors wouldn't have to pay for these non-prescription meds.

Now, I'm not sure what we're saving on that one. Maybe it's a lot more. If it is, I'll let the Minister of Health – because I thought he was going to stand up earlier. He can stand up and tell me what that amount is that we're saving by forcing seniors now to have to pay for a vitamin shot and all that kind of stuff.

The point is that again, it's a choice – it's a choice. We've talked about other choices. We've talked about choices around full-day kindergarten – not even a budgetary matter. We're going to implement something we never had – granted, there's a benefit, we all acknowledge it. We're going to implement something we didn't have and we're going to negatively impact what we already have.

We have needs for students with special needs and the Intensive Core French lottery. You have to draw someone's name out of a hat to decide if they get to speak French or not, and we have multigrading. We have kids in school that are being jammed into a classroom and so on. That could have been avoided. That was a choice, and it's not costing money. It's probably going to cost us more money to actually implement the full-day kindergarten if we had left everything alone. Again, we keep talking about choices.

Finally, before I sit down – I only have a few seconds. I again say to the Minister of Finance, call up your new buddy Stan Marshall and say, Stan, sharpen your pencil; Stan, sharpen your pencil. If the department can be asked to save 30 per cent in the department over two or three years, so can Nalcor.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As people at home are watching this, people here in the gallery who are watching the debate, would recognize that many of the people in this House are operating under a slight, maybe a very slight sleep deprivation. So I appreciate, and I certainly understand that the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands didn't mean to suggest that Stan Marshall is my new buddy. Quite frankly, Mr. Marshall and I have no relationship other than the fact that he is the new CEO. I know that wasn't his intention, but we can always, in the heat of the debate and in the heat of the slight sleep deprivation that some of us may be experiencing, I can understand why we may say those things.

Madam Chair, one of the things I wanted to do is I did want to take the opportunity to thank the officials from the Department of Finance who, at a very short notice, dropped the activities they were doing, because it is important that we made them available for the Member's opposite, to provide them the information that they did. It's amazing the amount of work officials do to prepare for the legislative activity that happens, but it's equally impressive – certainly it was

impressive to me when I saw the amount of work officials did as part of the work in preparing for the budget.

For those people listening at home – I'm sure the Members opposite, certainly those that sat in Cabinet would know this – budget documents, such as this one here, *Budget 2016, The Economy*, are documents that officials would prepare.

Madam Chair, I know the Member for Mount Pearl North mentioned earlier about some comments from this book, and one of the things I'd like to share is on page 18. The quote is, "Prior to the most recent collapse of commodity prices, economic activity in the province had been expected to slow over the next few years due to the winding down of the development phases of the Hebron and Muskrat"

Now, Madam Chair, certainly I don't think anybody in this province, this government, the former government, anybody in the community, anybody in the media, would not be anticipating that with the scale down and completion of the Hebron project and the completion of the Muskrat Falls project, and as we know now the changes of the Vale heavily intensive labour portion of that project, that there would not have been a decrease in the employment numbers. What is curious, Madam Chair, is when would we as a community, when would we as people of the province, when would we as media, when would we as the former government have known that. Well, Madam Chair, I would suspect that the answer would be when the project started.

I respect the Member opposite. I understand, and I, too, am quite concerned about the forecasted labour employment numbers. Quite frankly, Madam Chair, it's one of the reasons why I thought it was important that I provide – it's one of the reasons why I ran in politics. We have a very serious problem in our province and the changes in employment that are forecasted to happen after those three large-scale projects come to an end have been known for many years, just like the fact that peak oil was known to be happening in 2007.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I call the vote.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I didn't see him.

All right, the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Madam Chair, give us a couple of seconds to get up at least. All we ask is to have a quick look.

CHAIR: I will remind the Member that there was a moment and the video will reveal that nobody was on their feet, so if you want to be doing this you have to (inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes. Well two seconds is not very long, I tell you. Listen, I had a hip replacement last year so I'm not as quick as I am on my feet. I apologize for that one, okay. I expected the Minister of Finance that every time she does get up she'd speak for a full 10 minutes, to tell you the truth, but that's here nor there.

I have to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He made a promise a little while ago that he'd give us a briefing. I and the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands went to the briefing that time.

Again, we don't do it enough in the House of Assembly. We don't thank officials in the departments enough because while there are 40 of us in here doing the regulations and policies, it's the people behind the scenes that do the majority of work, and we know that. We know that as legislators. I really want to thank them. I thank the minister for arranging it and I thank the officials coming and giving us a briefing.

After the briefing – I understand exactly what they were saying and they were thorough, but at the end of the day there was one question. I've been doing this every time I get up in the House of Assembly and speak on this budget for the last number of days, I've been saying that this is all about choices. It's all about choices. It's the choices you made as a government. It's the choice you made when you did this budget.

Officials in the department today basically told me the same thing. I asked about the \$30 million. Like the Member who just recently got

up, he spoke about the libraries and tax on books. Two of us were there. We sat there and we asked the officials in the department. We understand this, and I understand there's not \$30 million in the drawer of the Minister of Finance, that she can take the money out of the drawer, flick it and say, okay, I'll take care of that, I'll take care of this.

Maybe sometimes when we get up here we say things like slush fund and stuff like that and it's not actually – and I understand it's not actually correct to use the term slush fund but, again, I want to get back to the emphasis. We're here to speak for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We're here to speak for our constituents that have a problem.

I'm going to talk a little bit about education. I know the Minister of Education loves it every time I get up and speak about education. Again, we go back to the head of expenditures and the total that we approved for here in the House of Assembly was \$5,142,545,200. That was the amount of money that was approved through the House of Assembly for our budget for this year. On that, there's a contingency plan for \$30 million.

When we look at education and the money that is getting spent in education, we could have taken that \$30 million that wasn't there since 2002 and we could have added on to – there are about 40 different line items here. One is Advanced Education and Skills and another one is for Fisheries, Natural Resources, but there is also the Department of Education.

So it's about choices. That's what we were told that time in the briefing: This is about choice. It was a choice the government made to put \$30 million into a contingency plan that wasn't there before. It was a choice – when the hon. Member asked about the tax on books and what was the revenue expected from tax on books, they told him \$2.1 million.

If the government wanted not to tax books, they could have made this \$27,900,000. That was your choice. If you look at what you're doing to the libraries right across the province, mainly in rural Newfoundland, then it's a million dollars that you decided to take from the libraries. We could have reduced that so this contingency

could have been \$5 million; it could have been \$10 million. You picked the figure of \$30 million. You made the choice to shut down 54 libraries for a million dollars.

That's exactly what this is about, and I'm not going to change – and I really do appreciate the briefing that I got, but what I said earlier is exactly right. It is exactly right. When I spoke to the Member across the way – and we had a great debate and I really appreciate the debate we had. We talked about seniors and I talked about the choices that you made to charge seniors for over-the-counter drugs right now that they used to get before.

I gave an example of a man who's 85 years old that now has to go get his shot that he gets at the drugstore. Now he has to pay \$12.16 for that shot. The doctor comes to his house every three weeks and does the injection for him. Now he has to pay for it. That was a choice that you made to charge that. That's a choice you made to shut down the libraries, a choice you made to tax books.

You didn't need to put the \$30 million in that there. You could have made a choice to put it there and said, okay, listen, I'm going to put a fund in and it's going to be \$10 million and we're going to keep the libraries. You could have put it there and said we're not going to close these libraries, so I got a million dollars that's going to go to the library board to protect the libraries.

Look at taxes on books, we're the only province in the country that is taxing books. That's a choice you made. Like the officials from the Department of Finance, when we asked the question: Could this have gone on some other line item? Could we have used it somewhere else? Could we use in Finance, could we use it in Health, could we use it in Education? Yes, but they chose to do this. Those were the exact words. They chose to do this. Those were the exact words that we used.

I'm not throwing nobody under – no way, I tell you right now, these people have worked so hard for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I appreciate our public servants like you wouldn't believe. But that's what you chose to do. You chose to shut the libraries down, and you chose

to put this fund in place for \$30 million, you chose to put that there, and that was your choice.

That's a choice government has made. That is what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are looking at. We're debating the bill here now that's talking about taxes on our home insurance, we're talking about taxes on our vehicles, and we're talking about taxes that we're charging for RVs. That is what the bill is about, the extra 15 per cent – and that's the choice you made. But maybe that \$30 million could have been a choice that we do a little bit more for our seniors, I don't know.

I think it should have been a choice that we go and people that have to pay the extra money – like I heard on *Open Line* the other morning, a gentleman, for a stool softener, has to pay another \$4.50. For him to call *Open Line* and talk about that on *Open Line*, that's very stressful for a man to have to do that. It's very stressful for me to get a phone call from a very fine gentleman, telling me that he is – and I know how old he is – 85 years old, that he went up to the drugstore and something that he was getting for nothing all along, now he has to pay \$12.16.

That same gentleman also is living in his own home, him and his wife, both of them 85 years old. There is some help out there. But I tell you, she's a great cook and he's a great man and they live a very nice life. Any time you go down there, beautiful people to visit, but they want to stay in that home. By increasing taxes like we're doing on their home insurance – because they really find this – they have a vehicle, so they have to pay 15 per cent on their car. Now we've increased the gas tax 16 cents. Now we're going to charge them for going up and getting a prescription that he used to get one time now – I asked the minister are there ways around it, and perhaps there is, that the doctor can do different things. I hope they get the information out so people don't be so stressed over this. Because there probably is some way that if a doctor can do – and I'm sure there may be. I've asked the minister that and I related to them, too, to go talk to family doctor.

Again, what's happening here, the choice of putting \$30 million is your choice. The choice to shut down libraries in rural Newfoundland and

Labrador is your choice. The choice of charging seniors or anyone on low income for going to drugstore to get a prescription, that's your choice.

We talk about education. We asked about full-day kindergarten – and there are an awful lot of people in this province who think it's a choice that we should put off for a little while until we really can afford it, but it's your choice to continue it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister for Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: It's a pleasure to rise and speak in this debate. I'm new to the House and I have regarded this as a really interesting learning experience. The thing I've liked so far about it is as long as we stay in this debate, I don't get any older. At this rate, maybe I'll be a week younger by the end of the week, who knows.

Interesting, my colleague over the way for Mount Pearl North raised the issue of Hansard. I come from a background in history. The original Hansard, apparently, I found out started – because prior to that, it was actually illegal to report the proceedings of the House and quote anything from the House because the communications in UK Parliament were privileged, and we've seen vestiges of that.

In 1771, there was a printer brought up before the House on charges of printing. The public outcry, when he was convicted, was so great that they put in a place a mechanism and there were two folks who bid for it, apparently. It was a guy called Debrett, whose name still survives. His ancestors published Debrett's Peerage, which is the definitive list of all the peers of the realm in the UK. Thomas Hansard got the contract. Since then, it's become a generic form.

The Member for Mount Pearl North raises a very interesting point. Hansard is a fascinating thing if you'd like to go back and read. And in the context of the budget, despite what the Members opposite say, I really don't think – as one of my old teachers used to say, I think there's an element of, what he used to call, first degree thought block. They simply just haven't grasped the severity or the magnitude of it.

Set against that context, there are some really interesting comments from Hansard. I would read back into the record a comment about consultation with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: to improve our health care system, we need to ensure that every dollar committed to health care is spent wisely and efficiently. That was the Minister of Health and Community Services in April of 2015.

If you then go back a little bit further on the issue of decisions: as we make decisions, as we move on, every million dollars we find is going to have an impact on somebody. That was the Member for Topsail – Paradise then, the premier.

If you work further down that quote, he said that in reference to people who receive government money and organizations, he said that we'd have a big line of people. If we lined them up outside, who receive funding from the government, and we said come in now and tell us what you think about reducing our budget. Every one of them, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, will have a reason why, yes, you should reduce the budget, but do not touch me, do not reduce mine, and here are the reasons why.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who said that?

MR. HAGGIE: That was the premier of the day, and that was on January 19, 2015. So I think it's interesting to reflect on these comments as you use Hansard and such mechanisms.

I'm just going to make a few observations on some of the things I've heard over the last 24 hours. Again, the Member for Mount Pearl North talks about how the budget increases spending. I would point out the math. The difference between this year's spending and last year's spending can be accounted for with two

items, and if you remove those two items there is no increase in spending this year. Those two items are an unfunded liability for the pension for our teachers, and the second is the extra debt servicing payments because of the fiscal hole in which we found ourselves. If you deal with both of those, then the budget is no greater this year than last year.

It's interesting as well, as a rookie to look at folk's style and the use of selective quotes where you take a phrase or a sentence completely out of context can flip its meaning totally on its head. There are some experienced practitioners on the other side when you look at that, where you take out a few words which appear to say one thing but when put back in the context of Hansard, as I have tried to read it, you get a completely opposite sense.

The Member for Cape St. Francis is back on his pet peeve about money and money set aside for a rainy day. My colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, dealt with that I thought rather eloquently last night by likening it to a credit card that you do not use. You keep a little bit behind on your credit limit in case of a popped tire or a rainy day or a forest fire. It's money we don't have to borrow. It's not money that's sitting – as the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands suggested, it's not actually money that is sitting in a vault somewhere.

I think really, Madam Chair, that it's interesting to contrast these techniques. One of the other ones – and I suffer with the same technological challenges that the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands has, so bear with me, the reading of emails. It was interesting that the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island says, I have an email that is actually legitimate. As if in some way the remainder may not have been actually legitimate.

So this is a legitimate phone call to my office at 12:05 in Gander today. I spoke to my assistant there, a priceless treasure by the name of Jackie, who is extremely good, without whom I would not manage. The caller said: Tell the Premier not to cave. Stand strong and do what has to be done. Let the Opposition have it – he said, in quotes. So he's obviously a slight partisan point of view. There are people out here who feel the

Premier is doing the right thing and it's unfortunate they are afraid to be more vocal.

I think that's a very telling comment, because my colleague, my parliamentary secretary, a sterling young fellow from Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, was in the media yesterday concerned about his family's exposure to foul language on Facebook. I have the same issue. I have a professional page, if you like, as well as a personal one, but the contents tend to mingle one to the other. I have children and grandchildren, particularly the grandchildren, who should not really be exposed to that kind of language.

I don't propose to monopolize my full time.

Thank you for your indulgence, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's good to get up again. I'll get on a few things I just made notes of based on some of the conversation.

As I said earlier when I got up, some of the decisions in education I wanted to come back to. I'm just looking through emails, messages and whatnot. The book tax, we talk about it. I know there's been a lot of public outcry from certain authors and educators in the province on the book tax. What are the government actually getting – I can't remember the exact dollars, maybe \$2 million a year. That's what they based on previous sales prior to when we're having this tax. Sales may no doubt decrease this year, which that figure is only an estimate at best. The province with high illiteracy rates, I question the combination of library cuts and book tax together. It's pretty amazing actually to do it.

I guess we get caught up in a lot of other things, but there are so many things in this budget. Like I said before, it has opened whatever door you want to open. Every one of them, there's lots of debate. It's a topic of debate that we can go on and talk about for an endless period of time. In saying that, I feel that it's an important issue and it should be brought here to the floor of the

House. We should talk about it as much as we can because there are a lot of people out there who are very opposed to this book tax.

When you're looking at miniscule amounts in the big scheme of things – I mean it's not miniscule to the average person. It's a lot of money when you're looking at \$2 million. When you're looking at a budget of \$8.5 billion, \$8.7 billion, it's a lot of money; \$2 million don't appear a lot in that big scheme.

When we put libraries and that with it, like I say, it affects our literacy rates. I don't think it's a good decision. I find it fascinating; I listened to some Members opposite make commentary about social media and about the tweeting aspect and whatnot. In today's world it's amazing, as I said earlier there when I spoke one other time today, the engagement through social media is fascinating. I do some of it. By no stretch am I – I'm not at it constantly. I know a lot of people who do it on a constant basis or a pretty regular basis. It's amazing the engagement you can have over social media.

I think about in generations past and former Members who were in this House possessed – one time in our Legislature, of course, this wasn't taped. It wasn't on camera. It was the House sat and the reporters would come in and you'd get it in print. No one ever watched proceedings. Now you look at televised proceedings, media cover it very closely, but the tweeting. This past week the Speaker made a ruling on a point of order on tweeting. It's something that we're going to incorporate into – modernize some of our Standing Orders. It's very important we have engaged in – as I said earlier today, that's a way the general public are engaged like never before. I really believe social media has given them that opportunity that they would never have had in previous times.

As recently as five or six years ago, Facebook was still – some had it, some didn't. It was amazing how everything – and it's just going on from that. Our younger generation – it's amazing. I guess when you don't want stuff – if you're under pressure, which the current government are under a lot of pressure. If they don't want bad news spread about or criticism, social media can be not-so-good a tool. Whereas if the general public want to get their opinions

heard, it's either the – we're here, as I said before the filibuster, for their concerns, for the people, or they can use social media.

I find it interesting; it is brought up a lot on the tweeting. A colleague of mine for Mount Pearl North is very adept at it. He does a great job keeping the public informed, keeping everyone informed of what's happening here in the House. I think he should be commended for that because a lot of people are engaged due to that process. I commend him for that.

The Minister of Health just got up. They like to talk about the fiscal hole we're in and all that. That feeds into – what concerns me is I'm not saying that's right or wrong, that's not my reason for that point. I come back again to – and a lot more people are talking about it. I've said it in my speech, but since then people have come to me. The sense of hope, the sense of despair is out there.

Every time a minister or Members of the House of Assembly, MHAs get up on that side, they say we had no choice, it's gloom and doom, the sky is falling so to speak. No doubt, we all admit it's a tough financial fiscal situation, but to be repeatedly and repeatedly and repeatedly saying those comments, it just reaffirms, it galvanizes the people's minds of this gloom and doom atmosphere that's out there. None of this helps the cause.

As a matter of fact, yesterday – I believe it was yesterday, this has been a long few days – I noticed two or three ministers, I can't recall which ones in particular. It seemed to be on message or this new message – communications consultants they are employing; I guess they're trying to stick the message.

Ministers actually got up yesterday and were very negative on Muskrat Falls. Now, it's not a matter of Muskrat Falls. That's an issue of the day, and we all know, we talk about it in public. There are pros and cons, everyone has their opinion. We've always supported it, but it's going through a period of time now. At the end of the day, I still believe it will be a great project.

Now the message coming from the ministers opposite – I find they're stuck on the same

message – is that it's not a good thing. I'm not here to argue if it's a good or bad thing, but it still feeds into the overall atmosphere or the scheme of gloom and doom.

I know there are people out there that feel these megaprojects, something like a Muskrat Falls – we're presently doing Vale and Long Harbour. There's a sense of optimism, there's a sense of hope that when they come online there will be permanent jobs. They create spinoffs for the economy. They look at that as being a good thing.

Even the stuff we have here, they're starting to question is this good or not. When it's coming to the ministers of the Crown, I mean people – and they should, they're ministers. They have big, important jobs. People listen to what they say and they start having a pause and reflect moment. It feeds into this old, gloomy atmosphere which, like I said before, will suppress our economy; there's no doubt about that. The consumer confidence is going to be way down.

I notice Members opposite were bringing up – my colleague for Cape St. Francis brought up about the loss of jobs and the economy. I can't recall the name of the document. Then we had the Minister of Finance and Minister of Education get up and basically condemn that document or they criticized that document because of their numbers. They questioned where they got their numbers from and they're not accurate, or they're not taking everything into consideration.

We come in here, like when we get emails from the public it certainly feel – these people who are writing these reports, that's in their field of expertise so to speak. Sure, they may not be 100 per cent accurate all the time. I suppose that's natural for anything, but I still think they're fairly accurate. Their numbers, there could be a little adjustment, not the type of adjustment that's being spoken about on the other side.

When the news is bad, it's not easy to defend it. It's not easy to find your way out. I know last night I stood in this House, and I'm going to say it again today. Regardless of political stripe, I really believe this is – and it struck me actually. Last evening when I went home – well, late last

night I went home and took a break. I flicked on the American news and President Obama was doing a media availability. His press secretary came out and Obama was talking to the media. I was like, that's pretty good, the President of the United States has a daily media brief.

We have a Premier who is on day three now, he's in hiding. He won't speak to the media. So I'm thinking the President of the United States can stand up in front of you – the press secretary comes out every day, the room is full of press. The news is not always good for the President of the United States. That's a big, important job.

If he can sit there every day and have media availability and we can't get our Premier to stand out here and have media availability – really? I know you're spending a lot of money on communications. I know that, I get that. I used to remember reading in the media Members opposite, I think, were critical of the money that – the former Tories were trying to get a communications plan and all this. You know –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: This present government is at the same thing. I know sometimes you try to stick to your speaking notes. Again, I respect that. That's what you're supposed to do. Sometimes you need to speak to the public. I'll go back to it, and I say it because I'm serious about it. The media ask the questions the public are asking, just like we're in here asking the questions the public want asked on the budget. The media are asking questions of public interest.

It's incumbent upon the Premier or a minister – and for that matter, any Member of this House, if you're asked a question you should stand up. You're in public office; you should stand up and ask questions. I don't think it has been anything untoward any premier, any prime minister, any president.

If the President of the United States can do it, I can't see why the Premier of Newfoundland can't do it. I have to say it because I think – I read that and it's two days running. The media won't give up on it. We're consumed with this

filibuster, but I'm reading through the media because it's all we get to see. We don't see much live. You're looking and you're saying, there's something not right with this.

Speak to the media, answer the questions. The public wants to know. I don't know what they want to ask him. We all probably know what's in the current news, talk to the media. You can't run away from it, you have to face it head on. It's a challenge out there; these are challenging times for you. Your leader needs to lead.

I'll take his quote in my last number of seconds: You can't lead if you don't listen. So maybe he needs to learn how to listen and speak to the media because the public are looking for it. I think it's only incumbent as the Premier to do so.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report progress on the resolution and Bill 19.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 19 and report progress.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that some progress was made on Bill 19, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, and have asked for leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report progress on Bill 19 and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. JOYCE: Today.

MR. SPEAKER: Today.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Ways and Means to consider the resolution and Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider Bill 14.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 14, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2." (Bill 14)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just explain what happened there. We just changed the bill so that we can have a few words on the levy, Madam Chair.

Of course, we all spoke about the levy. It's been discussed across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Premier committed at the time that it was a temporary levy, which is very temporary. There are negotiations with Ottawa, but the \$27 million helped us to put it towards the levy which we committed to.

Then, once the \$27 million – it was reduced. The levy has been reduced. Anybody over \$50,000 of taxable income will not be paying one cent. Approximately 74 per cent of the people of the province will not pay one cent of the levy. We said it. We understand the frustration of the people. We understand sometimes, but we said it.

Madam Chair, I know we were criticized before saying when you started negotiations back in December, January on this and it went on, but you can't come in and say here's what we're going to do with the levy until you have the agreement signed. A prime example – I ask the Minister of Fisheries, a prime example of this was the CETA agreement that this government went ahead and signed.

They forgot to ask their federal cousins, their federal counterparts down to it, Madam Chair. They committed this \$400 million to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for the

fisheries and no agreement signed. That is why you cannot – the Minister of Finance could not come out and say what we were planning on doing until we had an agreement signed. Once the agreement was signed – I think the final deal was on a Tuesday – Thursday the announcement was made about the levy.

To the people out there – and then because of the \$27 million, we changed the ratio along the way, Madam Chair. Now the middle income is still paying, but it's not a hardship on the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, one thing about the levy that I don't think we're pushing enough as a government – and the Opposition definitely doesn't want to talk about it – is the \$76.4 million for low-income seniors on it. It is a lot of money. It would be done on your last year's tax returns. In October you will get a Newfoundland and Labrador supplement. So people on the low end of the scale will get a supplement.

I think it's \$76.4 million. Now, I'm going on memory, it's in the – \$76.4 million I believe is the exact amount. It's gone into a supplement for low-income seniors, anybody with a lower income and it's a gradual scale.

Madam Chair, when we talk about the levy – and then I know the Third Party on many occasions were talking about the low income are getting hurt. The people in the low income –

AN HON. MEMBER: They'll probably get up and speak.

MR. JOYCE: Yes, they can go ahead and speak on it. If they want to, they can speak any time they want on this. Madam Chair, they can speak, but they won't bring up this \$76.4 million. They won't discuss it. It's all you hear.

I appreciate what they're saying. I appreciate totally what they're saying. I respect every opinion in this House. If you're speaking on behalf of a constituent of yours, I respect it. Democracy is the best we have. If we don't have democracy in this House of Assembly, we'll be over in other places where they were doing the democracy with guns and wars.

This is a great place to have democracy. There's no one in this House of Assembly would want it any other way – absolutely no one, Madam Chair. I respect everybody's opinion. At times we disagree with opinions, we hear each other. We may not agree, but we always have to have that respect for each other. I respect that.

When you hear the Third Party speaking, Madam Chair, they're always talking about the low income, the people making \$15,000, \$16,000, \$20,000 a year. With the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the Newfoundland and Labrador supplement, they'll be better off this year than they were last year. One thing I know that we did as a government, we put in this \$76.4 million to ensure the people who are less advantaged than others are taken care of. They will be better off.

There's absolutely no one here who can stand in this House and say that people at the lower end, like they said with the levy, \$20,000, oh they're going to be disadvantaged. There's no one can say that the people at the lower end are being disadvantaged. When I hear some emails standing up, seniors making \$12,000 a year, oh, they're going to lose this amount of taxes, they're going to lose this amount because of the levy, it's just not true, Madam Chair.

I know the Leader of the Third Party and the Third Party were offered a briefing on all of this about the \$76.4 million. I think some of the Opposition took us up on it, I'm not sure.

If you want to talk about the \$76.4 million, I can arrange a briefing. It can be done. Does it solve all the problems? Absolutely it does not solve all the problems, Madam Chair. I can tell you it's a good way and it's much better than we had come April 11 for the low-income people of the province.

I'm getting some people talking about the levy in Humber – Bay of Islands. I'll be the first to admit it. But once you explain it to them and after the changes to the levy, they almost said okay, we understand; it's not as bad as we said it was. I always said we're working on things. We can't say anything if it's going to happen for sure, but we're working on it. Come that Thursday we were definitely working on it.

Madam Chair, a lot of this issue started out – and I'm not here to criticize anybody – when the equalization payments that were supposed to be paid back were never paid back. I think there were two payments made and it was committed to be paid back this year. The federal government said, okay, we'll delay it until the 19th.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: They were arranged to be paid. They were arranged this year.

MR. JOYCE: They were arranged, yes. Some paid this year; you have an arrangement. The federal government said we'll delay it after the equalization payment. Equalization negotiations start in 2019, I believe, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I just want to explain that, yes, there are still some people who have to pay a levy – absolutely. There are 74 per cent of the people of this province who won't pay one penny. The lower income – and the Third Party, I know they'll have an opportunity to speak on this.

I ask the Third Party and I ask anybody in the Opposition, if you want a briefing on the \$76.4 million so when you stand and read out the issues about someone, seniors just getting old age income who are getting hit with the levy, who are going to be taxed to the hilt, it's not true – absolutely not true. I'll arrange a briefing for anybody.

If anybody has to say there are certain people at a certain level, \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000 paying a levy, they don't want it. That's fair game; that's a fact. I have no problem with the facts, absolutely none. That's a fact. I mean, we put that on a gradual scale (inaudible).

There is one other thing that I'm just going to bring up very quick. I know the Member for CBS was talking about Twitter, how quickly you get information out and how the Member for Mount Pearl North uses Twitter. I give him credit, he uses Twitter very well. Then he's talking about how Twitter evolved over the last

four years, Madam Chair. The difference that Twitter came from here, up to here in four years.

Guess what, Madam Chair? I used the same argument when I sat on that side of the House of Assembly about the fax machine. I'll tell you why. When the fax machine first came out that was a new evolution. Twenty years later or 15, it's almost obsolete.

Do you know why I use that analogy? I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis, you sat over here, do you know why I use that analogy? Also the Member of Conception Bay East – Bell Island, do you know why I use that analogy? You locked Newfoundland and Labrador for 50 years. You can't use any more new technology with Muskrat Falls because you have to buy Muskrat Falls power. It's in the agreement that you cannot use any new technology, any new forms of energy in Newfoundland and Labrador. You have to buy Muskrat Falls power. That's the agreement they made with the federal government.

So when you talk about the fax machine, when you talk about Twitter, just remember when you stand up in this House of Assembly here, I want you to explain why you locked every Newfoundlander and Labradorian into this multi-billion dollar deal which the cost overrun has gone up over the billions. Now they have to buy their power. Every time there's a delay in the budget, who's paying for it? The people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, if there is any new technology, it can't be brought into Newfoundland and Labrador. We can bring it in; we have to export it. We cannot use it for our own people to decrease the cost of electricity. Think about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand now and speak to – we're reverted to the levy bill. I forget the number. It doesn't really matter.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fourteen

MR. LANE: Fourteen, okay. I'm a little confused why we did that, but it doesn't matter. It's all about the budget. We're gone from one to another. That's the government's call and it's no problem. It's still the same issues.

I wanted to say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs in case he's getting – I can't speak for the Members. I've heard certain Members read emails and talk about seniors, like low-income seniors are going to get hit by the levy. I just want to say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I can confirm I have heard some of those things. I can also confirm – I can only speak for myself – I have never said that.

As a matter of fact, I have stood in this House of Assembly and I have acknowledged – I think it was last night we talked about it – I will confirm what the Minister of Municipal Affairs is saying, that there was \$74 million or \$76 million, whatever the number was, put into the budget to offset the levy for low-income seniors.

When he says that, that's absolutely 100 per cent correct. As a matter of fact, the seniors are going to be better off than what they are today, the low-income seniors. That is 100 per cent factual and he'll never hear me say anything to the contrary. I make that commitment; I won't say it because it wouldn't be true.

If there are things like that which are factual, I agree with him, let's get the facts out there. I'm not arguing it. Here's one fact, though, I will bring up, unless someone can correct me. I raised this last night as well. I don't know if the Minister of Municipal Affairs is aware of this one, I'm not sure if he is, but I just throw it out there because it is an issue. If you look at the scale that's being used for the levy, if you look up \$50,000 – I'll use it as an example.

On \$50,000, you pay a \$100 levy. So the question was put to me – we have two earners in the house and they both make \$50,000; a husband makes \$50,000, a wife makes \$50,000.

The husband pays \$100, the wife pays \$100. Their household, they're paying \$200 in a levy.

Next door you have a household, a husband and a wife, one of them doesn't work and the other one works and makes \$100,000. That particular person is paying \$700 and it is on the scale. What that means, a house, husband and wife over here, \$200 in levy; a house, husband and wife over here, \$700 in levy. There's no difference in the household income – no difference whatsoever.

Trying to be factual, I really believe that is a legitimate beef, that's a legitimate flaw. I don't know if anyone can go back and look at that and amend it.

MR. HOLLOWAY: That's not accurate.

MR. LANE: If the Member for Terra Nova wants to get up and point out where it's not accurate, I'm only going by the diagram that I was shown, the sliding scale and that's what it said. It's supposed to be based on a person, not on household income. So if I'm wrong, correct it for the record. I hope I am wrong, but that's what was pointed out. It doesn't go by household; it goes by individual. I think that's a legitimate issue, unless I can be corrected. I'd like to see the facts that I am.

The other thing in this, as the minister alluded to, when the deal was cut with the federal government – and I acknowledge this as well, it's a good thing. I'm glad because now the cap got raised to \$50,000. There are an awful lot of people, the number we're being told is 74 per cent. I have no reason to disbelieve that's true. Madam Chair, 74 per cent of the people now don't have to pay the levy because we raised the cap to \$50,000.

That is great. I'm glad that is the case. It was the right thing to do. I'm glad there was a way to make it happen. I'm thankful to Minister Foote and the other MPs, the Premier and anyone else who got together, came up with this and made it happen. I'm glad it happened. I'm sure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are glad it happened.

The piece that still is an issue for me and other Members as well – and granted, a lot of my

district is covered by the \$50,000. There's an awful lot of my district, probably more than half of my district, the \$50,000 announcement did nothing for those people in terms of the levy. They're still paying the levy.

As people would say, oh, you're living in Southlands or you're living in Westminster or you're living wherever, parts of Mount Pearl and you're making big money. A lot of the people we're talking about in my district are nurses, teachers – I've said it before – RNC officers, IT people, government workers, people working in health care in the labs: professional people. Yes, they're making a decent income, but you also have to factor into this – I read an email earlier today about a couple that were making good money, but they got all the expenses.

To buy a house in Southlands is at least a half a million dollars, they're \$500,000. You're not going to get a house there for less than \$500,000. They're only regular homes, but that's a fact. That's not diminishing the issue because there are big issues with people making less. The point is a lot of people in my district, yes, they're making decent money, but their expenses are high because of their salary and where they live and vehicles and insurance. Then, it's the cumulative effect of all the taxation.

The levy, if we're talking specifically about the levy, there's a lot of good for the low-income seniors. Good news for raising the cap to 74 per cent not paying it, great, but a lot of that 26 per cent are people I represent. So I have to stand up for them. I make no apologies to anybody for standing up for the people in my district who are coming to me and saying this is an issue. It's not just the levy; it's the cumulative impact of everything else on top of the levy. The levy has been the lightning rod but it's not just about the levy.

There are people in my district and people in the province that are lower income. Yes, they might have been saved by the levy – they might not have to pay the levy now because of these measures that have been taken. Thank God that people were loud and boisterous and so on. I think that certainly played into why this happened, and I'm glad it happened. The point is that all these other taxes, the cumulative impact on people in my district is huge.

Then there are people who, like I said, are not impacted by the levy. If you're someone who's on a low income and you're not paying the levy, but you're just making ends meet trying to survive – people on minimum wage jobs and so on, they have an old second-hand car they have to try to get to work with – they're getting hit with the insurance tax. They're getting hit with the gasoline and then they're getting hit with all of these fees and everything they have to pay. They're getting with the HST. For a lot of these people, they are literally living from paycheque to paycheque.

I've had people say, please, don't let this insurance – that's going to be huge. I had a person who is on minimum wage, or just above minimum wage, and they have a car payment. They also have their insurance. Their insurance is like \$200 a month because they're a young driver. Now that \$200 is \$230 a month.

Madam Chair, \$30 is not a lot for people in this House of Assembly. I spend more than \$30 on a day, sometimes. If I go into Sobeys and pick something up and someone is there saying, Mr. Lane, can you buy a few tickets? Sure, b'y. You go somewhere else or whatever. I can absorb it and people can, but there are an awful lot of people where that \$30 a month means a lot. It's not just that \$30 a month for insurance. Then they have to pay more for gasoline. Then they have to pay 2 per cent more on everything they buy in terms of HST.

Then, because of all I talked about earlier, because of all this taxation, that's going to apply to businesses as well. So if businesses have to pay more for their business insurance and for their vehicles that they use to run their business, the repairs on the vehicles, the gas for their vehicles and the insurance on all those things, what are they going to do? They're going to pass it on to the consumer. That's what's going to happen.

You talk about these people on fixed incomes and low incomes, now it's going to cost them more for everything they buy, every service they use. On top of that, they're going to be paying more in taxes and fees and everything else on top of it.

I'm telling you, there are people that are struggling now and they're going to struggle even worse. I am really afraid that some of these people that are teetering are going to teeter off the edge, and I don't want that to happen. I'm sure there's nobody in this House who wants that to happen. I know there's not. You're all good people. That's why you're here. That's why you got elected. We all are. We need to do the right thing for these people.

I continue to appeal to the government. Go back and make a few amendments, make a few different choices. There is some money and there is some flexibility. Not a lot, but there's some. We need to go back and make some amendments for the people.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the welcome back. I thank the Member for Cape St. Francis as well, absolutely.

Madam Chair, it's a pleasure to rise again today and speak on Bill 14 regarding the levy. I'll start my comments by saying we all recognize that the levy is a big burden to the people of the province. We recognize that. As soon as revenues became available we took action because it is a temporary Reduction Levy. We took action immediately, as soon as we could, to reduce that burden and now the threshold has been raised from \$20,000 to \$50,000.

Seeing this is a money bill – and of course what I'm going to speak about is very relevant. I'm not suggesting that it's not; it's very relevant to the finances of this province. As I've stated in this House many times, and I will continue to, we all recognize the steep fall in commodity prices has been a major contributing factor to where we find ourselves today. The fact of the matter is it's the fiscal situation that we've been dealt with. It's up to us now, as a government, to deal with the fallout and to take immediate action to correct the shift.

One of the areas – and of course everybody knows in this province that oil is the commodity that we've grown to depend on heavily over the past few years, certainly since the early 2000s, around 2003, 2004. We peaked in 2007, 2008, 2009, that area. Another commodity that – and there are a number of commodities involved. I would say mining has been also a major contributing factor.

Labrador has played a major part in that. Whether I'm talking about the Vale nickel deposit in the District of Torngat Mountains, my colleague here, whether it's the iron ore in Labrador West, it has been a major contributing factor. I also want to recognize there are contributors on the Island portion as well.

When I look at some of the statistics that mining brought to this province and where we find ourselves today, I will probably focus my comments on the Labrador West region where I am quite familiar with – and that's the iron ore. The value of provincial mineral shipments – this is all minerals now – totalled \$2.9 billion in 2015. That's a lot of money. Now, I'm not suggesting that \$2.9 billion went into the provincial coffers, but we did get our share of that – whether it was enough or not, that is always debatable, but it's the deals that have been made at the time of the start-ups.

Since then, even before then, we've seen a decline in mineral shipments, obviously. Nowhere is that felt any more than in my District of Labrador West. Now, we are very fortunate that the Iron Ore Company of Canada continues to produce at maximum level and like to go higher, and that's a good thing. However, just across the lake, we call it, in Wabush things did not work out that well. We have a major employer and a major contributor to the revenue of this province in Wabush Mines who has not seen any production since 2014 and continues to be idle today.

We are working every day with potential buyers or interested buyers to try to find a way to reactive that. We, as a government, are quite prepared to be a partner in that endeavour.

Getting back to IOC, even though they are producing at maximum level, we are not out of the woods there yet. We hear everyday

challenges that exist within the iron ore industry. Prices of iron ore went to as low in December, early January, as \$38 a ton for 62 per cent iron into China.

Now, we all know that other than probably the big three – Rio Tinto, BHP Billiton and Fortescue – many of our operators cannot survive at that level. Since then, prices have rebounded somewhat. We were up to as high as \$70 a ton back in April, but that was a blip, as you could say, on the radar and we have since dropped back down. We are now standing at around \$52, \$53 a ton.

Even that's challenging for operators like IOC. Now, as I said earlier, Rio Tinto, they're a major partner in that; but, nevertheless, it costs more to mine in Labrador and to process that concentrate than it is to mine, say, in Australia where they can dig it out of the ground and ship it directly.

We're heard, just this past week, as well that the Wabush 3 – now, for those who are not familiar with the area, don't confuse that with Wabush Mines because it has nothing to do with Wabush Mines. Wabush 3 is the name of a pit that is being developed by IOC and the development of this pit is very crucial to the future sustainability of the Iron Ore Company of Canada.

And we've heard, just this past week again, that for the second time the development of that pit has been deferred due to the volatility in the markets and the uncertainty within the markets. So we still have a lot of work to do and certainly we hope for the best. We've been there before. It's a very cyclical industry. In 1982, I remember we were pretty low, but we recovered from that and we will recover from this as well.

As a government, I think it's very important that we partner with the mining industry going forward to help them in their sustainability. Just this past weekend, the Premier, the Minister for Natural Resources, as well as the MHA for Baie Verte – Green Bay were in Baie Verte to their annual mining conference. They announced an investment into Anaconda. I have not seen any objection to that from either party on the opposite side. I just hope that I don't because it's very important. We have to continue to invest in our partners, in our industry, and mining is one of the areas where we need to invest.

Of course, this government made an investment this past weekend of \$500,000; \$400,000 in a repayable loan, and \$100,000 from the Business Development Support Program to help Anaconda with development of new technology and whatnot. I'm sure the MHA who is sitting in the Chair there right now is very appreciative of that, and the people of the Baie Verte Peninsula are appreciative of that because it shows our confidence in the mining industry, an industry that we think, as a government, is very important to our path forward in getting back to a sustainable province again.

Mining will play a major role in that. Of course, oil will as well, as the prices continue to rebound, but we have to look to industry and nowhere is that more evident than in Labrador. We see the parties on the other side talk about Labrador and the need for a study for a fixed link and whatnot, but we have to invest in Labrador because that's where a lot of our potential lies in the future development of this province.

We have to continue to invest in the mining industry, whether that's in a new operator with Wabush, or continue to invest in Voisey's – and we're very pleased that Vale has decided to go underground in Voisey's Bay to further develop that resource, which is very, very important to the future of this province. Whether you're talking about jobs in Voisey's Bay or you're talking about the Vale nickel plant in Long Harbour, it's all part of the same organization and the same development.

It's very, very important that we continue to monitor the mining industry and we continue to invest in the mining industry as we go forward, because the sustainability of the mining industry will be paramount to our way forward and to our way back to surplus, hopefully, sooner rather than later. That is why, as the commodities are in the doldrums right now, so are the finances of this province, but we have to work together and get us back. And that's why we've made those tough decisions. We hope that a lot of these conditions will improve and we will see our way forward.

On that note, I will take my seat and certainly have an opportunity to carry on with that because there's a lot more I'd like to say.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Warr): The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand in this House and have debate around this budget, particularly now that we've switched to Bill 14, the levy bill, which is a bill we've spent a full day having some open debate around, and noting the impact it's going to have on people.

I note some of the previous speakers talked about that there has been some changes to the levy bill and the criteria or the ceiling on who must pay that bill. No doubt, it's welcome by numbers of people in this province because it's something that reflects the fact it will lessen the burden on them. It's a bill that we personally, and I would hope and think that most of the population, if not all, realizes didn't really serve any purpose here, was going to be a burden on individuals, and would be a financial staller for our economy. But the ceiling has been changed, so there are less people who will have to try to find monies or change their lifestyle, or actually do without things to have to make that payment.

We're hoping the vision here is that eventually it's gone or it should be gone in this budget now, but the quicker it's gone, the better it will serve the people of this province.

I want to note my hon. friend for Labrador West that we agree wholeheartedly, that you have to invest in Labrador. It's very important. In the mineral industry and every industry in there, it's been a vital part of the success of this province over the last number of decades. Right now, it's hitting a bump in the road and we need to find ways to enhance that.

While I say that, I also say there are other services. You can't just invest in the mineral industry – which is very important, and your transportation links and all those are very important – unless you also invest in the services that are needed for people there – the social services. It's a bit alarming when you look at the population base and per capita, some of the services that are being cut in this immediate budget here. It's alarming because I had the

privilege of working in Labrador for a period of time and had the privilege of travelling through all the coastal areas and getting a sense of exactly what the challenges were, but particularly a sense around the pride people had and how the communities were moving things forward.

So when I hear we're closing three of our AES offices in Labrador, particularly where they're in remote and isolated areas like Mary's Harbour, Hopedale and Nain, it becomes alarming. Because I know, from my previous background, the benefits of the AES offices and the services they provide. For people in Labrador, in certain areas who may not have access to specialized broadband or technologies and this type of thing, they needed the services one on one. Particularly around being able to identify personal education needs, employability needs, health needs, all the other services that AES offers in its office. It could be around medical transportation, all the things relevant to that.

I thought that was a bit alarming, because I agree wholeheartedly, we need to invest in Labrador. It's very important to this province. It's part and parcel of who we are as a province. You can't divide one from the other. You can't say economically here's millions or hundreds of millions of dollars to ensure an industry that's very viable and very important to us economically gets to flourish, yet knowing you're going to stall because some of the services that are necessary to have a readily available workforce and have people wanting to live in these communities is not going to be available. Labrador, while it's separated because of geographics from different areas, it's one and the same when it comes to its people and what we owe.

That was a bit alarming that those type of things happen, that some of our libraries are being cut and closed. Again, very alarming because these are the centres in a lot of these communities where people get their Internet access, where they get access to information, where government officials come into that community and that's where they offer the round-table discussions, or the updates on new programs and services. It's very important, and that's why it was a bit disappointing to hear we were cutting

libraries in those areas too – minimal amount of money as part of that.

Also, having educators contact me about the impact the changes to the education system are going to have in Labrador. It's alarming there, particularly where there may be some specialized needs in Labrador that need to be addressed, because it's a unique set up. It's a unique land. Being able to first get the resources in there, and when you do get people in who are qualified and want to stay, that resource needs to be ramped up. It needs to be supported in every way possible. These are some of the things we need to be cognizant of. While we're investing in the industries, very important, we also have to invest in our other industry, and that's the people up there and the services they need. It's very important.

As I've been up for a number of times over the last number of days when we talk about the issues around education and our literacy levels and cuts to libraries and cuts of schools, I wasn't aware – and I think I mentioned this one time before. Even though I'd worked for the Department of Education for a period of time and had a direct contact with the education system, I wasn't on the grassroots, day to day, in the weeds, operational, when it comes to the teaching classrooms and the impacts of some of the services and programs. I did it from a managerial point of view, from a distance and a partnership thing.

At 2:14 I got an email from somebody. This totally caught me off guard. There's another service that's being cut that has an education based connection. It will be detrimental to the students who use it. I'll have a chance to chat with the Minister of Environment, because I think not only is it an education issue, it's also an environmental issue that I would think – because of his background, and I have the utmost respect for him – he would see this as being something that we're losing, a support service that would be very beneficial to the young students around the environment.

I'm just going to read out what was sent to me. Hello, it's been a long time since we spoke, but I assume you will recall our conversations many years ago in respect to the CYN initiatives. I'm now retired and grateful to not be in government

at this time. However, that being said, I admire the tenacity of yourself and your colleagues as you continue to push on economic, educational, health and social matters that are near and dear to the Newfoundland population. Please continue to keep up the good work, despite the exhaustion everyone in the House must be experiencing at this time.

I write today to advise of a provincial funding cut that will dramatically change or even force the closure of two really invaluable programs for our youth. Namely, the environmental education program that operates from the Brother Brennan Centre off Salmonier Line, and a similar program operating from the Killdevil site in Lomond. I have family and friends involved with both these programs. These people, and the many others who they support, especially the hundreds of children and youth who attend this program per year, will be impacted by the looming funding cuts. In both of these cases, the school board provides a half-year teaching unit and operational funds which go toward lowering the cost of children to participate.

On the West Coast, participation is actually mandatory for all grade five students. That's not the same for the Eastern region, but still classes of children, youth, participate to the max every year with their teachers. The cuts, of course, are coming from the school board, but are happening due to the dramatic cuts being imposed by the Liberal government.

I'm reaching out to you at this time because I know of your long-time standing interest in helping children, youth, families and communities. I'm a keen supporter of our environmental education programs, and I have to say, these two particular programs are stellar. I just cannot wrap my head around the loss of programs like these in our province and the long-term impacts these types of cuts will have on our children and their future. I'm sure you are hearing a lot of similar scenarios these days; however, perhaps you could keep these two programs in mind, and if the opportunity presents itself, help us out the best you can.

I want to reassure this individual that I will do whatever I can to implore the Minister of Environment have discussions with the Minister of Education around the impacts of these

programs. Now that it has been brought to my attention, I remember in my former life going to these programs and presenting there and getting to see the impact it had, and getting to have a hands on conversation with educators around the inclusion piece, the leadership piece, but around the environment. This is going back years ago when environmental issues were just becoming a hot topic. We were just getting a better understanding.

Our society has changed so much. Our students now take a much better leadership role in the environment and being stewards of the environment than we ever did. We didn't understand it. We came from a different culture at the time but our children, and I know no doubt our children's children, have a better understanding of how we have to be the proper stewards of the environment. We have to be the ones to keep it safe and maintain it. What better way than to bring people in in an education setting, yet in nature itself. Give them the tools, give them the skillset to be able to take it to the next level and ensure their understanding and their friends' understanding and us, as their parents and their guardians, understanding exactly the importance of the environment here.

So we're probably talking minimal amounts of money, yet a dramatic cut to a program that's very important to different sectors here when we talk about what we're supporting. We're talking about the environment, we're talking about education, we're talking about youth inclusion, we're talking about promoting a better way of life and we're talking about our culture and our environment.

For what's going to be saved in this process, these are another example of the many cuts that we haven't yet experienced that are going to surface as we go through over the next number of weeks. It becomes even more alarming of how detrimental and how devastating this budget is going to be on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and particularly our young people, and that alarms me.

Mr. Chair, I'll have a chance to speak again to this.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to take the opportunity just to stand up, we're discussing here this afternoon the debt reduction levy. Of course, it is part of the overall discussion we're having around the budget and various money bills.

This particular bill, Bill 14, around the debt reduction levy, back and forth we'll have some discussion over the next number of hours and perhaps on into the night. I guess for those at home, we have some people as well in the public galleries today, but just for the people at home, just to understand what is really happening in a filibuster.

What happens, a filibuster is generally for the Opposition. It's an opportunity for them to ask questions, to talk about various pieces of legislation, bills, and for us as government to sit, listen and to respond.

While the people at home may not understand that necessarily, on the government side, we may not get up as an even exchange, it's not necessary that we need to do that all of the time. It is the opportunity for the Opposition to really talk about the concerns that they see on behalf of their constituents, on behalf of the province. And they can bring that forward so that we get to hear every perspective that's important to this province.

So I thought it was important to kind of provide that little bit of clarification in terms of what happens when you are into a filibuster. We've have been doing this now since Monday. I've had some of my constituents who have said in terms of us coming out of the House for an hour or so, to be here for 24 hours, 36 hours – I know yesterday, for me, was 35 hours straight before I had an opportunity to even get out of the House for a little bit, go and freshen up, come back again and continue on. And that's happening for Members opposite as well.

Talking about the debt reduction levy itself, it's all tied to the fact that we've got a significant issue in this province in terms of the kind of money that we need to raise, and we only have a

few options. We can cut programs and services. I can tell you, as a government, that is not something we're keenly interested in doing. We can go out and we can try to borrow money.

I left the House for an hour or so to get something to eat, freshen up and come back and while I was gone, I spoke to some staff – as a part of my role as a Parliamentary Secretary to the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development – and they were asking me: Really, help me understand what's going on. What kind of fiscal situation are we in? I said: Well, a lot of it's tied to our bond rating.

I know that some Members on our side of the House have tried to explain that our bond rating is not very good. Our bond rating – and I think the Minister of Education had said a couple of days ago; his reference was that we're a couple of ratings above junk. While that may seem odd to those who don't understand, what it really means for us is our ability to borrow and the cost to borrow.

It's already been said in this House that we're paying around \$950 million in debt servicing for the money that we need to borrow this year. We need to borrow, not \$100 million, not \$200 million, but we need to borrow \$3.4 billion.

Now, I fully understand that's hard to grasp for people; that you need to borrow \$3.4 billion on an \$8.44 billion budget. So where does the rest of the money come from? Well, the rest of the money is coming from other measures: taxes, either corporate taxes or personal income taxes, investments that would come back to the general revenue. All of those things will help provide the basic services that we are trying to provide to the good people of this province.

Otherwise, we have to start cutting. In 2013, I was in a different capacity and I saw that one of the measures that were taken by the government of the day, the Members in the Official Opposition, was that they cut public sector jobs. While it was originally forecast it was going to be about 1,200 positions gone, by the time the dust settled and people moving around in different positions, we were into well over 2,000 positions. That was significant.

I listened to the Members opposite talking about you could do other things. Let's keep all the libraries open. Let's get rid of the debt reduction levy. Let's not raise personal income taxes. We already know last year we had a \$2.7 billion deficit. That had to be paid for; we had to find those dollars because that was already expended. That was one of our biggest challenges.

The Members opposite who say that we should not raise gas taxes, we should not put in a debt reduction levy, we should keep all these things open, we saw what their response was – they cut public sector jobs. They cut them by a big number. I can tell you that is certainly not the preferred option that we talked about as a government. Attrition – yes, absolutely.

We have seen that already. There are positions that have become redundant. We found savings within departments where we can bring divisions together, that has happened, and we'll continue to look at that as a model. We went out and we engaged the people of this province – and I know that we've been accused time and time again of not listening. As I said, a filibuster is an opportunity for us to listen again so that those other messages can come forward. But when we went out and engaged the public through the spring, people did say find efficiencies across government. Our interpretation of finding efficiencies was to look at the programs and the services and how you are delivering them and try to deliver them in a more effective and efficient manner.

What you'll find in that, there are savings that can come from finding effectiveness and efficiency, and some of that is going to mean that we won't backfill some positions, so attrition still becomes our preferred option.

I just want to speak a little bit about the libraries. I think there's a difference between libraries that are in schools – and we already know what has happened in the last couple of weeks is that we've said that there is a reprieve for a period of time until the end of October around school-based libraries. I would argue, and Members opposite have already said this afternoon that these are more than just libraries; these are more than just providing access to books to the residents of the community.

I would probably argue that they are a bit of a community centre. These are community centres, so they've morphed into more than a library. I know, in particular, one of the libraries in my district in Glovertown, it's in the school and it's slated – we need to find a solution past October 31. I've been there; I've met with the library board. We've got another meeting now coming up next Friday and we're trying to find a solution. But based on the kind of things, and the great things that are happening in that library, I would argue that's more of a community centre.

So the solutions that we'll bring for keeping that service in the community are going to change our focus. It's not going to be solely on the provision of access to books in the community, but it's going to be about what are the other services that are going on there in that library so that from a community centre type of approach, we may be able to find a solution that keeps those services available to the community, and also available to the students that are in the school.

Of course, we've got to work with the English school board, the Department of Education and the provincial libraries board, but all of that is the kind of partnerships that we will move forward with.

Just quickly on the \$30 million contingency fund; in 2010, we were hit by Hurricane Igor. It's not lost on me today that the tropical storm that is coming up the Eastern Seaboard is called after my first name, and I'm not going to stand here today and say that I'm just like the hurricane that's coming forward, but what I'm going to say is that in 2010 there was devastation in Random Island –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: – in my district and the Member for Bonavista's district, and so there needed to be an infusion of dollars. That devastation happened to many communities. There was a loss of life at that time. So when Members opposite ask why do you need those dollars, why should that be there – I would argue with you because I remember that day. My wife

was stranded on one side of a river, on a highway that was washed out. I was on the other side and couldn't get to her, but the devastation happened, we need all kinds of dollars to put roads back together, to help people who were in devastation. So I would argue there's a need for things like a \$30 million contingency fund, and that's why we have that built in to this budget.

So, I'll come back –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his speaking time has expired.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to be back on my feet as part of this debate that we're now having on Bill 14. I have just a point of clarification for those that may be watching. This ongoing debate is about two bills: Bill 14, which is the Liberal levy bill, and Bill 19, which will raise everybody's insurance cost by 15 per cent on home and auto and large recreational vehicles at the very least.

We only get 10 minutes at a time. I'm already down to nine-and-a-half minutes, so I'm going to continue with my effort to read into the record some of the notes I'm getting from concerned citizens. I'm receiving them by email. I'm receiving them by Twitter, which seems to upset people across the House. I'm receiving them on Facebook as well. I want to thank people for following this debate. I want to thank people who are tuning in online, tuning in on television, or are actually coming here to the gallery in the House of Assembly to see first-hand what's going on here during this debate.

We're debating the levy, so let me start with a message that references the levy. It came in on Tuesday morning. Interestingly enough, it's still Tuesday in the House of Assembly – so another unique element of parliamentary debate.

I would rather have paid the levy than see all the cuts to education. All we are doing here is stealing from the future to pay for the past. Also, as an owner of a construction-related business, the past 18 months since the oil prices have dropped have been a challenge, but nothing compared to the effect that this budget has had on construction. No one wants to invest any money here at this time, and can we blame them?

We have had to lay off 80 per cent of our employees. We have to pay the same debt and most of the same expenses with much less revenue. A competitor has had to lay off employees that have been working with them for 25 years. We are now competing with companies that normally would not be after the same work as us.

I don't have the answers, but it's not my responsibility. I want to know where are the recommendations from economists or other qualified individuals that have advised the Liberal government that this budget is the best way to move forward for Newfoundland and Labrador. Thank you; a concerned parent and business owner.

Could you please read this in the House? My parents are seniors on a fixed income. My father has COPD, congestive heart failure, kidney disease, high blood pressure and chronic back pain due to an injury at work back in '87 which prevented him from ever returning back to work. My mother had a brain aneurism that burst and suffers constant headaches, high blood pressure and a couple of other problems.

They can barely make ends meet as it is. And with all the changes going on, I don't know how they're going to manage. They hold a mortgage with a bank outside the province and two weeks ago, upon renewal, the bank calls them and says that they have assessed the property values in our province and it has declined because of the way the economy is headed. They want out and won't renew the mortgage.

I spoke to them on behalf of my parents and I was told that their only option was to find another lender or sell. So after exhausting all options and having tried everything I could think

of, we have no choice but to sell their house and move them into an apartment.

My parents have been in their house for 18 years and now they've had to leave and spend their last years cramped into a little apartment. I am not sure how they are even going to pay rent, car insurance, heat and light, fill their prescriptions each month, continue to eat, and whatever other expenses come up. The Liberal government is killing our economy and our seniors. Something has to be done. They need to go.

Good evening, just exactly how was the deadline forgotten by the Department of Finance in respect to the nurses' union contract negotiations if the Liberal government has retained specialized lawyers at exorbitant rates? Should they not be fired? Perhaps now would be an opportune time to make use of the solicitors on staff as opposed to paying through the nose to fight the employees that keep this province running. It seems each and every day there is another bombshell. I'm in absolute shock over the past few weeks. A lot of people are.

On July 1 of this year, senior citizens in long-term care face a monthly increase to private pay fees of \$190 per month. This adds up to roughly \$2,300 a year, which is a big increase for people on fixed income. The scary thing about this increase is that the letter informing family members about it also stated that the monthly fee for long-term care will increase with the consumer index. Many pensions are not indexed, so the government is slowly chipping away at the little bit of money these seniors have left after paying monthly long-term care fees. Add that to the removal of dental and medical coverage and vulnerable seniors are being hit way too hard in this budget.

For example, here's a breakdown of my father's situation: yearly increase in long-term care fees, \$2,280; loss of dental coverage for dentures, \$1,500; the levy payment, \$300; income tax increase, \$1,757. So, in total, an 80-year-old disabled man is going to pay out \$5,837 more than he did last year and he will pay even more than that in 2017.

As private nursing homes generally follow the same fee structure as Eastern Health facilities, the increase in fees is generating more profit for

owners of private nursing homes, such as the Premier, and shows again how this budget was designed to not only protect the wealthy, but to make sure they are even better off on the backs of those who can least afford it.

I only have a few minutes left, Mr. Chair, but I'd like to talk once again about libraries. I continue to receive messages from people who are concerned about the closure of 54 libraries. Libraries are a valuable cultural centre for many communities, with many events of all sorts, that will be lost if government goes ahead with massive closures for such minor savings.

In the same regions where libraries are closing, the library may very well be the only place to access high-speed Internet and librarians are on record as teaching many library users about the online world and giving them their first experience with the Internet. Such a pointless measure to save such a comparatively small amount of money is rendered moot by claims by government that they can now all of a sudden use e-books, though many of our Newfoundland and Labrador books do not exist in such a format and people in the small communities cannot access high-speed Internet either in their homes or by high-speed wireless data because such services are simply non-existent and unlikely to be offered by carriers.

Does government expect library users to now invest in expensive smartphones and e-readers and pay high wireless data carrier bills when they cannot even use such devices in some of their communities? This is what's being put forth, that everyone can now all of a sudden somehow use e-books. The cost to subsidize or encourage private carriers to provide Internet service to the regions affected by proposed library closures would be many, many times the tiny cost savings achieved by this draconian, anti-culture, anti-literacy, anti-science, anti-knowledge, mass library closing measure.

This means government would have to massively subsidize or help fund or encourage more fibre optic infrastructure and cellphone and data towers in areas with geographic imposed restrictions. One example is unbelievable when you consider it. The Town of Benton has, in the past, been unable to use high-speed Internet

when it is literally just down the road from Gander.

I don't claim to keep up with which community has high-speed Internet available in the home or wireless data, but it just seems such a ludicrous proposition that we can all read e-books over non-existent data networks in the same small communities where libraries are closing. Paying huge monthly fees for smartphones that are nothing more than expensive paperweights in those towns. Shame!

Mr. Chair, I could go on and on, and I will. Here's another one: We are a young family with a son that is two years old. My wife works with health care and, myself, I returned to school on the hope that there would be better jobs coming along. We bought a house, set up roots and were determined to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador our whole lives, no matter how hard it was going to be.

Until the current Premier became our Premier and with all these new taxes and job losses, people have no confidence in the government, and have less disposable income. So, in return, there are no open jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador for a person who is entering the trades.

My question to you, Premier: When will you realize that just because something looks good on paper doesn't mean it will work? Young people are leaving just to find work that was here before you became elected? Housing prices are dropping, higher unemployment rates, older citizens are leaving to move away with their children because they can't afford to live here anymore.

When will you realize that your decisions will set Newfoundland and Labrador as a province back decades, not just with people moving away but also new businesses that will not open, which will lead to fewer entry-level jobs? What will you do to correct these measures before there are full planes leaving and empty ones returning?

Mr. Chair, I've received hundreds of messages and I will stand on my feet as long as I can to continue to bring these issues to the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to get up and respond to a few things that have been said here in debate. I've been taking some notes all through the night and the morning.

The Member for Mount Pearl North who just spoke, who was minister of Health and Community Services last fall, I just wanted to say again, he continues to contend that our government took stickers and snacks away from sick children in the Janeway Hospital. He continues allege that.

He alleges that the current Minister of Health and Community Services was the minister who oversaw this practice whereby stickers and snacks were taken from sick children at the Janeway Hospital. So I think it's important for everybody to know, for the record, that the direction to take that action was given last September. The provincial election was not until –

AN HON. MEMBER: That is not true.

MR. KIRBY: The Member is over there saying that's not true. Prove that it is not true, I would say, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: The direction –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: I didn't heckle you when you were up speaking. Mr. Chair, may I have the floor?

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member the floor has been given to the Minister of Education.

MR. KIRBY: We sat quietly here and listened when the Members opposite spoke; I expect the same.

In any case, the direction to take stickers and snacks away from sick children in hospital was given last September when the Member for Mount Pearl North was the minister of Health and Community Services whose responsibility is the Janeway Hospital. That direction was given.

And it gets more interesting, too, Mr. Chair. Because not only was that direction given while the Member for Mount Pearl North was the minister of Health and Community Services, the direction was: don't implement this until January, until after the provincial election. There have been news stories printed since. The Member for Mount Pearl North continues to allege this was not done on his watch, and that is not the case.

The Member for Mount Pearl North was the minister of Health and Community Services last September when direction was provided that stickers and snacks – and I think it's absolutely shameful and absurd this action was taken. He was the minister of Health and Community Services responsible – whether he was directly involved is not the point, because he has no problem trying to hang this on Members over here. He was the minister who was responsible for Health and Community Services when that action was taken. He should get up and apologize for continually suggesting he was not the minister of Health at the time.

The Member for Gander was not elected until November 30, and he had no role in this. This came to our attention when the decision was implemented in January, as per the direction provided last September when the Member for Mount Pearl North was the minister of Health and Community Services.

So I hope that clarifies the matter, but I'll be pleased to get up and repeat that as many times as it is possible, because the Member takes to social media and makes allegations that are absolutely false and the record has to be corrected.

Another thing that was said, the Member for Conception Bay South got up here this morning,

he said, we know they are spending a lot on communications – that our government is spending a lot on communications. I assure you, Mr. Chair, we are spending a whole lot less on communications. In the Treasury Board process –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KIRBY: He may laugh all he wants. They can laugh all they want. I don't think it's very funny. I'll tell you why it's not funny. In the Treasury Board process, we had officials from every department in. Many of them said they never appeared before Treasury Board before. We met for hours and hours in January and February, trying to get to the bottom of some of this outrageous spending that we have seen.

We found out that they spent no less than \$1 million on one advertising campaign. Actually, we found that tens and tens of millions of dollars were spent during the previous administration's term of office on communications and advertising. This was torqued up last year during the election year, and I encourage members of the media to ATIPP all of this because it's not hard to find, and it's not hard to find who is involved.

We know that ministers were involved in giving direction to the Premier's office at the time, was giving direction to Crown agencies to continue contracts in the hundreds of thousands of dollars without going back out to a public tendering process of issuing Request for Proposals. This was going on.

They spent \$1 million on an advertising campaign that basically said, hey, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we love Newfoundland and Labrador; let's continue to live in Newfoundland and Labrador. That was done under the auspices of a population growth strategy.

Just a few short years prior, the same crowd spent over \$2 million on another advertising campaign, under the auspices of a population growth strategy, and when the folks in their leadership went in and looked at the advertisements, the TV ads that resulted from this several million dollars' worth of spending, they said: We don't like those ads. They never,

ever were aired on television. Department after department after department came in and gave us similar information. Tens of millions of dollars spent on advertising and zero accountability.

So the Member gets up and says we're spending way more. I assure you, those practices have been discontinued and they stopped the day after we got elected.

Another thing that went on which boggles my mind, the practice is, or has been traditionally, that each minister has one politician assistant, referred to as an executive assistant. Under the previous government, they basically found a way, with approval from the Premier's office, to skirt this tradition, to hire more political assistants under the guise of ministerial liaisons.

So not only did the minister of Health and Community Services – the Member for Conception Bay South may smirk because he knows he's implicated in this too. When he was minister of Transportation and Works, not only did he have one political appointee working as executive assistant and another political appointee working as a constituency assistant, he had another one working as ministerial liaison. And with all of this, he still managed to boggle the whole Romanian ferry business, the great deal he got us into, walked into that blindly without having any assurance that the tariffs were going to be forgiven by the federal government, because they basically went outside of the international agreements we have on trade. They went into that.

Then we are also spending a fortune to prep for a ferry in his district where no preparation was made for docking at all. There are tens of thousands of dollars, over a million dollars now, we have to spend another small fortune in preparations that they didn't even think about when he had so many of his friends hired on in a political capacity beyond which we have ever seen in the province before – unbelievable.

The Member for Conception Bay South gets up and makes these allegations about our practices, but if you drill down and actually locate the details you can see that the level of political patronage and the spending on communications that we saw under the previous government was

just completely out of whack with everything that we saw prior. Everything was torqued and contracts were continued. As I said, it's not very hard to find this information. Should the media be interested in following up on this, it's not very hard to find.

The fact that \$2 million – and they get up and talk about how many libraries could you keep open. Well, I suppose if you didn't treat the taxpayers' money, if you didn't treat the Treasury as something you heated your house with, because that's basically what it is. It's just as well to take \$2 million and burn it than it is to spend it on a \$2 million population growth advertising campaign that never saw the light of day. I would go further and say it makes about just as much sense to have a \$1 million population growth advertising campaign allegedly about population growth. Interestingly enough, those ads coincided with the timing of the provincial election and advertise to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Now, we know we want people to stay in the province but do we need to have a million dollar advertising campaign to that effect, basically telling people this is a great place in the world to live? We already know that. So it's absolutely not the case that more is being spent on advertising.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: That is a false allegation.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to stand in this hon. House and speak to the budget. I'm going to stick to just that, the budget. I'll let the Minister of Education and the other Members, they can have their little row and so on and back and forth. I'm not going to comment on any of that, I want to talk about the budget.

I do want to make comment, though, as to some of the commentary the Member for Terra Nova made when he was talking about the Government Renewal Initiative that he attended, and talking about how they listened to the people and this is where the budget came from through that process. He said, we were listening then, and now as part of this filibuster we're continuing to listen. We're listening to the emails and we're listening to the Members and so on. That's their opportunity to speak and for us to listen.

I just want to say, and I'm not trying to be argumentative, but you're hearing – what people are saying is you're not listening. I said it before, there's a difference between hearing and listening. That's what people are saying, because if you just simply hear what everyone is saying, you hear what we are saying, and you hear the emails that are read out and you hear what people said at the consultations, if you don't act on what you're hearing, if you don't take direction based on what you're hearing, you don't do what you're hearing. I understand as government, you have to make some tough decisions.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the hon. Member to direct his comments to the Chair.

MR. LANE: My apologies, Mr. Chair. I got a little carried away. I'm a little bit sleep deprived, so I apologize for that.

The point I'm making, Mr. Chair, is it's fine to hear what people are saying, but there's a difference between hearing and listening. Listening means you don't just hear, but you process what you're hearing and you take some action. You acknowledge what you're hearing and you make your judgements around what you heard.

Now, I can guarantee you, I had one of these consultations in my district and I attended another one in St. John's West, and there were people, there's no doubt. There were people who said maybe income tax is the way to go. We should raise some income tax. That's a way to get revenue. There were some who said gas tax is a way to raise revenue. There was someone

who said that promise on the HST, maybe you can't make that promise anymore. That's a way to raise revenue, and there were people who talked about fees.

I can assure, and I said this before and I'm going to say it again. I would challenge any Member to stand on their feet and say they attended a Government Renewal Initiative meeting anywhere in this province where the consensus of the group was raise the HST, raise the insurance, raise the income tax, create a levy, put up all the fees and all these other measures, and do it all at the one time; hit people with all of these things at the one time. I challenge anyone to stand up and say that's what came out of that government renewal. I'm prepared to say that didn't happen. I'm sure that didn't happen.

That's what people are saying, Mr. Chair. When you hear it continuously – I know I sound like a broken record – too much too fast, but that's what people are saying. It's fine for us to keep saying it but what people really want is some action. People want to see some amendments, some reasonable amendments. That's what they want. That's why this filibuster is taking place. It's not just us standing up and reading emails and saying people are saying this and saying that. What we're looking for is some movement. That's what we're looking for. We're looking for some movement on the budget. We're looking for some reasonable amendments that we can all live with, that we could all agree with. That's what it is.

The Members on this side, we've talked about it. I can tell you from my perspective, I'll stay here again all night tonight and tomorrow night and the next night, I'll stay here all weekend if that's what it takes, or until the government invokes closure, one or the other. I'm prepared to stay here until either you invoke closure or we see some changes. That's where I'm at, and I know that's where other Members are at. That's where we are.

MR. LETTO: No problem.

MR. LANE: I hear the Member for Lab West saying no problem. No problem we're going to see some amendments or no problem you're going to invoke closure?

MR. LETTO: No problem staying here.

MR. LANE: No problem staying here. Well, there's no point in staying here and us talking unless we're going to see some movement, and that's what we want to see. That's not what we want to see, it's what the people want to see. It's what the people want to see. We need to make a little bit of progress here, and it is about choices.

I have heard Members opposite say we had no choice, we're in such a mess financially. Nobody is saying we don't have financial problems. No one is saying that. No one is saying we don't want to pay any taxes. Although I'm sure nobody likes paying taxes, but we're saying we have to make some changes to make it more palatable for people. It's just too much. That's all people are saying. It's just too much, we need to make some changes. There are things that can be done.

We look at the education system, how many times have we said it. Full-day kindergarten is a good idea. It's a great idea. The research is there, but do we sacrifice the kids that are in school now? Do we sacrifice the programs we have? Do we start picking names out of a hat to see who gets to do French and who doesn't? Do we go into team teaching and multigrades? Do we deny children with special needs the resources they need just so that we can ram through full-day kindergarten and say, hey, guess what we did? We put in full-day kindergarten. Does it make sense? Does it make sense at this time? Shouldn't we do it when we're able to maintain what we got, make sure what we have is working and it's resourced properly, and then when we have the money, then we do it.

I hate to keep bringing up the whole issue about the Labrador link, because then people will say, oh, you're against Labrador. I'm not against Labrador. I'm not against the concept of a link if it would work. I don't know if it would work or not. Again, if you're going to do a feasibility study and spend \$750,000 – which would keep three-quarters of the libraries that you're shutting down open, by the way, it would keep three-quarters of the libraries open – if you're going to do that, and let's say you do the study and they say, yes, this is a good idea, it's feasible, it can be done but it's going to cost you

a billion dollars or two billion dollars to do it, where's the money coming from? When are you going to do it? When are you going to have the money to do it?

You're saying you're not going to see a surplus for like seven years. For the next seven years there's no surplus. So you got no money, you got no cash to do it. What's the point of doing it this year so you can get a study that says, yeah, it's a good idea, it's feasible, and stick it on a shelf for the next seven years or 10 years and then look at implementing it? By that time costs will be all changed, technology will be changed and the \$750,000 report, right through the shredder. I don't see anything unreasonable about what I'm saying here.

Then we talk about the \$30 million in the contingency. I do thank the minister for the briefing, but at the end of the day that was also a choice. You could have put \$25 million in the contingency and put \$2.1 million so that you wouldn't have to tax books, or you could have put some of it toward offsetting some of these other taxes and still had a contingency – \$25 million. So that's a choice.

We talk about – I brought it up before – the gas tax and part of the 15 per cent that's going on that 16½ cents, part of that is federal money. Part of that is federal. That 15 per cent, part of that is federal. I don't know what the amount is, but some of that amount, I believe that the federal – and I could be wrong –

AN HON. MEMBER: Five per cent.

MR. LANE: Five per cent? Yeah. So 5 per cent of that 16½ cents the feds are capitalizing on. Unless the Minister of Finance can correct me, I think that's how it works. The feds are capitalizing on our austerity measures. Whatever that amount is it should come back to Newfoundland. That's a few more dollars. Maybe that'll keep the libraries open.

Then we have Nalcor over there; you talk about a sunshine list. I'm told executives in Nalcor, there are that many sunshine listers you'd get sunstroke when you walk in through the door, one fellow told me. I don't know if that's right, but that's what I'm told.

Let's give Stan Marshall a call and say: Stan, sharpen your pencil, b'y; sharpen your pencil. The departments were asked to save 30 per cent over the next three years. Nalcor should be able to save it.

To say we're not putting out any options or there are no options is not right. These are just a few. There are other ideas out there. Again, I implore the government, listen to what we're saying. Please make some changes.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly good to rise again and speak to the bills that are on the table.

Last night, Madam Chair, I spoke about being an Aboriginal growing up in a small community, living through times when times were tough and not having the ability to get anything you want. There are not a lot of us here that had everything growing up. We've had some tough times. I'm sure most of us here have.

Madam Chair, sometimes as an Aboriginal person you look at things a little bit differently. I can remember growing up and going to my parents and asking them for things and not being able to get it, and wondering how cruel and insensitive they are. They can't give me what I want. How cruel and insensitive.

Madam Chair, it was only when I got older and had children of my own, when they came to me asking for things and I said no. I remember going somewhere by myself and how bad I felt not being able to give it to them. It's not a good feeling, but if you gave into everything then you put yourself in extenuating circumstances. So I just use one analogy.

Another analogy I used last night is a storm, and I've been caught in a lot of storms. I'm a

mariner by trade. I've been caught in storms where I didn't think I was going to make it.

I'll tell you a little story, Madam Chair. About 16 years ago I was bringing a 40 foot vessel back from North Sydney to Makkovik and the examiner questioned my ability to do it because I was new. This was my first time doing it. So he gave me a choice. He said if you can bring your vessel back home to Makkovik from Nova Scotia in two weeks, I will give you a licence to run it.

Madam Chair, we had to cross the Straits from North Sydney to Port aux Basques in a 40 foot vessel. When we got to Port aux Basques we found out that the *Caribou* was stormbound. We listened to the forecast. The forecast said it's not too bad. Madam Chair, 60 miles out of Port aux Basques, six-and-a-half metre sea in a 40 foot boat, you question your ability. You question if you're going to get through this.

Now, Madam Chair, I lost my radar. I lost my VHF radio. I lost a lot of things. When I got to Port aux Basques there was a bunch of old retired fishermen sitting on the wharf. They came down and all they said to me was, it wasn't very pretty out there was it? Madam Chair, it wasn't, but I got the vessel to Nova Scotia and Makkovik in five days.

I would just like to talk a little bit about what impacts are. Our job – and I say this and I'll say it again. Our job is to mitigate impacts, the Opposition's job is to magnify.

I heard the Member for Cape St. Francis this morning talking about being exactly right. Well, I'd like to use his words and apply it to some of the things I've heard across the way.

The Member for St. John's Centre talked about a mass exodus from the province, hundreds of thousands of people will leave. Well, Madam Chair, a budget lasts one year. Storms never last, bad budgets never last. In a year from now, according to the Member for St. John's Centre, the population of this province should be between 100,000 and 250,000 people. I'm going to wait a year and see how many people leave our province if there is a mass exodus.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune: This budget will rip the guts out of our economy. Is this exactly right? Because these are the messages that are being put out there by the Official Opposition. Is this exactly right? Is our economy in the next 365 days going to have the guts ripped out of it? I'm going to wait a year.

There are other things; the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said, I don't think this budget is as severe as people say it will be. Well, Madam Chair, by what's being put out there by the Opposition, by the NDP, I can almost guarantee it's not going to be as bad as they say it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: Because the perception is already out there that this is going to kill our province. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands just said, this will drive everyone over the edge. Well, in a year there shouldn't be anyone left in our province. We should be all gone over the edge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. EDMUNDS: When you say things that are exactly right, are you driving home the impact or are you being truthful? Because when the message gets out that's not factually correct and people start to buy it, it questions your ability to be exactly right.

The Member for Mount Pearl North was standing up time after time and saying this government cancelled the stickers at the Janeway, when what is exactly right is he was the Minister of Health that did this. And then he went and turned around and told – being a smart politician, he's a smart politician, I give him that. He said don't implement this until January. So when you talk about being exactly right, Madam Chair, I have all kinds of quotes.

I'd just like to use another one. The Member for Mount Pearl North again, a couple of minutes ago, said that this budget will kill our province and will kill our economy. Well, Madam Chair, he has one year to prove that. By this time next

year, according to the Member for Mount Pearl North, our province should be dead and our economy should be dead. This is a message the Member for Mount Pearl North is sending to the people in the province.

Now, I'd like to reserve a judgement on that. I'd like to come back here in 365 days and tell the Member for Mount Pearl North, hey, guess what? Our province is still alive. Hey, guess what? We still have an economy.

So my point is just this, Madam Chair. If you want to be exactly right then put facts out there, because no one can dispute the facts, but if you put out information that's an interpretation of what is the reality and you put your own spin on it, that's when you'll get fans. Fans only believe the truth. They do not believe what you tell them is the truth when, in fact, what is put out there is not actually correct.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

An interesting story with the vessel going across and the hon. Minister of Natural Resources will understand what I'm saying when, I know where you're coming from, okay. I know what your thoughts were. My thoughts go out with you, too. She'll know that will be something between me and her, and she'll know what I'm talking about.

It's interesting that the story will be told about people going out on the ocean. We all have family members and we all have loved ones who do go out on the ocean and sometimes they go out in times of very, very, very rough. No matter what side of the House you're on, we all experience stuff when it comes to the ocean. I just wanted to say that there that time.

I'm going to get back to my budget speech. It's an honour to get up in the House of Assembly.

Every time I get up to represent the district from Cape St. Francis – it's an honour to get up and represent the people.

For the people out there watching today, and I know there are lots of people watching because it's a pretty interesting debate we're having here. Sometimes Members will get up and they'll seem very enthusiastic about their speeches and they'll go – I'm not saying it's nastiness, but it's trying to make a point or make someone look small or big or whatever, but the reason we're here for this debate, the reason why I am and I know my colleagues on this side of the House are doing it, and we're putting in a lot of hours and everything else, but we're doing it for a reason. It's a reason that we are hoping – the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said it when he was up just a few minutes ago, we're hoping for change. We're hoping it will make a difference.

We're hoping that getting up here in the House of Assembly will hopefully get a dialogue going, that people will look and say, okay, maybe we can do this. That's what we're hoping for. I don't know if we're going to get those results. I really don't. I really hope we do, because I feel anytime there's dialogue and people are talking and people are listening, that sometimes maybe changes can be made.

I'm not at this to score any political points. I don't want to be at it. That's not my nature. It's not who I am as a person. I believe I was elected to come to the House of Assembly to do the right thing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and in particular, the people of Cape St. Francis that I represent. So that's the reason why I'm stood up here time after time after time.

Again, every time I get up and talk about the budget – I believe it, I really do, and I say it all the same – it's about the choices we make. It's about what we feel, and people in Newfoundland and Labrador through their emails, and I really do – some Members get up and a lot of them are reading emails. I had a couple this morning that I read, but I really do because I really believe that just giving people the opportunity to be heard is huge.

Now, we all went to the different consultations that were out there and they were well-attended.

We had, I'm not sure, I believe someone said there were a thousand submissions. And people in Newfoundland and Labrador were engaged, they were engaged in what was happening and they wanted to be a part of the solution. That's who we are as a people.

I want to be part of a solution to make Newfoundland and Labrador a better place for, whether it's a child, it's a teenager, it's a low-income person, it's an adult, it's a senior. I want to be here and do my best to make sure Newfoundland and Labrador is the best place that we can have to live in. I say it all the time, bar none, there's no better place in Canada to live. We live in great communities.

The consultations you had were good ideas, they were great ideas. I sat at a table up in Roncalli, myself and six other women, and we had a really good conversation. Just to see around the table the different ideas.

I mentioned to the Minister of Transportation a couple of weeks ago that one of the ideas, one of the ladies had a real pet peeve. She said what really concerned her the most, she works at the Health Sciences and gets off around 12 o'clock at night, and to drive by the Confederation Building at 12 o'clock at night and see the lights on. She said it drives her nuts, because she gets home and her two children, if they don't shut off the lights she's off the head with them. She couldn't understand. Obviously that's costing money to have the lights on.

Now, I did explain that a lot of the lights are sensed and people do go in in the nighttime and security will go up around floors to check the floors out and stuff like that, but that was a suggestion. Maybe there are some lights we can have turned off the different sensor, but that was the kind of discussion people were having. That was a good idea. She was driving home from the Health Sciences and she said that really drove her nuts. Every time she looks up she's telling her children to turn off the lights so that the government can't turn off their lights. She's paying for it – and she is, because she's paying her taxes.

Those were the things people really were engaged in. We talked a lot. We talked about gas tax, we talked about personal income tax. We

talked about different things that perhaps we could charge that people are not getting charged for right now, and increasing some fees.

So as an Opposition party we're not saying status quo – and I hear it all the time – if we didn't do anything. We're not saying that. Don't insult the intelligence of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when they – don't say nothing has to be done. Or the word that kills me in the House of Assembly, really kills me in the House of Assembly when I hear people say, they don't understand, or you don't understand. Because do you know what? Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do understand. They understand that times are not the best. They understand the effect oil prices are having on our economy. I think everybody knew last year when they saw the price of oil, a barrel of oil dropping like it did, that people really did understand and say, listen, we have to make changes.

I know as a government when we were in last year, the budget we ran – and we knew we were coming into an election – was to increase the HST. People said to me, b'y, are you nuts or what? Election time is coming and you're going to increase taxes? But it was the thing to do because we had to. People understand; people are engaged in the whole process.

They knew once the price of oil drops, the revenue to our province, the revenue to Newfoundland and Labrador, money we have to spend – we're spending 40 per cent of our money that's coming in on health care. So if your revenue is not coming in, are you going to be able to spend that 40 per cent? It may go up to 50 per cent, and where are you going to get the money? We all realize that. We're not here to debate that. We're not here to say you shouldn't do a thing; you should leave it like it is.

The budget you designed and the reason why people are upset is because they trusted you to make the right decisions. People are out there saying, listen, that's not the right decision. This is not the right decision. When you hear the Premier of the province get up and say, okay, here's the budget. We're going to debate it in the House of Assembly but what's in the envelope is staying in that envelope. We're not making any changes.

People want to be heard. They want to participate. They're willing to do their part but when you get up and say, listen here, this is it; here's what it is. You're told what it is, that's it. That's what's wrong here. That's why we are here today and that's why we've been here for the last couple of days, because we'll all have different opinions. We'll have different opinions than Members of the Third Party, I know we will but there are good suggestions.

When we talk about people that are – and the Member for Torngat Mountains, I have a lot of respect for that Member. Your own budget is suggesting there is going to be 33,000 jobs gone in the next five years. Now I'm not saying turn off the lights she's gone b'y, she's gone, but that is significant when you look at the population of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's a lot of jobs.

When you look at our population dropping by 20,000 that means there's a lot of people moving away. All I'm trying to do is find out the best solutions for our province and for our people. I do not want to see people move away. I'm very fortunate, very, very fortunate. I have two children, and both of them are still here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I know there are other people – I have two brothers who are away and lots of family members. We all do, but at the end of the day we want to do what's best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So all I'm asking is for you to listen. It's not too late to make changes. The budget may have been passed last week but there are changes.

When we're going out and doing things to seniors, like having them stressed out about having to pay for a shot that now costs them \$12.16 when we can make adjustments in our budget so that seniors don't have to be stressed over stuff like that. When we're closing libraries, and it may be a small thing but it's a million dollar solution. I am sure on an \$8.4 billion budget that we can find a million dollars so our libraries don't close. Tax on books –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to stand again and respond to some of the – I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands starts heckling as soon as I stand up. I don't know why he can't just listen to the debate rather than yell over in the corner.

I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis, first of all, he says will there be changes to the budget. Well, the budget has been passed and one can argue what the Opposition is doing –

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands yelling now is largely theatrical –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

I must advise the visitors to the public galleries that they are not to participate or demonstrate in anyway nor show their approval or disapproval of the proceedings of this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Again, I must remind the visitors of the public galleries that they are not to participate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

In view of the difficulties, this sitting is suspended.

This House now adjourns. We're just adjourning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

We order that the galleries be cleared, please.

This House is now in Recess.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to begin again here. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis was talking; he said you could change the budget that we've already passed. We did pass the budget already. The theatrics that the Opposition is participating in, the disrupting of the House of Assembly and so on, which appears to be somehow orchestrated, that's all part and parcel of what it is they want to do. That's their decision. If they think that's a good investment of our time, then that's their right to do this, but the –

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Chair, I stand on a point of order.

(Inaudible) that we have information and that we are inappropriate, are slandering, I believe they need to be (inaudible) accusations and their maligning in terms of accusing anybody on this side of the House to have had anything to do with disrupting the business of this House is slanderous.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair will take the point of order under advisement.

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

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Of course, there can be changes because there's the Temporary Deficit Reduction Levy which we've already adjusted since it was originally announced, in which the Premier has been clear, the Minister of Finance has been very clear that it's temporary. Once we dig ourselves out of the fiscal mess that the previous administration created, then we can make adjustments.

So, yes, you can always make changes, but the thing is we have the Opposition Members over here talking about you have destroyed the economy. They said that even before any of the changes were made, which is absurd, but it really speaks to the level of partisanship and the extent to which they are able to use hyperbolic speech in order to just more or less fan the flames. Again, that's their choice. That's their right.

It's interesting; the Member for Cape St. Francis said something about how the lights in the Confederation Building should be turned off because when they drive up the road his friend is really upset about it. I don't know why, the Member for Cape St. Francis was in government for –

MR. K. PARSONS: A point of order.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Under section 34, Mr. Chair. I just ask the Member, he's making an accusation that the Member is not saying the truth. You can check and see that you can't stand in this House and say just tell the truth; insinuating that he's not telling the truth.

CHAIR: I ask the hon. Member if he had anything to –

MR. JOYCE: No, I'm asking the Member to withdraw.

CHAIR: I ask the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis to withdraw his remarks.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay, I'll withdraw; no problem. I got no problem with that. I just want the truth to be told, that's all.

CHAIR: I ask the hon. Member unequivocally.

MR. K. PARSONS: I withdraw.

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Chair, the Member for Cape St. Francis can accuse me of lying all he likes, but he said something to the effect of the lights in the Confederation Building being on in the nighttime is making people upset and they should be turned off as a cost-saving measure.

I was just about to say through all the repeated interruptions that if he wanted the lights turned off here in the nighttime why didn't he ask for that to be done when he was sitting over here on the government side? Why didn't he present petitions on the government side? Why didn't he raise it? I never heard him mention that before today, that he's upset the lights are on here in the nighttime. I don't know why he didn't do anything about it.

I was also talking about communications and the communications budget, because the Member for CBS had alleged we're spending much more on communications than the previous administration was. Well, first of all, if you go through the budget Estimates document line by line and you look at the line for transportation and communications, you can see the commensurate reduction in our spending and our proposed spending, our planned spending on communications and transportation.

Again, I encourage the media to ATIPP this stuff because this is certainly something that should be out there. I'll just give you one example of what I'm talking about. In the year before the election, before the election year there was an expenditure – the difference in expenditure on advertising and communications by the previous administration, the same people who sit across from us here today, there was a \$1.7 million increase in spending on advertising paid to media through expensive contracts with external agencies.

There'll be more to this, and like I said, I encourage the media to ATIPP this stuff. Also, go to agencies, boards and commissions as well because there's even more to it than what I have right here. We have managed to find through the Treasury Board process that there was a \$1.7 million increase in spending on marketing and communications, all sorts of advertising campaigns, signed off on by the previous administration. Millions of dollars, at least \$2.4 million spent on advertising through external contracts versus less than \$700,000 the year before. So he can get up there and allege that we're spending more, but I encourage the media to ATIPP this because this is a story waiting to be told.

You have to ask yourself a question, why is it that in the election year the previous administration approved contracts with external communications companies to the tune of approaching \$2 million more than what was spent before? Why were there millions of dollars spent in the election year on advertising and communication – why was there a \$1.7 million or more bump in communications and advertising spending signed off by ministers and the Premier's office in the previous administration, in the dying days of their government? Why did that happen? I think this is something that really needs to be gotten to the bottom of.

The other thing that I would say, because the Members get up and say how many libraries could you keep open if you did this differently or if you did that differently. Why did we have vacant school buildings with the lights left on and the plumbing being maintained to the tune of over a million dollars a year? I got a list; schools that date back to the late 1990s sitting there, no action taken, and all of them say to be disposed of, to be disposed of. Most of this is vacant school buildings. Schools that are closed for years and they're sitting there costing us over a million dollars a year to operate schools with no children in them.

Like I said before, in one of the communities, out in Heart's Delight – Islington somebody said to me they set their watch to the school bell. The school is vacant but the bell goes off every recess time, in the morning and so on. People set their watch to the school bell going off in a

school that don't have any kids in it. This is what was going on.

The first thing they could have done, which is what I did, what this administration did, was shut off what could be shut off in buildings that were no need to maintain because they're beyond repair and they are really set for demolition, or just to sell for land use, and do the other thing that we're doing or making great strides in, which is divesting these and selling them off, putting them out to tender or arranging to put them out to tender and allowing them to be used for community use rather than spending a million dollars a year operating vacant schools. These are some of the sorts of things that went on.

Just to go back to it. Like I said, I think the media, if they want an interesting story I encourage them to look into this because there are thick files around that can be easily attained on this; I'm certain of it. We went through the Treasury Board process in the winter and we were shocked time and again that these huge contracts, over \$100,000 in many, many cases, added up to, at least these – and there are probably more of these if you dig even deeper – \$1.7 million bump increase in spending on paid media, advertising, communications promotion in the final year in comparison to the year before.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: It's absolutely interesting.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand and to speak to Bill 14 about the levy.

It's kind of interesting; I believe the levy in many ways was a leverage to some of the protesting and pushback that we see province-wide, because the levy was perhaps the red flag in this budget that people saw was so unfair.

This flat tax, this surcharge, people saw the way it was designed was completely unfair to the people of the province. It became the rallying cry for the people of the province.

Now it's unfortunate that those who were in the gallery have had to leave, and I understand. Mr. Chair, what I find very interesting is there are very few of these people that I knew. So what is happening is we have more and more people becoming politically active. Now, I understand how difficult for those who are not aware of how the House works and I understand the level of frustration of the people in the province in terms of the very concrete ways the budget is affecting them, their daily lives, and their families and their communities. So I understand that frustration, and I'm sure many of our Members here in this House understand it. They're hearing from their own constituents who are really frustrated.

People are also dealing with the negative messaging that government has been pounding away since government was elected in November. Again, once the Minister of Finance said that she had a chance to look at the books and how really bad the situation is, and we all know that. I believe the people of the province know the situation is bad. You'd have to be hiding under a rock at this point not to know that. It has been just drummed into us time and time and time again.

What hasn't been drummed into us is the vision of we'll be able to move beyond this. That there are solutions and together we'll be able to work through this and weather the storm. So that coupled with the frustration people feel because of the grim measures of this budget, how it affects people in their daily lives, and their families and their communities, and then coming into this House of Assembly, which is a very foreign set up to many people.

I know before I was elected I didn't quite know how our parliamentary procedure worked. I'm sure for a lot of people when we first started this we didn't, because this is not usually how you conduct your conversations in your daily life. So we had to learn those rules.

I can remember the first while that I would come into this House and be heckled. I didn't quite

know what to do about that, and it was really tough. One day, because I was a particular target in the past administration when I was first elected in 2011, that at times I would get up to speak and I would have to sit down because I couldn't hear myself, the heckling was so bad.

Then, a Speaker took me aside. He said, you know, the only way to be able to get through it is to turn your body to the Speaker's Chair and pretend that the people on the other side are not there and say what you have to say on behalf of the people you are representing. So I used that technique, because there was no other way to get through it aside from sitting down, because the heckling was so bad.

Mr. Chair, that's not how we conduct our lives outside of this House. So it's very difficult for the people, for the general population who don't really know how the House works, to sit there and to see some of the ways that the House works. I believe the decorum in the House has improved incredibly, and that some of our sessions we really hear one another. Sometimes it's just quiet, but sometimes you really get the sense we are listening to one another and hearing one another. It's very foreign to the people there.

The people who were here, I would not call them protestors. I would call them the people of the province, and it was very frustrating for them. I do hope they come back. I was able to go outside and speak to some of them. I said it's really important that they're there, but I have to abide by the rules in the House. I can't just pop up and talk whenever I want, as do the people in the gallery have to abide by the rules in the House, but this still is the House that belongs to the people of the province.

So I do hope, Mr. Chair, the people do come back and that more people come. It's important for people to see how we go about our business, but it's also important to have respect for the House and how we undertake our business.

Again, the rules are very foreign to our daily living, and we all know that. It's not how we conduct our daily lives. So hopefully – there were people outside. They were crying because of the frustration. Their frustration is they kept saying nobody is listening to us. Nobody is

listening to us, is what they kept saying. When will someone hear what we have to say? The frustration is real. It's palpable. This wasn't theatre. This wasn't drama. These are real people with the real issues that they are dealing with in their lives.

They are out there. They were out there crying, saying nobody is listening to us; grown men and women from our province crying in frustration. To call it anything but what it was, genuine frustration, and people who really care about the province, people who really care about their communities, people who really care about their families. I would encourage all of us to spend time out in that lobby and to speak to people and listen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: I know when the Members go back to their constituencies, when they go back to their districts they listen to the people in their districts. I know that, but then a lot of people are feeling frustrated because they feel they are not being heard. They feel the heavy handedness and the hopelessness of this budget, the message of hopelessness that government is portraying to the province. I believe that is fanning the flames of frustration.

Mr. Chair, I have an email here from Monique Tobin and I would like to read it. The emails keep coming and it's because people want to be heard. Some of the emails have solutions, some of them have ideas, some of them are rife with anger and frustration, some of them are pleading. For the most part, people are reasonable. They know we're in a tough shape, they know that.

I would encourage people to have a listen, not because they're listening to me but it would be very interesting I think for Members to really hear what's in this email. You don't have to listen to me, but listen to the words on this page. I think people will find it interesting.

Hi Gerry, I am forwarding you an email I sent to Ted Blades at CBC concerning this government's disregard for rural communities. I think this further reflects this government's

disinterest in listening to the people of this province and its lack of a plan to propel us forward as a province. Thank you so much for your constant hard work. You must be exhausted ... ta-dah, ta-dah, ta-dah. She says it is completely inexcusable. It's this theme again, Mr. Chair, that our Premier won't truly listen to our voices and unacceptable that he stays silent and will not respond.

This is the letter that she sent to Ted Blades, who is the anchor for *On The Go*, CBC Radio's going home show. Dear Ted, I am writing to you on the final leg of a Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council school tour touring with Andy Jones and Mary-Lynn Bernard to perform the *Queen of Paradise's Garden* storytelling puppet show. We're visiting – this is a really interesting letter, Mr. Chair. We're visiting 10 schools in the Nova Central School District, most of which are in small and fairly remote communities. St. Brendan's Island, Leading Tickles, Cottrell's Cove, Point Leamington, Fogo Island, Change Islands, Twillingate, Triton and Badger.

On this tour, we performed in some of the public libraries located in schools which are being eliminated by this provincial budget. In every community it's all the talk. We hear how well-used these libraries are. Every librarian proudly reports their circulation numbers. The walls of every building display hand drawn colourful signs made by the students that say save our library.

Every member of the school staff and many more community members that we meet tell us they are discouraged and baffled by these cuts and express a lot of their anger and frustration. It's resettlement without using the word, teachers on Fogo Island said to us. We've heard that sentiment echoed repeatedly. On Fogo Island – which we were told brings \$45 million new dollars into the economy annually – they feel the budget is hitting them mid-stride.

Now I see I'm running out of time, Mr. Chair. I look forward to continuing this letter when I speak again.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased to participate in the debate again because I've got a lot to say. As long as we stay here, there are lots of interesting things I want to point out that I've managed to do through my research over the past six months. I'm glad the media has indicated they're interested in some of this because it is certainly an intriguing subject.

An email I just got from somebody who said to me, we see all these signs around of resign, Premier, resign. This person said to me, we don't need a revolving door in the Premier's office like we saw under the previous administration. We don't need premiers coming and going every year or in whatever instance, every few months leaders of our party. We don't need that right now, and we don't need revolving doors for Cabinet ministers either because that's how a lot of these messes were created.

They were asleep at the switch and more worried about their own political survival than they were worried about our survival as a province. They were more worried about that. They said to me, we need a leader that can face the gale not a leader who buckles with the wind when the gale comes. I think that's an interesting perspective. Sometimes you have to make difficult decisions and not do the sorts of things that we saw the previous administration do for the sake of preserving their own political skins.

We still see this intense effort to divert to subterfuge, to not take any responsibility. Like I said, the Member for Mount Pearl, who was the Minister of Health, blames the current Minister of Health for actions taken that affected sick children in the Janeway, actions taking stickers away from children at the Janeway when he was responsible for health. Now he's trying to hang it on the Minister of Health who was not even around when that decision was made.

In fact, the directive that was given – I don't know who gave it but certainly the bottom of it will come up, no doubt – was not to do this until January, which is well after the provincial

election. He's been out there ever since alleging, and surrogates of the Opposition alleging, that somehow this was done on the current Minister of Health's watch. That's just rotten.

As I said before, in the Treasury Board process this past winter, it was the first time that officials in departments had an opportunity to have a discussion with Treasury Board. We are the committee who are responsible for looking after the affairs of the province to try and resurrect our credit rating, because as I said many times before, we're teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. When we go to try to borrow money for the good people of Newfoundland and Labrador – and we're borrowing about \$3½ billion this year. People process that; \$3½ billion we're borrowing this year just to keep essential services in place.

When we go out and try to do that – and our bonds are trading at a couple of categories away from junk bond status, because that's what they did. They trashed the provincial Treasury. We're trying to do that, and everything I hear is don't tax and spend everything. Spend on this and spend on this and spend on this. We're not hearing anything really other than that; other than cut a \$13.3 million program.

Remember, a \$2.7 billion deficit and their solution is to cut full-day kindergarten, which is \$13.3 million annualized and impact 5,000 families in the province through that. Then I don't know where you get the rest of it, because that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface. Then they talk about, well, they are now the standard bearers for education. I beg to differ.

Like I said, I got up before – and I hope the media takes this and takes a good look at it because here is something that really needs a good look, and this is just core government. I know through the Treasury Board process, because I sit on Treasury Board, which the hon. Minister of Finance chairs – Members here are nodding their heads who are on Treasury Board – because we had all of the agencies, boards and commissions also that receive government funding in the Treasury Board. This winter we're trying to get to the bottom of this shemozzle they created.

In core government, in the year before the election \$670,000 was spent on external advertising, marketing and communications by private companies. Now that's a pretty big number, but fast-forward to the year of the election and that crowd increased spending on external marketing and communications to the tune of \$1.7 million – \$2.4 million in core government spent on marketing and communications in an election year. Why was that? Why was there a \$1.7 million increase in external marketing and communications with certain agencies during the election year? Why did they do that?

Not only that, I wish – because I'm saying to the media, you can dig into this. I'm not going to start ATIPPING agencies, boards and commissions because it's not appropriate for me to do that as a member of Treasury Board, but I have some back of a napkin figures here that would blow your mind. If you look at the agencies, boards and commissions, some of these agencies, boards and commissions got calls from staff in the Premier's office and from ministers' staff saying extend this contract, use whatever clause in the contract to extend the duration of the contract.

So there are hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions of additional dollars that were spent by agencies, boards and commissions external to this core government. Beyond the \$2.4 million that was spent in an election year, there's even more money than that. You've got to ask why. Why would there be such a massive explosion in spending on marketing and communications giving money over when they – like I said, the previous government had spent way beyond what we're spending.

If you look at the Estimates documents, you can see across the departments, transportation and communications, all that's down. We've driven those figures down, but this is in addition there. This is in addition.

We're talking about the sorts of things like the one million dollar population growth advertising campaign, the TV ads. I remember I was on a plane leaving here. I could see it on Air Canada flights. You could see it around town. You could see it on TV. You could see it on billboard advertising or whatever; all sorts of advertising

within the province for a million dollars, \$100,000 to produce the advertisements and \$900,000 worth of cost, and then all of this other spending.

If you look at RHAs, regional health authorities, you dig into that, you can see there are hundreds of thousands of dollars more; if you look at other agencies, boards and commissions, hundreds of thousands of dollars more. So why were there millions of dollars more spent in an election year on the purchase of external marketing, communications and advertising by that previous government? Why did they do that? Why did they spend millions of dollars more of taxpayers' dollars last year – because we're only talking about last year – on these external contracts for marketing and promotion than they did the previous year?

It really doesn't make sense, because if it was a small increase – let's say if they went from \$670,000 to \$900,000. If it was a small increase you could say, okay, well there is some explanation for that, but why did it explode? Why did it go up that much? It really doesn't make sense, because within core government it almost quadrupled. The amount that was spent on advertising, marketing, promotion, communications of government departments almost quadrupled in the election year.

Like I said, if I have some back of a napkin figures when we had agencies, boards and commissions, then we said, why did you spend all this extra money on, and what was it on? We've been looking into this since. They said, well, you know, we got a call from the Premier's office or we got a call from a minister's office and we said extend this contract or what have you. Don't exercise the option to go back to tender, don't exercise the option to have another request for proposals, just spend on more marketing communications – in an election year.

What was going on that in an election year core government marketing, promotion and communications spending quadrupled, and then agencies, boards and commissions had a huge increase as well.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Why?

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity to get up in debate. We've gone back to Bill 14. I've had a couple of days of debate and I'm looking forward to the days ahead, continuing debate on an important piece of legislation and to the budget.

It is good to see Members of the government up and speaking. It is great to hear from them in terms of their views on the budget. We will continue the debate.

I listened attentively to the Member for St. John's Centre when she spoke. She talked about the engagement of people, people in the public gallery and people in general over the past couple of days since we've been having debate here. Obviously, since the budget came down we have a lot of input from people in our districts, all of our districts. I get emails and phone calls and so forth from people in my district, and certainly around the province as well. We've all gotten a lot of those and a lot of input.

As the Member had indicated, it's a great exercise in engagement, in discussion, in policy discussion, in issues of importance to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There is no better way to get that than get it directly from individuals as they share their experiences on how a particular budget or how a particular policy affects them. So it's great to hear.

I think it's a very worthwhile exercise in terms of we talk about a filibuster or continuing debate on particular items of importance to people. You get that dialogue back and forth obviously as a government. As a minister you need to stand up and defend decisions you've made and choices you've made. I understand sometimes that's tough, but as an Opposition as well we need to bring forth people's questions, people's concerns, people's suggestions. This has been a great exercise in doing that. That's all about the overall engagement of people as we move through this process.

One of the Members earlier today talked about the impact of the budget and referenced the fact that it's not as bad as you say it's going to be. Well, that's good news. That's good to hear, but I guess we'll see as we move forward with some of the implementation of what was in the budget.

While some of that has started already, we've seen 16.5 cents on gasoline. People have seen that. They've seen it coming right out of their pockets. We have a levy that's to come. We're discussing that here today. We have tax put back on insurance premiums and a whole range of fees, personal income tax. All of that will be laid out over the next number of months in this fiscal year, and people will see the impact as that occurs.

Respectfully, if it's not as bad as it is or – that's something people of the province will decide as we move through. Obviously, right now it has been laid out to them. From what I've seen, I think people think generally it's going to be bad but maybe they'll be proven wrong. I'm not sure.

I know the Minister of Finance, before the budget, indicated that there weren't very many things good in the budget, I don't think anything good in the budget. Since then we've heard a story of there is and there are positives and those types of things.

I know when she made that comment I was quick to say there were a number of programs that have been built over the past number of years that are good programs and were developed collectively with partnerships in the community through various departments, social programs and economic programs. Even the ability to maintain some of those programs is positive, because they have been successful. Those that were maintained we certainly recognize that and say, yes, those were good choices and there are good programs to benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Anytime you can continue to maintain a successful programs that is positive indeed.

Overall, in terms of the budget that's been brought down, some of the indicators even in the documentation around the budget is a little confusing in regard to a stronger tomorrow and a vision of how we're going to see our way

through a tough economic situation. Then, at the end, due to a path or due to a way forward, we're going to clearly articulate, or the government is going to clearly articulate, the steps they're taking on how that's going to improve where we are today and how that's going to lay out over the next couple of years.

Even in their own documentation from the budget, we're looking at a significant decrease in the number of jobs in the province, from roughly 233,700 in 2016 to 200,700 by 2021. That's a loss of 33,000 positions over five years. That's in government's documentation; it's not us generating that. That's from the evidence-based analysis that's been done on the other side that the Premier always talks about that was done and identified. That's significant.

You look at projections for our population, because we know where we are in regard to that. We always talk about our demographics. We need to create that environment in our province, as we've always said, that has strong economic and social values that allow all sectors of our population to want to stay here to contribute socially and economically to our province and continue to drive activity in our province.

Obviously, that all relates back to taxation because we need a contribution from the business community, corporate taxation, business taxation, taxation from individuals, personal income tax and how people contribute. Collectively everybody in society or everybody in the province needs to contribute.

Now how you do that, you do it on a balanced approach. I guess one of the problems with this budget is that people would say it's not balanced. I mean everybody knows there had to be some decisions made. The issue is what were the decisions made, how quickly are they being made and what's the immediate impact on every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. That's the concern we're hearing; too much, too quick. There's no plan laid out after that of how we're going to get to where we need to be as a province.

Some called it a lazy exercise of fees and taxation. On one side of the ledger, that's what it is. At a time as well when we see various aspects of our economy, especially related to the

resource sector, in commodities we're seeing a slowdown. You can't shock the economy. You can't smother the economy with fees and taxes. That's going to make things worse.

There are major concerns, even from economists and business people and everyday Newfoundlanders and Labradorians saying this is too much. The economy is driven by consumers. It is certainly driven by activity, driven by people able to spend money to drive every kind of business there is in our province. That leads governments to the ability to raise the revenue they need to operate the province, but you can't do it to the extreme. There has to be a threshold and it has to be recognized what that threshold is and where that breaking point is. Most would say now we've exceeded that breaking point.

The Member said it's not as bad as we say it's going to be. Well, I hope he's right, but there are a lot of people out there that we're seeing in the past number of weeks and months who don't agree with that assessment. I don't think it has been clearly articulated to support that, but we'll see. Hopefully, he is right. We'll see how it goes, but I don't think the general population out there right now would concur with that.

The population growth; what we're seeing here, based on these numbers the population almost collapsed, and that's concerning because we need people. We need people to continue to live and work in this great province. That continues the growth of our province, and that's extremely important.

We look at things from the Budget Speech. We look at the provincial deficit reduction measures. They're estimated to account for 40 to 50 per cent of predicted declines in these broad measures of economic activity. So what we're seeing is the budget measures are going to dramatically affect their economic activity as we move forward. Now that's an interesting policy direction to take, I guess.

We would think you would take from an economic diversification, from economic activity, from innovative ideas on how you're going to develop new growth. First of all, you're going to sustain where we are in regard to various industries and activities in the economy,

but then how do you be innovative to develop new aspects of the economy to bring in new dollars, new money to help not only sustain but to grow our economy.

So this seems to be an alternate means to slow the economy, reduce economic activity, and somehow we're going to continue to be able to tax and fee everybody and provide all the services and magically being able to continue our province and grow our province, which doesn't sound like a plan to us. I think most people in the province would concur with that and have trouble understanding what exactly it is we're doing.

Now sometimes in Question Period we've been told we don't understand. We don't understand, the media doesn't understand. There are all kinds of people in the province who don't understand. Well, all we're saying is tell us so we can understand. The people of the province, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians making their way in this province, doing the best they can, want to contribute, have contributed to the province, everybody who lives here have done a good job at that, well, they just want to know. Tell us, we don't understand.

We even get to the point here in the House in Question Period, on the other side, is that you're not asking the right questions. Imagine, telling the Opposition you're not asking the right questions. We're asking on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I ask on behalf of the people of Ferryland District as a critic. I ask on behalf of people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a job on the other side to answer the questions. Don't tell us what questions to ask. We'll ask questions on behalf of our constituents, and we'll ask questions on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's your job as minister to answer the questions, to articulate what your vision is. Everybody may not agree with it, but the problem with this is we don't know what it is. It hasn't been articulated. We don't know what the vision and the direction is, so we're having a debate about it.

Mr. Chair, I certainly look forward to the days ahead getting up and having further discussions in regard to this budget and this particular bill. I think there is much more to discuss.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise again today and to be able to speak and talk about the Big Land and the good people of Labrador.

For this next few minutes I want to once again talk about the proposal in the 2016 Budget for the \$750,000 to update the feasibility study on the fixed link across the Strait of Bell Isle. I know Members opposite have brought it up several times in their comments. They feel that while they try to articulate that they are not really against a fixed link across the Strait of Bell Isle, they feel it's not right to do it in this budget.

Again, I would ask, when is the right time? The people of Labrador have been waiting for this for a long, long time. Little do people know that this is just as much – or more, I would think – a benefit for the Island portion of the province than it is for Labrador.

When I got up earlier I talked about mining and how important that is to the provincial economy. We talk about looking at ways to diversify the economy and to improve the economy of the province. I just want to take a few minutes to draw an analogy to the fixed link to Prince Edward Island; some interesting statistics, just a little bit of history. In PEI, the ferry service started in 1915, by the way. The first ferry to go from New Brunswick to PEI was in 1915.

I remember as a little boy, that's a long, long time ago, but I do remember when the first ferry came across the Strait of Bell Isle. I think I remember the name. I think it was the *Avalon Coaster*. She carried, I think it was six vehicles; four on deck – four in the back and two in the front. It was like a schooner-type of vessel. Things improved since then. Today, we have the *Apollo* of course.

Do you know what? When you look at it and how we compare to PEI – I've always been a proponent of the fixed link across Labrador and many of my relatives have. I can go back and

talk about people like Tom Kierans, Burf Ploughman, Danny Dumaresque and all them who are all proponents of the fixed link. Some of them have passed on, unfortunately.

Discussion of the fixed link to PEI, do you know when the first discussion took place? We're talking about a little island here off the coast of New Brunswick. The first discussion on a fixed link –

AN HON. MEMBER: In 1865.

MR. LETTO: You're close, you're very close. The first discussion on a fixed link to Prince Edward Island took place in 1870. It was done by a gentleman by the name of George Howlan, who called for construction of a railway tunnel between Abegweit Passage at the same time that the Prince Edward Island ferry was being built across the province in the 1870s. That was taken then to the legislature, of course, in the British Parliament.

The gentleman passed on and then discussions died, but they were revived again in 1950. In the 1960s the discussion started again. We have to remember now, they had a ferry service at this time. They went through the feasibility and there was a plebiscite in 1988.

Mr. Chair, 59 per cent of the – and I recall that as well, because there were a lot of people who didn't want the fixed link to PEI at the time. They were called the – I think the group was Friends of the Island. Friends of the Island were opponents. Then you had another group, Islanders for a Better Tomorrow. Now, doesn't that sound familiar – Islanders for a Better Tomorrow. Here we are. They were the proponents of the link. They wanted the link.

The result of the plebiscite was 59.4 per cent. The construction was carried out and as we all know today – and I would venture to guess that many people in this House of Assembly and in the galleries or wherever, and certainly in the province, have used the fixed link to Prince Edward Island.

It was open on May 31. The first vehicle to cross the fixed link was May 31, 1997. That's an important date to remember, because I'm going to give you a few statistics now. By the way, it

was built by a partnership of course. It was built by the private sector and now it has taken –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LETTO: That's right.

Today, how the statistics – my time is quickly running out, so I have to move quickly. Before 1996, Prince Edward Island – in 1996, for instance – tourism is their forte of course, that and potatoes, because I have statistics on both. It is interesting to compare the two.

You have to remember now, PEI is the island and, of course, the mainland. We can say Newfoundland, then in Labrador – 740,000 people visited the island in 1996. In 1997, the first year that the bridge opened, of course it was a phenomenon at the time and it was a novelty, 1.2 million people visited Prince Edward Island in 1997.

We talk about tourism here as an industry that we should be developing; yet, we have to stand in this House as a government and defend \$750,000 that we're proposing to spend to update the study to get us to the point where we can at least see the feasibility of a link across the Strait of Belle Isle. It's unbelievable.

The link has made a difference in the export of food. Potato production has increased dramatically. An increased number of food processing plants, creating items such as French fries and potato chips. People may laugh at that, but that's the economy of PEI. The economy of PEI is tourism and potatoes. That is their economy. We can have the same thing. We can have the same thing as a province. It may not be potatoes but we do have a lot of potential in agriculture, I can guarantee you that.

There has been a revolution in the island's retail sector since the opening of the Confederation Bridge. Before 1997, big box stores were rare. They were found in the Maritimes, Halifax, Moncton or St. John, but now they are on the island.

So, Mr. Chair, here we are in 2016, and when you look at it that the first discussion around a fixed link to PEI took place in 1870 and here we are in 2016 fighting with the Official

Opposition, fighting with the Third Party, fighting with the Independent Member to spend \$750,000 on a study. It's unbelievable.

We can be PEI. We can be. We can double our tourism industry, but because it's so far away, it's out there in Labrador – from the northern tip of the Northern Peninsula to Labrador – it's not a priority. If it was a priority – they're saying it's not true. If it was a priority, you wouldn't be arguing against the \$750,000 that's in the budget. So you can't have it both ways. It's a project whose time has come, Mr. Chair.

It can be paid for. We as a people don't have to pay for it. There are ways to pay for such construction. They did it in PEI. They doubled their exports, they doubled their tourism.

Here we are today in 2016 – what's the date, June 8 or 9?

AN HON. MEMBER: June 8.

MR. LETTO: It depends, it could be the 7th, it depends on whether you're in the House of Assembly or not.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's still Tuesday.

MR. LETTO: It's still Tuesday. Here we are, I'm standing in the House of Assembly as the Member for Labrador West and a born Labradorian – a proud Labradorian by the way, the same as my Member for Torngat, a proud Labradorian – fighting for \$750,000 to try to improve the economy of this province when the economy, as we all know, has been hit a terrible, terrible blow.

AN HON. MEMBER: On a budget over \$8½ billion.

MR. LETTO: On a budget over \$8½ billion. The Members on the opposite side keep saying, what are you doing for diversification? Well, how can you diversify if you don't have the infrastructure in place to do it? That's all we're saying.

Mr. Chair, I'm very passionate about this as you can see. It's something that I've been pushing for a long, long time and I will not give up.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it's an absolute pleasure, as I say every time I get up, to represent the people that elected me, the District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis. I applaud the speaker who just got up because we're all like it b'y. We're all passionate.

We're passionate about where we're from, we're proud of who we are. That's who we are as people. As Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, that's who we are. We're very proud of our province and we're here to do the best we can for our province and for our people.

I'm going to just touch on the first part – usually I spend the full, but I'm just going to spend a couple of minutes on a concern that I have about the whole process that we're doing this year. It really hits home when you speak to people who are in the public service, because I speak to a lot of people in the public service. I've been around the building now for eight years. I'm not a bad fellow, I'm a pretty friendly fellow. If you want to have a talk we can have a chat. Whether it could be about moose hunting or hockey or sports or anything at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: And I do speak to people. I was over in the Department of Business for a year and I made a lot of good friends there. I feel that I've spoken to a lot of people in my district that work in government.

When the budget process came down and government decided, listen, we're going to put one budget – now this is the first time, I could be wrong now. I'm not sure. If I'm wrong, I will say, listen, I'm wrong. I think it's the first time

since I've been here, and I don't know of any other time, that there were two budgets in one year. Now maybe it was, maybe in an election year or sometime, maybe there was something – I don't know. It just seems that the only – I've never heard tell of it before.

I don't think the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, they don't know what to expect. It's almost like fear. It's like, okay, this budget was so bad – now this is the way it was first with people talking about it. They said, oh my God, this budget is so bad. How bad is going to be the next one, and what's next. That fear that you put into people affects our economy.

When you look at young people; I know a young girl building a house. This is their first house they're building and she's very worried. She said, Kev, what's going to happen? What happened with government, what we did – now I can't say what we did, what government did. They put out a notice to people. I think they're mainly considered temporary, not full-time employees – 2,500 of them got a notice that their contract is good until September 30.

So you went out and told these people, listen here, the budget's coming down. The second one's coming in October, but you're only good until September 30. What did that do to the people? I mean that's a person, a young girl who's building a house. The fear it put in her and to try to believe – what's going to happen to the future.

Mr. Chair, I look at people and how we spend our money and how we do things. We talked today about insurance and we talked about – one Member mentioned that it was in 2008 that insurance was first taken off and now we're putting it back on.

It's a similar thing with this second budget. The second budget is after putting the fear into people, and I know. I spoke to people who are building homes. I spoke to people that are contractors. They tell me, Kevin, it's going to be a bad year. It's going to be a bad year because there's a lot of fear out there. People are generally worried. They are worried about what's going to happen to their jobs.

I know people in the real estate market are saying it's not looking good. It's not looking good when it comes to that stuff. That's what happens when you do the things we're doing. The fear you put in society. That should have been all done in the one budget so that people would have an idea of where they are and what's going to happen to their lives.

We're in the midst of negotiations with unions. I would imagine most of the unions out there understand. You might not think they understand but there are a lot of them out there that do understand where we are.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay, I'm going to straighten that up now in second.

Unions I think are understanding of where we are fiscally, where the province is. They understand there are a lot of things going to happen in – I would imagine a negotiation phase is, they're ranking up now and saying, okay, this is what we have to get ready, let's go in and negotiate. They are willing to negotiate, I would imagine, and they are willing to negotiate fair.

Government took a different approach all together. Government went out and hired – I heard the RNC this morning, a person from the RNC unit and they said hired guns. That's what he called them, hired guns. He said they went and got this big negotiating team that they are going to negotiate with the unions, but a major problem happened this week. Some Members over there today mentioned about falling asleep at the wheel. That was a comment that was said about the previous government. They fell asleep at the wheel, they said – fell asleep at the wheel.

Now, I don't know what happened with the hired guns and I don't know what happened – I know the Minister of Finance yesterday, I don't know if it was an apology or I made a mistake. It was like, oops, we forgot to do that. Now, I don't know how you're going to do it. I really don't know how you're going to do the negotiations this summer with the other unions.

AN HON. MEMBER: Twice, isn't it?

MR. K. PARSONS: Oh, they did it twice. It's not like they did it once.

I listened to the RNC this morning. They are saying that's not fair, because here are two unions, the Nurses' Union and Allied Health Professionals union. The lady on the phone this morning from the Health Professionals, they said: Will you go and negotiate? She basically said: Are you nuts! Listen, this is a year away. We have a year. They didn't do their due diligence. They didn't do what they needed to do. No way, we'll listen to see what they have to say, but if anything comes out of collective bargaining, we're not going to be there. The Nurses' Union, when they did their news conference the other day, the smile on their faces was amazing.

You talk about falling asleep at the wheel. My God, you hired – is it \$600 an hour that they're paying? I don't know, I may be wrong on that one. You can correct me on that, but I know it's a lot more money than most people in Newfoundland and Labrador make. It's hired to make sure that negotiations are done fair and done, I suppose, on time. Now they're not done on time because oops, again, we made a mistake. I'm very, very sorry about that mistake, but we made a mistake.

Then when asked in Question Period yesterday – and we hear this all the time. I really have to say Question Period – it can't be question and answer period, it's Question Period because there are no answers come by. We were wondering yesterday – I think one of the Members here asked the question: What does that mean? What's the cost? Do you have a cost of how much this is going to cost? There was no answer.

It's unfortunate that mistake had to be made. It's very unfortunate, but that's a big mistake when we look at all the unions and all the negotiations. I don't know, maybe if we had to let the people in Treasury Board, the people that do the negotiations, the people that normally do it, maybe that mistake wouldn't have been made. I don't know. I really don't know if that's true. I really don't know.

I'm sure we have public servants that have been doing negotiations and I'm sure they know what

negotiations – and this rule, this was something that should have been known by everyone. The mistake that was made should never have been made. Obviously, again it was, oops, I'm sorry.

That's okay; we're after hearing that before. We heard about contracts that weren't being read. That's a big problem. Not only is the budget – see, you have to understand the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're smarter than people give them credit for because they're following – they've lost trust in government because of all these mistakes.

I believe the mistake with the HST, jumped aboard with it, get rid of the HST. Then, all of a sudden, \$100 million in revenue was gone and then say, oops, no, we're going to do that now. There are a lot of mistakes being made. A lot of mistakes were made.

The people that make the mistakes are the ones that have to own up to them. You can put all the blame on everybody else in the world, but when you make a mistake you're the one that should be the one to own up to it.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to observe. I don't know, Mr. Chair, if it's \$600 an hour or not. It's strange for the Member to get up – this absurdity of the nature of the debate that a Member can get up here and make allegations about what external contracts are, and not have a single note on it, not know what the facts are, just throw numbers out in the air like it's factual and then say, I don't know if that's the number or not, but it sounds right to me or whatever. Leave it to somebody else to correct the record.

If you're going to go throwing around allegations, at least go back and read Hansard when the hon. Minister of Finance answered the question in Treasury Board about what the number is. If you're going to throw it out there, know what it is because otherwise it doesn't have much – it doesn't make much sense to me.

I'm going to have a chat about Muskrat Falls too, Mr. Chair, because I think it's really relevant to the discussion. The Member for Cape St. Francis keeps getting up and talks about his concern for seniors. God help seniors when Muskrat Falls' juice starts to flow there based on just what I have seen.

I just want to go back to the Muskrat Falls debate, or such as it was, because when this project was originally announced it was put out there, we had a red-hot economy, we had a blue-hot economy, we had a white-hot economy, every colour of the rainbow-hot economy according to the government of the day. It was all based on oil projections. Or actually it wasn't really projections, figures from the day that really if you looked back now, I suppose hindsight is 20/20, but it had no basis in reality.

We said we need to put this through the Public Utilities Board because they wanted to spend billions of dollars on that project. Now, we know since then that our predictions that the cost of this megaproject would balloon are now starting to bear fruit, that's actually coming true. You didn't have to be a wizard or an engineer or an expert or a financier to see this coming. All you had to do was look at what's going on in the rest of the world with megaprojects around the building of dams for hydroelectricity.

So we said we need to send this to the Public Utilities Board. The government of the day, the crowd opposite said absolutely not. In Nova Scotia, where Emera was part of this with the Maritime link, they actually own a third I believe, they own a large portion – I think it's a third of the Labrador Island link. Emera had to go to the Public Utilities Board, the UARB in Nova Scotia and go through a regulatory process but the government of the day, they more or less said the Public Utilities Board had no say into it.

Then when they caved, they drafted the question such that they disabled the Public Utilities Board from actually doing what ought to be done, which is a thorough investigation of whether or not Muskrat Falls was as good as what they're saying. Why is this relevant? Because this year in the midst of a fiscal nightmare, the province on the edge of bankruptcy, we have to give over a billion dollars to this project if we are going to keep it going, and the cost continued to balloon.

Wait till the revised costs on the schedule come out, I say.

Then we said, well, let's debate Muskrat Falls in the House of Assembly – because of what I just said. The potential for billions of dollars of cost overruns and problems, and then the potential for seniors and everyone in the province frankly to be adversely impacted by potentially exorbitant power rates in comparison to what people pay now. They said, no, we're not debating that in the House of Assembly.

One of the ministers went on TV and basically said the Opposition are not smart enough. There is nobody over there has the depth to debate Muskrat Falls. That would be more or less the same as if I got up here and said this is a useless discussion because the Opposition doesn't know anything about the budget. I would never say that. The Opposition is entitled, it's their job to hold the government to account. If I was over there again I would be doing much of what they are doing, which is asking questions, raising concerns, bringing in emails, trying to bring concerns to government's – bring it to the table.

They said no, no, none of you are bright enough to discuss Muskrat Falls at all. Those of us who were in the Opposition were elected the same as everybody else was. We had just as much of a right to raise questions here but no, we're all too stunned. Frankly, to be honest, their attitude was the people of the province are too stunned. They didn't know as much as what they did about Muskrat Falls.

Anyways, the pressure went on. Then they said oh, well, we'll do it on Private Members' Day – which is a two hour block of debate which has to end at 5 o'clock in the day. The Leader of the Third Party barely had an opportunity to say anything at all. Because of the procedural shenanigans that went on here that day she barely even got a word in, didn't say anything, and she's leading a caucus of five people over there. So we had this debate, it was a faux debate, it was phoney.

Then the legislation had to come in. I'll never forget it, because I've got a young child and it was getting up close to Christmas, and you know you try to do your Christmas shopping and try to spend time with family, have people

coming in from away, and we were here in the House of Assembly engaged in a filibuster, much like we are now, hitting up against Christmastime. This is how they pushed this through. People had to go home – what were we going to do, either pass Muskrat Falls or stay here until December 25 and onwards. If you go back and read Hansard, you can see language like that, we'll stay here as long as you want.

So basically, hitting up against Christmas holidays, the government had a majority and rammed Muskrat Falls right down our throats. Like I said, lampooned everything we had to say. Nothing we had to say made any sense, we were all too stunned to understand what was going on, and then all the Members over there – the Members who are now calling on the Premier to resign, alleging all sorts of things about this budget. Saying, oh, if you don't build an extension to a school, if you use modular classrooms then you should resign, or you should vote against the budget because there are busing changes. Every one of those Members got up here and they were counted and voted in favour of Muskrat Falls. Much like they did during the filibuster on Bill 29.

Now, here we are six months into it – here's the interesting part, actually. This also is extremely important and necessary for the public to know. We asked officials from Nalcor, now the former CEO and the former chair of the board, we asked them to come into Treasury Board – and their chief financial officer, we asked them to come in and discuss their budget. The same as everybody else, because when you're giving billions of dollars over to a public agency, a Crown corporation, in the least, those of us who sit on Treasury Board have an obligation to ask questions.

When we're talking about cutting from other areas, we have an obligation to see if there are savings that can be achieved at Nalcor.

They came in, one of the first things they said is that we've never been asked to appear before Treasury Board before. We have spent billions of borrowed money, effectively, because that's how the previous government operated, was borrow, borrow, borrow. The previous government had spent billions of dollars of borrowed money on Nalcor and not one time did those officials sit with the Treasury Board

ministers to have a discussion about the finances at Nalcor and its various subsidiaries, operations, and particularly the Muskrat Falls Project.

That's mind boggling. That was the level of oversight that we had on that project. That government was so – and you have to remember the time. The Premier's seat – now all resign, resign. Of course they want the Premier to resign because their practice, the modus operandi, the way they operated was that seat was like a revolving door. It went around and around and around. We had 4½ premiers in about the space of six years or five years.

Not only that, ministers of Education. When I came in here, just in a four-year period, we had Darin King, then we had Clyde Jackman, then we had Susan Sullivan, then we had Derrick Dalley, then we had Susan Sullivan. We had five people in this seat. No wonder everything went off the rails, because they were asleep at the switch. The preservation of their political skins occupied so much of their time that they didn't have the time to do the necessary things that government ought to do to ensure people's money is being spent responsibly. That's a fact. It's really sad that we're here today being lectured by people responsible for that.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I certainly don't intend on spending any time lecturing anybody. I understand the frustration that the minister raises there. I think we can all look back on every administration that's ever been in government for any party and we can pick apart stuff. We can do that and there's enough blame to go around in all parties, all political stripes, all government, but that's not what we're here to talk about.

We're here to talk about this budget. That's what we're here to talk about, this budget. The people

are contacting me. That's what they want to talk about. They want to talk about this budget.

I just want to say I heard the Minister of Education, not this time but the last time he spoke. He talked about the best you can do is come up with – I think he said \$13 million. You're complaining about the budget, you're complaining about there's no money to relieve tax and so on, and the best you can come up with is cut full-day kindergarten to save \$13 million.

Now, I'm not going to speak for the NDP. I'm not going to speak for the Official Opposition, if that's what they're getting at. I don't think it's what they're getting at, but I'm not going to speak for them. I'll speak for myself.

Full-day kindergarten, for me, is not about the \$13 million. Now, if we can save \$13 million, if that translates into if we leave things as is we save \$13 million and we don't hurt existing programs, and that's \$13 million we have that we can now not close libraries and we can cut some of these taxes, or not tax books and all of this, that's a bonus. If that's the case, that's a good thing.

When I'm talking about full-day kindergarten, what I'm talking about is a fact that what I'm hearing from the school councils and the schools in my district and so on, is they feel that – and I'm being told we have situations where because we're trying to accommodate full-day kindergarten in some schools, including the one in my district, we're jamming kids into a classroom that's too small, because the space is not there. We're jamming them into a classroom that's too small.

Then we're hearing about team teaching and multigrading. Yeah, maybe that's happening in other places in the world, and maybe it's happening in parts of rural Newfoundland. I'm not saying it's not, but it's never happened in our area. Why would we go to the lowest common denominator? Let's raise everyone to the highest common denominator, not go to the lowest common denominator.

Then we hear about students with special needs. We're hearing that the resources are not going to be there for those students. We're talking about

class cap sizes being raised and the impact that's going to have.

I understand full-day kindergarten is a good thing. I understand it. I support full-day kindergarten. I think people in general support it, but all we're saying – or all I'm saying, I should say – is don't implement it until you can implement it properly, that you have the proper amount of space, that it's properly resourced, that we can afford to do it and we're not going to damage any of the existing programs. We're not going to do harm to any of the existing programs.

If you can do all that, then I'm on board 100 per cent. If we could do all that and do it that way, I'm 100 per cent on board, but that's not what's happening. That's not what I'm hearing at least. That's not what I'm hearing from the school, it's not what I'm hearing from parents and school councils and so on. That's not what I'm hearing. I'm hearing we're doing this and we're going to harm something else. That's the issue. It's not about the \$13 million.

My inclination – and the minister knows the numbers, I know. I'm the first to admit that. The minister talked about \$13 million. So if you didn't implement full-day kindergarten and you left things status quo in that regard, then that \$13 million you're spending on full-day kindergarten maybe that could be used to make sure there are enough resources, if they don't already exist, for children with special needs and all those issues. So that we have the Intensive Core French for all children and we don't have any children falling through the cracks. Use the \$13 million for that.

If there's enough money to take care of that and there are a few million leftover, now we can start talking about putting that towards not shutting down libraries, not taxing books and things of that matter. That's all I'm saying. The minister said it's about – all you can come up with is \$13 million to save money for taxes. That's not what I'm saying. Maybe other people are saying it, I'm not. I just want to be clear on that point.

It comes down to the choices. That's a choice that's being made. I think it's not the right choice at this time. I'm not saying it would

never be the choice, but at this time. That's all we're saying. That's all I'm saying.

I also heard the Member for Lab West. I'm going to say again for the record, this has nothing to do with us and them. Not for me. Admittedly, I'm not from Labrador. I have no family in Labrador. My wife has some family in Labrador. I'm not sure if they're originally from there, they moved there, but she does have some.

I've been to Labrador once in my life. I flew over to Blanc Sablon. I went over to L'Anse au Clair and whatever once. That's it. That's all I've been over there. I'm not pretending to be any expert on Labrador or know much about it because I don't. I try to listen in the House and understand, but I can't understand because I had never really been there, never lived there. I'm not going to even pretend that I do.

If I was the Member for Labrador and I know this is something that the people want, it's a dream and maybe it can be a reality, I can understand. As the Member for that district, of course you're going to advocate for it. I would think that all four Members from Labrador are going to advocate for it. I don't blame them for advocating for it, not at all, but the only point that's being made – and it's not saying they shouldn't have the link.

The practical point, besides the \$750,000 it's going to cost that you can argue, given that we don't have money for anything else – are we going to spend that money. That aside, let's say if we had the \$750,000 and it wasn't going to harm something else. Let's say if that was the case, the point that was raised to me – which I never thought of until this person raised it – was to say: Well, Paul, if they do the study this year and it comes back that yes, it is feasible, it's a good idea, the technology is there, it's possible. If they came back with that and said, well, that's going to cost a billion dollars or two billion or whatever the number is. Maybe it's a half billion, I don't know. I expect it will be a lot more than that, but if they did, what are you going to do? When is this going to happen? Where is the money to?

The government is saying we won't reach surplus until 2017. That's what they're projecting and they're hoping. There will be no

surplus, so there's no extra cash. We have the Waterford Hospital that's been promised. I don't know what that's going to cost. It's going to be a lot of money. It's going to be in the hundreds of millions, I would imagine.

We have the Corner Brook hospital which has been promised. That was a billion dollars at one point. Then they said we're going to try to whittle it down to less than that, but now with inflation and overruns it's probably going to be a billion dollars, I'm suspecting. I don't know, but I'm suspecting. Those are promises that are already made. So where would the money come from to do it? I don't know where the money is going to come from anywhere in the near future.

Now, if the Minister of Finance can tell us the plan where that money would come from – if that study was done and it was shown that was a good idea and it would be feasible and it was going to cost a billion dollars or two, if she can say here's where the money is and that's going to happen in the short term, if she could do that, then that would be great, and I'd support it. I would support that if it made sense and the money was there and it was reasonable, but I don't see where that's going to happen, that's all.

Like a person said to me, well, if it's going to take – if you do it and you say it's feasible, and it's going to be 10 years before we can even think about designing it or building it or whatever, by the time that happens technology could be changed, the costs could be all changed and you would have to do it all over again. Looking at it from that perspective, does it make sense to do it now? That's the question.

That doesn't mean I'm against it and it doesn't mean I'm against Labrador, but it is still \$750,000 now that could be gone towards not shutting down three-quarters of the libraries. A million dollars is what it costs to shut down those libraries; \$750,000 is three-quarters of that. So three-quarters of the libraries could be saved just by not doing that expenditure this year.

Again, these are some of the choices. I'm not against Labrador, absolutely not. I'd love to see it happen. If it's feasible, I hope it does happen someday, but these are things that people are

telling me. I'm just bringing it forward as alternatives and other options.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly an honour for me to stand again and speak about the bill that we're discussing. I just want to make a couple of comments.

The Member for Cape St. Francis mentioned the fact that there were a lot of notices went out that the end of September would be a contract ending. The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board can correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is we do have a number of part-time workers that it's a practice for us every year to give notice that it's part time and they keep being renewed. So I don't think it's anything new. I think the Member should have probably known that since he would have dealt with that situation.

One of the other things I wanted to make mention, Mr. Chair, is the term that's been used, and the term has been hopelessness. I think the hopelessness piece that we need to talk about is the debt that we have, because if we cannot get our debt in check, it will be hopeless for everybody. I think that's important for us to realize.

I just want to also – and I think I mentioned before, and I might be a thousand dollars out each way, but I wanted to just bring it up again because I think the debt that we have and the interest we're paying on our debt is something we need to understand fully. We have the highest per capita debt of any province in Canada; \$23,000 per capita.

If you listen to Members opposite and don't cut any services, don't do too much too fast, don't get anything under control – if we kept the status quo and did nothing, I have said it before and I'll say it again, before the end of this mandate, in this government, we will be paying \$2 billion in interest. Mr. Chair, \$2 billion, not principle – \$2 billion in interest.

Guess what? If we think we're bad now per capita, it would increase to \$54,000 per person in this province. When we say per capita, Mr. Chair, we're talking about man, woman and child – \$54,000 per person. Mr. Chair, I have a difficult time to get that figure in my head.

Now, Mr. Chair, one of the other things I wanted to talk about, our folks on the other side are talking about full-day kindergarten. Delay it. Guess what? They are doing an absolute, fabulous job. They're doing the job they're supposed to be doing. They are in Opposition.

I would bet my last cheque really, if we were standing in this House now and saying we are not implementing full-day kindergarten, they would be on the side: Shame on you fellows! Shame on you fellows not implementing full-day kindergarten when we spent \$30 million getting ready for it and now all of a sudden you're not implementing. That would be the discussion, because that's what they're supposed to do. That's what they're supposed to do.

I'm not surprised, and I'm sure people listening are not surprised. Because if it was turned the other way and we were saying today, we're standing up, we're not implementing full-day kindergarten, they would be over there saying shame on you for breaking another promise, and shame on you for not implementing full-day kindergarten. Mr. Chair, we understand that.

One of the other things I just wanted to mention is the fact that – I know my good colleague has talked about the fixed link. Well, let me tell the Member opposite as well, we are now living in 2016 and there are all kinds of other opportunities. We are a government that will be open to opportunities that probably were not done in the past. As a result of that, there may be opportunities for looking at P3 opportunities, there may be private investment into a fixed link. There are other ways in which we can go about getting that done.

It's not a case of not doing anything about this. It's a case of looking at what would be the best option, and that's certainly something we will be continuing to do.

CHAIR (Finn): Seeing no further speakers –

The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand and to speak again to Bill 14, the Liberal levy.

When I last spoke, Mr. Chair, I started reading a letter that Monique Tobin had written to Ted Blades, who is the anchor for the CBC radio program, *On the Go*. It's a fantastic radio program. It sums up what's happened in the day and helps people enter into their home life if they are regular workers during the regular work day. It's a very interesting letter, and it's about libraries. I think it's interesting because it carries through the theme of people feeling that government is not listening to them. That's what this filibuster is about, Mr. Chair. People have so clearly said to us that they feel a sense of despair because of the effects of the budget, despair because of the message around the budget, but also they feel that government is not listening, that they are not being heard. That theme recurs again and again and again in all the emails that we are receiving.

Again, this is a very interesting letter that went to CBC. I would think the Members of the House and the people in the gallery and the people at home – and it's great to see people back in people's gallery attending the business of the province. I'm very glad to see that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. ROGERS: Again, as I had mentioned, sometimes the rules and procedures of our House seem very foreign. It's not the way that we conduct ourselves in our daily lives. So it can sometimes be very frustrating for those of us here in the House, and also very frustrating for people in the galleries – particularly during this time when there appears to be so much frustration because people are feeling that government is not hearing them, is not listening. We know that there's a difference between listening and listening with the real intent to hear.

So, on with the letter that Monique Tobin wrote to Ted Blades at CBC. Dear Ted, I'm writing to

you on the final leg of a Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council school tour, touring with Andy Jones and Mary-Lynn Bernard to perform *The Queen of Paradise's Garden* storytelling puppet show. We are visiting 10 schools in the Nova Central School District, most of which are in small and fairly remote communities: St. Brendan's Island, Leading Tickles, Cottrell's Cove, Point Leamington, Fogo Island, Change Islands, Twillingate, Triton and Badger.

On this tour, we've performed in some of the public libraries located in schools which are being eliminated by this provincial budget. In every community, it's all the talk. We can imagine that, Mr. Chair, the people that are losing their libraries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Chair, I'm finding it a little bit hard to hear myself because of the conversation that's happening directly across the floor by the Members. Perhaps they could either move it outside the House, just so that it's a little easier to speak. I'm asking for your protection, Mr. Chair.

In every community, it's all the talk. We hear how well used these libraries are. Every librarian proudly reports their circulation numbers. The walls of every building display hand-drawn colourful signs made by the students that say: save our library. Every Member of the school staff and many more community members that we meet tell us that they are discouraged and baffled by these cuts and express a lot of their anger and frustration. It's resettlement without using the word, teachers on Fogo Island said to us. We've heard that sentiment echoed repeatedly.

On Fogo Island, which we were told brings \$45 million – new dollars – into the economy annually, they feel the budget is hitting them mid-stride. I happened to stay at Quintal House bed and breakfast on Fogo, owned and operated by Nadine Decker who is the Gander – New-Wes-Valley regional representative of the Provincial Council of the Rural Secretariat. I was barely in the door and she was talking in angry disbelief, indignant about the sudden dissolution of the regional councils on budget day. As we know, Mr. Chair, those regional

councils were disbanded on budget day. They had such an important role to play in the economic development of their communities.

She went on to say: The email to announce it came without warning – Nadine said – which she found especially galling, given that it was Volunteer Week and there was no acknowledgement of her 11 years of volunteer work with the council, or any expression of the value of the group, simply a notice of its dissolution effective immediately.

Imagine how that might feel, Mr. Chair. This woman served on that board as a volunteer in the best interests of her community and all she got was a notice that it's over. No thank you, no chance to debrief, nothing, it's gone. It's just simply gone. No winding down, no need to submit reports, research and recommendations that the group had been working on over a long period of time to put together. These folks were working together on community economic development.

Nadine spoke almost breathlessly about how the group had developed into a well-connected, regional voice that had learned how to work together to give input on policies to address long-standing issues like poor water quality. In St. Brendan's, the water is not potable due to high arsenic levels. In other communities, we were surprised to experience water with an odour and heavy discolouration, a situation residents were well used to over many years.

As we know, Mr. Chair, there are many communities with boil orders in their community where they have to boil their drinking waters, or sometimes even boiling the drinking water doesn't make it safe. Water dispensers, water purifiers and bottled waters are the methods of clean water delivery in these communities. It seems like Third World conditions. We don't expect that in North America.

The secretariat's regional council was working to address this issue and other issues long undealt with by government, such as – this is a very important one for the people on Change Islands – an oil spill off Change Islands that, for years, had produced a visible oil slick of bunker

sea and diesel, contaminating the water, fishery stocks, sea life and fishing gear in the area.

Nadine compared Newfoundland to Russia, as a society without a direct voice in governance. Government is a noun. We have that, Nadine said; we need governance. It's so interesting again because these were people who were working hard to look at diversification in their communities and economic development in their communities.

She praised the work of Bruce Gilbert and Jenny Rockett, both wonderful employees at the Office of Public Engagement, who work closely with the regional councils, encouraging their input, fostering their development as an active and well-functioning body that could shift government policy. The regional secretariat councils was his baby, Nadine said, and the councils had grown over years, of meeting, talking, figuring it out, into a group that she said was poised to help government to more effectively govern their areas.

So we have been on the road for eight days and listening to CBC coverage whenever we can. Has this story of eliminating the voice of rural stakeholders from direct input and involvement with government been explored? Monique.

Mr. Chair, that's exactly what people are talking about. They're talking about the desire to be heard by government. Again, as this government has no direct plan to move the province forward, aside from getting to surplus in seven years, these are people who were engaged in their communities, who are identifying ways of making their communities more sustainable. And they'd worked at it for years. That was a lot of work done, and a lot of creative work done and substantial work. Government, just by a stroke of the pen, I guess doing that line-by-line analysis without looking at the direct effect of their cuts on what it means to rural communities – and this is such a clear example of that.

We know, all of us in the House know, that the economy of this province was built on the backs of rural communities. These rural communities know what's needed in their areas. I am sure the Members who represent rural communities have met with these councils in their districts. They

were just closed, just like that, with no warning, with no reports, with no windup.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair acknowledges the hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to stand and have a few minutes. I listened to the Members opposite, the Member for St. John's Centre, and I welcome the people in the gallery also. It's always nice to listen. Obviously, I enjoy people. I go out to all the meetings that I'm asked to, to meet.

Mr. Chair, I have no problem sitting here and listening to the issues, absolutely none. I have no problem with anybody on this side of the House sitting down and listening to the issues; but, Mr. Chair, the Member for St. John's Centre just got up and talked about how sustainable the communities in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – and I'm glad there are people in the gallery to listen to this. I'm glad, I'm really glad, so that people can't say, well, he said this, she said that.

That Member – we put \$20 million in so we can leverage federal money for towns and small communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. She stood on her feet and said it was nothing but a slush fund. That we were using it for a slush fund; \$20 million to leverage federal money for small towns in the province. She stood on her feet – and I offered to take her and show it to her. I offered to take her and show her where we're leveraging federal money. She would not take me up on the offer.

The Member was up criticizing this government – and I'm some glad there are people here listening to this, Mr. Chair, because I have no problem debating the issues. I have no problem. There are issues in this budget that we have to count. I have absolutely no problem.

I offered the Member a briefing on this, a briefing. In my hand there's \$180 million to be spent in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, all across, for capital works, for small projects, so they can have proper water and sewer. The Member still wouldn't take me up on the

briefing, but stands up on her feet and starts criticizing government and me, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs. She stands up and says we're not doing anything for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I just have to defend it. I really just have to defend it.

This same Member for St. John's Centre, I offered to sit down and show her what money the federal government came through with, what we're putting up and what municipalities are putting up. Municipalities are putting up their share also. When I walked over to her and the co-leader of the Third Party, I said, do you know what you're saying about it. Do you know what they said? We don't want to listen to it.

I actually walked over and said what you're talking about is a slush fund, trying to embarrass the government. We just announced \$24 million three weeks ago up in CBS for small towns across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They didn't want to hear that. I hear time and time again about this \$20 million slush fund. Part of that slush fund that she's using is money that this government put in for small towns in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Char, I can read out some of the ones that were already announced. I have no problem doing that. There's a list that's on its way to Ottawa. Some are already up in Ottawa to be approved. If you go through each one of those there when they're all announced, she'll realize how much it's going to benefit rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just cannot stand here and sit here – and I'm sorry for taking up the time because I know the Opposition always wants to say, okay, everybody gets a turn, everybody could have time to speak. I appreciate that also. I appreciate being able to stand up. I always appreciate that. I usually stand up – and you want to talk about the budget. When you want to talk about the budget and you want to talk about all the bad things – and for the Member of St. John's Centre saying we're doing nothing for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, we're doing nothing to stimulate the economy.

I remember back years ago – and I'll use a few fish plants for example. Those fish plants

couldn't expand. Do you know why they couldn't expand? Even in your own district, Mr. Chair, do you know why they couldn't expand? They never had the infrastructure in place to expand.

With \$180 million that's going to be spent, not counting what's going to be spent from Transportation and Works – \$180 million, Mr. Chair, right here is \$140 million. Every project that's on this list that's recommended to the federal government is water or waste water. For the Member to stand up and say we're not doing anything to try to put in infrastructure in towns in rural Newfoundland and Labrador so they can expand the business, start a business – it's good for tourism – it's just absolutely, categorically, totally not true.

For the boil orders, yes, there are a lot of boil orders in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We had meetings. We had a ministerial meeting on it probably about a month ago. We're taking steps to help. Some people in the province don't want the boil order off. The reason why, they don't like the taste of chlorination. They honestly don't. There are some more that can't because of water quality. Some more got the chlorination building turned off, can't operate it. Some more haven't got the ability. There are a number of reasons. We got the list of everyone.

The Minister of Environment is doing his due diligence to get this done. We have a couple off. One in particular was on a boil order for 20 years, 20 years – off. We took the necessary steps. We took someone out, showed them, and got someone to train the people in how to do the testing, how to do the chlorination. It's working.

A hundred and forty million dollars, federal, provincial –

AN HON. MEMBER: That's a good news story.

MR. JOYCE: It's a good news story for everybody in the province, but when the Member for St. John's Centre is standing up and trying to embarrass the government, making statements which are factually not correct, I have to stand and say, here are the facts.

Mr. Chair, I said it before, I'll say it again. I offered the Third Party an opportunity to sit down and get briefed on the federal-provincial-municipal arrangement. The Opposition opposite, to give to their credit, I sat down with at least four of their Members. Guess what? We went through their towns, we went through their districts. That's the way we should work.

Can I use the Member for Cape St. Francis for a minute? We sat down, goes through his towns and say, okay, what list do they put in? Then we sat down and said, okay, what's the priority, what is it all about? That's the way it's done; but the Third Party, they're from St. John's. The St. John's water system is all right. But for them to stand up and criticize – and the Member for Cape St. Francis knows all about this, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, the same thing. She sat down with me and said, okay, what can we work on? She understands. She understands that rural Newfoundland and Labrador needs the infrastructure.

Mr. Chair, I said it before. When the Member for Ferryland was in, we sat down and worked on the Bay of Islands. So this is not anything new, the Opposition working with government, because I did it.

I remember the Member for Gander, Kevin O'Brien. I used to sit down with him on a regular basis and say, okay, what can we do? This is normal, but when you ask the Third Party do you want to sit down so we can say what's happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Do you know what happens? They don't talk to you. They stand up and put all these statements out. I just can't take it anymore.

There are things in the budget; there's a levy in the budget, there are taxes. You can stand up but, please, don't stand in this hon. House of Assembly with the knowledge that you could have or should have or could get very easy and make statements that there's nothing being done for rural Newfoundland and Labrador for drinking water, for sustainability in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, when I offered the briefing. Here it is right here. I could sit down with them. I could show them the ratio, show them the ranking system. I can go through it step by step, but they have not taken me up on that yet. They haven't taken me up on that yet.

I have to give the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and the Member for Cape St. Francis today on the \$30 million – that was their contingency fund – that is there, would have to be borrowed – they took the government up on it. They went in and said, okay, give us a briefing. There still may be ways you can borrow; that's different But at least they took us up on and said we'll go in, we'll sit down and we'll get briefed on it, so we'll know. And that's fair enough.

You may still say, well, you can use the \$30 million; that's a different story. But you take the offer up so when you're speaking in this hon. House you have the facts, and the facts that you're speaking in this House, Mr. Chair, are the facts to the best of your knowledge.

When they offered to the Third Party – and I don't mean to be picking on the Third Party, but every time they stand they talk about government not doing anything for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, that we're neglecting rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Guess what? Most of the Humber – Bay of Islands is rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Lark Harbour has no water. There are parts of Cox's Cove, Mr. Chair, that they need upgrades to the water. There are parts all throughout the Bay of Islands they can't get water. There are parts for sewer. Christopher's Cove, Plant Hill, they're trying to get sewer. Lark Harbour has no sewer.

So when the two Members from the Third Party want to stand up and talk about rural Newfoundland, you are talking to a person from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I absolutely refuse to get scolded here in this House because we're not doing anything and they won't take me up on an offer to sit down and see what's being done for rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It is a pleasure to be back in the House joining in day three of our filibuster. Mr. Chair, I'm going to pick up where the Minister of Transportation left off a couple of minutes ago when he spoke about the role of Opposition versus the role of government. He talked about full-day kindergarten and he said if we were in Opposition, we'd be doing the same thing, questioning full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Chair, the point that I would like to make with respect to that is, yes, indeed, in Opposition we are bringing the people's voices forward, but what that clearly indicates to me is that they're still not listening. What we are doing here in the House and what we've been doing for three days are reading emails that are the concerns of the people, directly from the people. So to say that we're opposing it for Opposition's sake is not accurate. We are hearing the voice of the people and we're bringing that voice to the House.

There are numerous people in this province who really can't fathom why you would proceed with full-day kindergarten in light of the global oil crisis, in light of the fact that our budget is not where we had anticipated it would be. Jurisdictions across the country, across the continent and across the globe are in this situation, anyone that is an oil producing jurisdiction, Mr. Chair; everyone has to make decisions to get through the hump.

Some people will make decisions that lead their respective jurisdictions through in a prosperous way, just like we did back in 2007-2008. There was a recession that year across the entire continent of North America. Both Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador weathered that storm very well at the time. I firmly believe it was because of the outstanding leadership of the day.

Here we are in a similar situation now in 2015 with a drop in oil prices. What the public of Newfoundland and Labrador is clearly saying is the strategy that has been developed in *Budget*

2016 is not one that is viewed by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as the best way forward. To that end, they are sending us emails and they are offering suggestions and we, in turn, are bringing their suggestions to the floor of the House, Mr. Chair. We hope that, at some point, Members opposite will actually stop and listen to what people are saying.

When it comes to full-day kindergarten – Mr. Chair, I'm relatively unbiased when it comes to this topic because I don't have a child. I certainly don't have a child that's about to go into kindergarten and I don't have children that are in the system from K to 12. I speak with no bias, but I hear and I empathize the concerns that I hear from parents who have children that now can no longer avail of Intensive Core French, of parents of children who are going to be going to school with the increased caps sizes. Parents are very, very concerned.

So do you jeopardize the quality of education that already exists in place for the sake of adding a new bottom-line expenditure that will be on the books year over year over year over year? It's not a logical decision, Mr. Chair, and I fail to understand why the government is refusing to take an objective look at this budget line expenditure.

We hear so often in this House, as part of the key messaging strategy that the Liberals have developed, that overspending is the problem. If you truly believe that, why are you adding incremental costs to the bottom line by introducing new expenditures? It's baffling to me, Mr. Chair.

That's my commentary with respect to full-day kindergarten. I certainly make no apologies for bringing the voice of the people to the floor of this House. We will continue to do so and we will continue to live in hope that Members opposite will begin to listen, Mr. Chair.

I also want to speak about libraries. I received an email today that asked me if I could speak some more about the libraries because there are so many topics that we're all discussing and concerned about here in the House, libraries being one of them indeed. They asked me to bring forward, once again, their concerns about

what will happen in the absence of these libraries.

I really enjoyed reading an article this week in the paper about the author Michael Crummey who is donating the proceeds of his most recent book to the library in Buchans. I thought it was quite impressive. I, myself, can say that my love of learning and my love of books were born in a library.

I will never forget going to our library as a young girl in St. Alban's. You'd go for story time. We had, at the time, the round book stations. It was like diagonal in the middle and that's where all the books were. We were quite young then. I wasn't a whole lot smaller probably than I am now.

I'd perch on this little octagon table and I'd pore over the books. I'd bring them home. Mr. Chair, in addition to my love of learning and my love of reading, it also taught me about responsibility because those were the old-fashioned days when, on the back, you had the little envelope that the librarian stamped with your return date. That was always a big thing, to make sure you had your book back on time because someone else may want to read it and you've had it long enough.

There are many components of learning that we availed of by going to the library. You learned how to socialize with other children because you were there for play-based learning. What's going to happen now with all of these communities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador that had this wonderful opportunity for their preschool-age children? That is now gone from many places in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I still fail to understand the logic of the location of the decisions. Again, you look in my district; the library with the highest volume was one of the ones that were cut. There will be in their regionalization plan one community serviced and 21 communities will not be. Then I look at the Great Northern Peninsula and I see no cuts up there. Not one, not one single library.

I would put forward, Mr. Chair, that the geography of the Coast of Bays region is equally as challenging, if not more so challenging, than the Great Northern Peninsula. As I said, the

logic of how these decisions have transpired I fail to understand. The logic escapes me entirely.

We're seeing, of course, job losses by women. I do think this particular measure was made – and I'm speaking strictly to the library decision – without an appreciation of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, without an appreciation of the women who work in these roles. I really do feel like it's an attack on rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

You see none of the libraries in the city have closed; yet, here in the city people have access to many more educational opportunities besides libraries. You can go to museums, you can go to the Johnson Geo Centre. There is library after library after library. So certainly people who really wanted to avail of one could probably drive an extra 10 or 15 minutes and find one. In rural Newfoundland and Labrador, we're going to have to drive an hour. Who can afford that? It is absolutely incredulous, and it is another decision that I truly believe needs to be revisited by this government.

To say that we don't put solutions forward is not accurate because there are solutions, and we've identified them on a number of times. The Labrador study on the tunnel could be postponed to keep the libraries open, or another option can be changing the allocation in the contingency slush fund from \$30 million to \$29 million. Two simple solutions right there and libraries can be restored, Mr. Chair.

Again, with respect to the education system. There's no need for that to be torn apart for the implementation of full-day kindergarten. Full-day kindergarten should not happen at the expense of all the other children and all the other grades.

I'm sure many of you saw the newspaper article of the father whose young daughter was in tears. I anticipate she too will be a future politician one day because I think this experience will have marked her in such a way that she will never, never forget what happened to her. She will grow up, I do believe, to be a strong advocate of the people and for what she believes is right.

The story about the father of the young twins. One of whom could avail of Intensive Core

French, the other who could not. Tragic stories, Mr. Chair, and I certainly do hope they can be revisited in short order before this government proceeds with actually closing the libraries and actually implementing full-day kindergarten.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour to stand in the House of Assembly and speak to the matters at hand.

Before I get into it, Mr. Chair, we have been here for a number of days now, through the night, and I want to say thank you to all of the staff of the House of Assembly for being here with us. The Table Officers, the Commissionaires, the Guards, the Hansard staff, the Pages, the Clerks, everyone who does such a terrific job. The RNC who are with us today; our constituency assistants in our own offices who are manning the phones and helping people get the information they need while we're in here. Certainly, our own staff here in the building that help us get through this. So just a big thank you to everyone, because all of these people who tune into the webcast, it doesn't happen on its own. For everyone who is playing a part in making it happen, I say thank you to them, Mr. Chair.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I really like her, but she has a habit when she gets up of weaving webs. Then someone has to get up and try to unweave, because she makes statements, Mr. Chair, and implications that ought to be refuted. She just made a comment about the Northern Peninsula, how there were apparently no library closures and tried to link it to her district having library closures. I believe she made, it appeared to me, some implication that perhaps there was political interference. Well, Mr. Chair, I would ask her to rise on her feet and tell us about the 19 out of 20 fire trucks that went into PC districts. That's what happened on their watch just last year.

She also talks, Mr. Chair, about the fiscal circumstances we have and the fact that the Members of the government side and the government caucus are out there saying that the situation is grim. We have to tighten our belts. We have to make changes to the fiscal circumstances; but, she says, now they're adding spending.

Well, Mr. Chair, I will explain once again to the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune that the added \$400 million, \$222 million of which is going to the teachers' pension fund. So I guess the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune doesn't consider this a good investment. The other monies, out of the \$400 million, is the increased cost of borrowing, because when you run up your credit card and you don't pay your bills, the credit rating agencies don't take kindly to it. This added money, Mr. Chair, is squarely the result of mismanagement by the other side.

These are comments that I'm not surprised are made by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, who I do really like. I have to admit, I really like her but she makes these comments that you just have to refute because facts matter.

I think the Opposition has a very important role to play. We all should respect that, and I think we all do. The people of the province I'm sure respect that, especially given the fact that the Members opposite claim they have so many emails coming in, that they respect the role the Opposition plays. The Liberal Party was once in Opposition as well, so there's no one going to argue with me to say we don't respect their role.

With that, with respecting the role an Opposition plays, they also, Mr. Chair, should have a responsibility to stand on their feet and speak with facts and speak with what actually is happening. I know they're tired. I know the days and nights are getting long for the Members opposite, but it's really important that we speak with facts.

Here's a fact, Mr. Chair, and also a comment made by the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. She went on record here in the House of Assembly on April 28 where she called the seniors' advocate a luxury. She said this was not a wise investment, it was a luxury.

I say to the Members opposite, and I say to the people watching at home, I've had people call my office who say they're tuning into the broadcast. They're saying I appreciate some of the words you're saying. You're being honest, you're being frank, you're being forthright with people.

We consider the investment of a seniors' advocate a wise investment, Mr. Chair, because that's a commitment that we made and it's a commitment we're living by. The seniors are the people in our society who built our communities, who built our own very families. They deserve now our respect. They deserve us to show up to work for them so that we give them the protections they need, especially in a rural district like my own. I always reference my district because I think it's the best in the province. Of course, I'm biased.

I have such a wonderful district filled with wonderful people; many of them in an aging population are seniors. I think they will stand very much to gain from having a seniors' advocate, much in the way that I think they'll also gain by having the additional benefits we enhanced in terms of the Seniors' Benefit, as well as the Income Supplement for low-income families, persons with disabilities and seniors. That's \$76.4 million invested into that, Mr. Chair. I'll just repeat that – \$76.4 million. That's what we're putting into low-income families, persons with disabilities and seniors.

I consider that a very wise investment because I've had a lot of people call me since the budget – that we've already voted on by the way. I've had a lot of people call me and they've expressed concern, despair of what they're hearing from Members opposite. I said, just hold on, give me your circumstance and let's talk about this. By the end of the conversation, it turns out they're actually in money. They're actually in money, Mr. Chair, a lot of seniors in my district.

Unlike the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune who considers a seniors' advocate a luxury, I believe it's a wise investment, just as the investments into the Seniors' Benefit is also a wise investment. We must do everything we can as a government to protect those who built

up this beautiful province that we now call home.

There are also other things I would like to set the record straight on that I'm hearing from the Members on the opposite side. As I've said, Mr. Chair, I think it's really important that they rise on their feet and speak for as long as they feel necessary to express the concerns that they might be hearing, but let's do so in a spirit of fact and honesty.

I just want to share with the Members some comments by an outside party made on a comment that the Member for Mount Pearl North made. I referenced this last night. He is talking about their awesome attrition plan, as he calls it, where eight out of 10 public sector workers would be replaced under their plan.

Well, the Auditor General at the time said that you need 19 more attrition plans to actually make the savings that this province requires – 19 more times than what they were proposing. This is emblematic of the piecemeal approach that the government opposite took. They hailed themselves last year in the election year, as they say, raising taxes on the HST. They hailed themselves for doing that.

Mr. Chair, truly and surely, the scope of this deficit, they knew what it was. The Premier of today wrote the former premier on September 28 requesting an updated fiscal update. He would not provide it. They knew what the numbers were, Mr. Chair. They wouldn't share it with us, nor would they share it with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's a very unfortunate thing that they did.

I believe it is incumbent upon a governing party to put those numbers out there, which they did not do. This is the reason why we ran into a campaign thinking it was a \$1.1 billion deficit, only to find out today that number would be \$2.7 billion.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BROWNE: One billion up to \$2.7 billion, Mr. Chair. It's incredible – it truly is incredible.

There are also some other things I want to correct the record with before I'm done. You

talk about the key messages from this side, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune says. Well, a lot of the key messages from the other side over the last 24 hours or so are the absence of the Premier in terms of media scrums and he's evading questions. Well, he did one today, I'm told.

I also have here with me, Mr. Chair – he did three scrums last week: one lasting 16 minutes, one lasting 20 minutes and another lasting 26 minutes. So how can you possibly frame the argument that the Premier is avoiding the media when clearly he is out there, out front and centre, responding to the many questions and legitimate questions that they are asking, right there, out front and centre?

That's what our Premier does, Mr. Chair. We don't shy away from the facts. We don't shy away from what we must answer for. That's a hallmark of what we have brought forward in our approach of governing. We've been forthright with the people in this entire process, and we will continue to be honest.

It is no different than the question that was brought forward yesterday by the Member for Mount Pearl North who, we all know, this time last year was the Health minister. He rises in his place and he asks a question about the stickers at the Janeway, knowing full well that decision was made in September of last year. And he's got the gall to come here and ask this Minister of Health why he's cut the stickers when he was the minister of Health. So I say to him, rise on your feet and tell us why are you trying to put forward ideas that you know are not the case, and why are you asking the current Minister of Health to answer for decisions that he made when he was the minister of Health.

This is the kind of stuff the people at home need to know. He needs to stand and he needs to tell us, Mr. Chair. When you're watching it, I understand people take you at face value, but this side needs to stand up and refute what we're hearing from the other side because facts matter and so does the truth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

It is a pleasure to be back on my feet in the House this evening and to continue debate. Government's changed the bills a couple of times on what's actually being debated, but there are actually two bills that are standing relevant to the budget. One deals with the levy and the other one deals with the taxes this government is putting on insurance – on home insurance, on auto insurance and related other types of vehicle insurance.

There was some discussion earlier in the week and there was suggestion somewhere as well that the GST on insurance was going to include life insurance and health insurance and so on, but that's not true. If anybody was thinking that – because we did receive some responses from people who felt and expressed what they thought was the inappropriateness of that, but we know that's not true and that's not factual.

The GST increase is planned, if the bill passes, or when the bill passes, only to go on vehicle insurance and also home insurance. I've talked about that in the past here in the House in the last couple of days, and I'm not going to belabour that one any further at this point in time.

Also what we've been doing, using our time here in the House, is to share the views of the public, share the views of the people of the province. Many who felt that their views weren't being listened to. We know Members opposite and the government had campaigned on a commitment to listen to what people have to say, to be open and be accessible and so on. People feel while they're speaking, their viewpoints are not being taken seriously and they're not being listened to.

I mean, it's one thing to listen to what someone has to say, and then it's something else if you listen to what they have to say and then you completely discount what anyone else has to say. With the exception of the levy, which Members opposite have said – they didn't say they changed it because they felt it was wrong; they said they changed it because the federal

government deferred payments that the province is required to make to the federal government.

The federal government has come forward and said, look, you came to us last week and you asked us to deal with this. The Minister of Finance said discussions happened in December, but the federal minister said it was only the week before that the province came to the federal government and said, look, can you defer these payments for another five years. The federal government agreed to do so. That loosened up, I believe it's \$27 million – I think it was. The minister confirms for me it's \$27 million. And deferred those payments that the province has to make to the federal government to start in 2022 and then for a 10-year period.

It wasn't elimination. It wasn't that the federal government came to the province and said we are going to cancel the call; you don't have to repay this \$27 million year over year. They didn't do that; they just postponed it. That freed up some funding and the government made the decision. They could have made any decision, I suppose, on how to utilize that \$27 million that was loosened up.

It's still debt; it's still borrowing. It's not like there's money sitting in an account for them that they now have because it still requires borrowing. They could have reduced the level of borrowing by \$27 million. They could have reversed some of the education decisions that were made that people are upset about, parents are very upset about and students are impacted by. They could have changed or made changes to the gas tax or to the tax on insurance or on the levy. They chose to make the changes to the levy.

Instead of the very lowest of income earners who were impacted by the levy down to \$25,000 range, they've now set the levy to kick in for people at the \$50,000 range, which is a benefit to those who earn less than \$50,000. However, I have received some correspondence from people who are saying you have two people in a home earning \$50,000 each, versus one person who's earning \$100,000, then the numbers are not consistent. So the impacts on families are different. We still have those concerns that we're hearing from people.

I received this message from a gentleman who said: I'm a father of four children; three of those children are adults. They're very well educated. Two of them are Memorial University graduates; the other one is a College of the North Atlantic graduate who's now a federal police officer. The fourth child is currently in post-secondary education studies.

He says: All of them follow the workings of the Newfoundland and Labrador government fairly closely. Mr. Chair, I want to point out, if people are just tuning in for the first time or haven't been listening to some of these messages and emails and so on that we're sharing, I just have a few with me here tonight so far and I have some more right here – but I just want to make it clear that we've been trying, in many ways, to paraphrase what people have said. Some people are very open and bold in their expressions, so we try not to read anything that would be inappropriate or name names and businesses and those types of things.

While some people have said feel free to use my name, my preference is that I don't. I wouldn't want to put them on the spot, per se, but we've been trying to share them. Also, Mr. Chair, much like what VOCM *Open Line*, or *Backtalk* or *Nightline* would say, words to the effect, the views expressed here are not necessarily those of this station. The same thing here; I don't agree with everything that are in some of these emails and messages, but these are messages and emails from people who have asked that their beliefs and their position be shared.

Like I said, there are some very strong and blunt ones, which I am not going to share, but some who expressed in somewhat of a valuable way of how they feeling. We are going to paraphrase some of these but make sure that the information is made available.

This gentleman, as I was saying, is a father of four: three young adults, very well educated; two at Memorial and one at CNA who is a federal police officer. The fourth one is currently in post-secondary. He says: All of them follow the workings of Newfoundland and Labrador government very closely. All four of them were most appalled about the announcement in *Budget 2016* which would lead to the closing of the libraries and the taxing of books.

They felt by closing over 50 per cent of the province's libraries is hurting and belittling us as a province and it is making our provincial government and the Department of Education look really small. They also feel it's degrading to the entire education system. He says: Thanks, great job and expresses his viewpoints there.

This message says: We're on a combined fixed income: \$25,000 a year for two of us. Between having a mortgage, all other household bills and a \$650 monthly medication cost because we have no coverage – now, when I read this first, I thought, with a salary of that amount, there would be assistance and support from government. But the person goes on to say: We are barely keeping our heads above water before your ridiculous increases. We don't have coverage because we don't qualify for the seniors' drug plan because you had to be in receipt of GIS. We can't get the GIS because they go by your previous yearly income when you still worked and not your current retirement income.

That's not a new problem. It's not a unique problem, but there are circumstances where people are impacted by that. And obviously this family has very high health costs, with now a reduced income because they are newly retired income levels.

I have a husband who has a life-threatening medical problem and he can no longer afford to take his meds. Did you give one thought to the people who have health issues and don't live in larger towns: people like us who have to travel often for appointments?

What's wrong with you people? How can you sleep at night knowing what your decisions are doing and how they are affecting people and forcing them to make decisions that could very well cost them their lives? It is very clear that (inaudible) your family and not have to worry about being put in a position where you have to make life-threatening decisions – and I know this is very strong language, Mr. Chair. By the way, to get by, you'll have to defend these increases and sleep just fine, because they really don't give a – well, they don't care is what the person is saying, as long as it isn't your own and put in a situation.

Obviously, it is a person very emotional and very direct. In essence, what this message is about is a newly retired couple, \$25,000 a year for the two of them, a combined fixed income – we don't know if it's gross or net – and \$650 a month for medications. Because of their circumstances they aren't eligible for coverage or assistance. This is a family who's obviously frustrated by increased cost and the difficulties they face.

Mr. Chair, my time is winding down. In this method and point of debate where we are in Committee we have a relatively short period of time, only about 10 minutes for each of us to speak for alternating speakers, but I look forward to the opportunity to speak again later, and also we'll do our best to share the messages that we received from people. I really don't believe we're going to be able to get through them all tonight because there are so many, and we have other matters as well that we want to raise that are particular to our own districts that we're hearing from our own constituents directly by telephone and conversations and so on. We're going to share some of those views, as we've been doing, and we'll continue to do so. Yes, this debate does matter. Sharing people's views does matter. Making sure the Members of government understand exactly how the people feel and the implications of the decisions are on them, then we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I noticed in the last while Members of the Opposition have been getting up and Members of government have been getting up and reading emails and so on. I had a telephone call the other day when we had the motion here, the private member's motion, where the Opposition wanted to cancel full-day kindergarten. Someone got in touch with me, an educator of some reputation in the province – and I won't name the person in the interest of their privacy – but they said to me: Don't worry about that, Dale; some of them still thinks the youngsters got to bring a chunk of wood to school to keep the fire going and heat the school. So people have a good sense of

humour in this province as well, but we get all sorts of feedback.

I just got this email here. It dates June 8, so today, 6:21 p.m. not long ago. I won't name the people who are implicated here, but this to the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North, the former Minister of Health and Community Services and cc'ed to me.

It says: The Liberal budget is indeed a hard budget that no one likes. However, since that the government of which you are a part created the financial fiasco, I haven't heard you in the Opposition suggest what you would do if you were left to deal with the deficit. I would like to hear from your leader – and names the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the former premier, the Member for Topsail – Paradise who was just up.

It names him and it says: I'd like to hear your leader stand up and apologize to the people of the province for creating this financial crisis. We get all sorts of emails and messages of support and we get emails opposed as well. I remember in the budget in 2013 when the previous administration laid off, I believe it was over – it was well over a thousand public servants were laid off. They shut down all the Employment Assistance Service providers. They eliminated 160 teaching units. They made massive changes.

I still have – and I could go dig them up if I wanted to – the hundreds of emails that I received back then about that. I don't recall having a filibuster about the budget and doing that. Depending on how long we're here, maybe I'll go back to my archive, because I keep all my emails, and dig out some of that because this whole suggestion from the Members of the Opposition that when they were in government no one ever said boo about their budgets and the shock they're getting.

The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island actually said – one day he said he's getting tens of thousands of emails. I'd like to see him produce it, because I don't know if I have 10,000 emails since I've been a Member of the House of Assembly and that's going on five years now. He had tens of thousands of emails about this budget. I'll take him at his word, but

I'd certainly like to see him table the tens of thousands of emails that he's received.

I have a good number from previous budgets; and Bill 29, there were hundreds on that, and Muskrat Falls, hundreds on that. I raise Muskrat Falls again, Mr. Chair, because the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands got up after I spoke – and I spoke about Muskrat Falls. There's a reason why I'm speaking about Muskrat Falls. It's a project that's currently – the most recent forecast is \$9.2 billion. That's larger than the current provincial budget for this year – \$9.2 billion. Because of the escalating, ballooning, exploding cost of Muskrat Falls, well, stay tuned. That's probably subject to change.

I raised that, and then the Member for Mount Pearl North said, well, this is about this budget, not about what happened before. This budget is spending \$1.3 billion on our commitment that the previous administration made to Muskrat Falls – \$1.3 billion. I'm not talking about something that happened back in the pot auger days when Joey Smallwood was premier and Frank Moores was over here. I'm talking about now – now. We're on the hook for this project.

I was just reading an article in the *Globe and Mail*, it basically says – all the best information says we have, the province, the previous administration poured about \$4 billion into this project already. People say stop it; \$4 billion has already been spent, and \$1.3 billion in this budget.

I say to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, this is not ancient history or something. This is today. This is the present. This is the mess we're trying to contend with. So that's why I'm talking about Muskrat Falls, because it's not something – this is not like putting the railway through or something. This isn't the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway. This is something that's happening right now that we have to deal with, because that crowd over there thought they could borrow their way to prosperity. They borrowed us into, well, a big mess. They put us at the edge of the abyss.

They stand up there, and the Member for Mount Pearl North, I don't know, I'm starting to get a bit sleep-deprived, but it's bordering on amusing

here now. He's like a broken record. I wish somebody would flip it over at least, listen to side two, side B. Because he gets up every time and says, what you got to do is cancel full-day kindergarten.

I'm starting to sound like a broken record now. I've said that's \$13.3 million on a \$2.7 billion deficit. Now, okay, let's say we did that. Where are the rest of the solutions? The totality of what the Member has to add on to that is we should cancel the proposed consultant's contract for \$750,000 for the fixed link to Labrador. That's all he has to offer. Just do those two things and he's happy to walk away, everything is excellent then. Just cancel those two things. Well, that doesn't give us much of an indication of how it is we're going to dig ourselves out of the deep, dark hole that we have been thrust into. It doesn't at all, doesn't give us any indication.

The Member for St. John's Centre got up and talked about this touring group that went around doing puppet shows, or something to that effect, with children in schools across the province. That was a program that was funded by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, at least in part: Cultural Connections. She got up and said libraries in schools are going to be closed.

Again, speaking of broken records, I don't know how many times we have to say it before the Members opposite start admitting that the facts are the facts. No libraries in schools are closing. No school libraries are closing. They're not being eliminated. They're not being shut down. They're not being closed. No school libraries are closing.

If somebody wants to go out and do a Cultural Connections tour, whether they're playing the banjo, playing a puppet show, doing some other artistic merit, I don't know, moulding clay, making a vase, making a lamp, any other artistic endeavour on the face of God's green acre, they'll still be able to do it next year, Mr. Chair, because no school libraries are closing. They will no longer be part of the provincial libraries board network, but they're not closing. Don't say they're closing if they're not closing. It's as simple as that.

We can have a debate – and I appreciate having a debate; there's no question. When you say that's not factual, please use the correct information, and then the same Member gets up time and again – and then people get up and say, well, this email here now I don't agree with everything that's in it. Half of it is probably wrong, but this is what somebody thinks. Let's read it anyways.

I wonder if somebody wrote something ridiculously racist and xenophobic, would they get up and read that. One Member got up here and read something last night and said the Premier lied. If I got up and said that any Member of this House of Assembly lied, I'd be called out for unparliamentary language. I'd have to get up on my feet and apologize because we have a civilized way of having a debate in here – well, most of the time.

That doesn't involve, I say to the Member for St. John's Centre – I love it when we see people in the public gallery. I wish there were people in the public gallery every day. They're interested in what's going on in the province. She said the way we conduct business here is not the way we do it in my household.

Well, I don't know. In my household, people aren't screaming and yelling at me and throwing stuff at me. People can come in the public gallery and listen. Do you know what? Then maybe they can learn the process and if they want to come down here, they can run in the election. Lots of people up there – I see people up there all the time who've run for election, they're interested in politics and I encourage that. But we can have a civilized discussion, even if we disagree about things –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – we can have a civilized conversation.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his speaking time is expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Again, I'm happy to stand and to speak to this motion. I have a concern in the way that the Minister of Education will twist words or twist what has been said in this House. I never once said that libraries in schools will be closed. As a matter of fact what I did was I read a letter written by Monique Tobin that included not just a travelling puppet show, but the esteemed, award-winning Andy Jones and his partner Mary-Lynn Bernard, and Monique Tobin, who's one of the pre-eminent sociology researchers in the province.

I would say to ridicule that is an interesting thing to do in this House. I do think it would be incumbent upon the Minister of Education, if he would like to refute or debate anything that I have said, that he might get that a little more accurate. I would appreciate that. I'm sure all of us in this House would appreciate that.

Again, what we're looking at here is how this budget is affecting people and what the overall message is that we seem to be getting from people in the province. I believe that what they're telling us and the frustration that they're feeling is that they feel they are not being listened to.

I believe that when we look at what happened in the provincial election, there was this incredible red wave that happened, this red tide that happened as a spillover from the federal election. We saw that people were so desperate to get rid of the Harper government, and people voted Liberal. They voted Liberal federally, and we saw that every single MP in this province that was elected was a Liberal MP.

I believe people felt victorious that they were able to get rid of the Harper government. It certainly was time. The Harper government had inflicted a lot of damage on our country in terms of our social safety nets and programs, in terms of our sense of who we are as a country on the global stage. So people felt a form of victory.

Then I believe people were ready for a change in government provincially as well, which was on the tail end of the federal election. I believe people felt very hopeful about what happened on

the federal level and people felt very hopeful about what happened on the provincial level. People voted for the Liberals because they believed the promises. I think it's interesting, it's not always the case to be true, but often people assume that whatever the federal party does in a certain party – for instance, people would assume that the federal Liberals, the provincial Liberals would follow suit in terms of how they would approach the issues in the province.

I think people expected that sense of hope and optimism that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau brought to the people of the country. I think people extrapolated that, in fact, would be the same approach that the provincial government would do here. It makes sense. I understand why people would think that. Also, this Liberal government when they were campaigning, they campaigned on a proposal of optimism, on a proposal that we are looking to the future. That's not what has been delivered.

People were astounded by the promises that were broken and then people were astounded by the budget. I guess in some ways it's not even some of the specifics of the budget, but the messaging before the budget was brought down, then the messaging around the budget and the continued messaging that we hear. The messaging that it is so desperate, it is so hard. There's no messaging of we're going to get through this. The only message is, the only goal is that in seven years we will be back to surplus.

What has happened is government has talked specifically and almost exclusively about the provincial deficit and the provincial debt, how heavy that is and that it has to be dealt with. I believe what people are feeling is that this budget, in fact – for many people, the particulars of this budget is creating deficit and debt on individual people and on working families in the province. They feel that they – as a result of the measures of this budget – will be in debt, that they will have deficits.

In fact, what a government should be doing – and we all know that, and I'm sure that's what this government knew they should be doing – is to lift the burden of deficit and debt also from individual people so that we can strengthen our people, we can strengthen our economies, we can strengthen our communities, we can get

people back to work so that not only are we dealing with the deficit and debt on a political level in terms of the province, but also that we are not creating extra deficit and debt in the lives of the people of the province. That would be what government's role would be now, to help us weather this storm, to help the people of the province weather the storm. Unfortunately, that's not what we're seeing in this budget.

Again, people had the frustration – and I believe the frustration they feel is because their expectations were so high. Their expectations of this government were so high because of the effect of the federal government and the federal election, and also because of the promises of this provincial government. The promises they made when they were campaigning. People were ready for a change.

People were really angry with the Conservatives, who are now in the Official Opposition. They were angry about Muskrat Falls. They were angry about the fact that there had been so much prosperity, and not everybody shared in that prosperity. When we see what happened with the budget; we saw people who benefitted the least from the prosperity were in some ways disproportionately carrying the heavier load of the budget. The extra fees, the extra taxes and the cuts to programs and services.

I believe that is part of what is happening in our province right now. People want to be hopeful but people are in despair because the government has given the message that things are so bad that there is nothing for people to be hopeful about, and government has to do something about that. They have to do something about it because it is a hard time financially. It is a hard time fiscally. Government's role now is to pull us forward, to propel us forward and to get people back to work to get the economy moving, rather than grinding the economy to a halt. Because to not do so, to not stimulate the economy means we will continue to spiral downward, and we know where that will get us.

I'll be happy to read a few emails. I don't have that much time, but, for instance, this is from a woman who wrote me today. As a cabbie, I am paying about \$30 a week extra for gas – so she

drives a taxi – but I don't mind the gas tax. I understand that these are difficult times.

That's the thing, Mr. Chair, is that people are being really reasonable. They are not expecting a utopia. They are expecting to be part of the solution. They want to be part of the solution. They love their province. They love their home, and they want our province to succeed.

She says: As a grandmother and mother, a mother-in-law of two well-educated, expensively educated young people, I fear they will have to leave and I will lose access to them and to my lovely grandson. They are so employable everywhere else but here.

That's the message that our young people are getting. They feel they're not employable here but they know they'll be employable elsewhere, and that's heartbreaking.

Our tax dollars have gone into educating our young people, particularly our young people who have a significant amount of post-secondary education. She said her son has a master's in public history, which you would think would be useful here, and his partner has a philosophy degree with a diploma in adventure tourism. You would think that they could stay, that they would be able to get work.

There are a few other issues that she addresses in her email. The next time I stand, Mr. Chair, I'll speak to those as well. Just imagine the tax dollars, the money we have poured into our post-secondary education system and also our kindergarten to grade 12 to educate our people, who are among our greatest resource. How many people are telling us they feel a sense of despair, they don't feel there's room for them now.

We're not making this up. I've never said there is going to be a mass exodus, but there is a reality that people are saying they feel too desponded.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to have an opportunity, like other Members have, I'd like to thank our staff that have been here for so long with us. It is a long time for us to be – I think that deserves a round of applause for everyone that comes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: I'd also like to thank the people in the gallery for taking time out of their schedule to be here as well. I know it's difficult for them to come here and listen to this sometimes with us. They may not agree with everything we've done, but we're trying our best to solidify the future for our future generations, our kids and grandkids, so they'll have a better future than what we have to deal with today.

The Member for CBS talked about the lack of hope and despair the province is going to be facing. I'd just like to stick to some of the positive things that have come in this budget that are quite substantive and going to be quite good for our province.

The potential long-term opportunity for our province is good. There is a little blip in the radar right now. Obviously, we've put a lot of resource focus in the budget and we're suffering through that right now. We're working as hard as we can to try to make those investments.

In our budget – they talk about an austerity budget, but we're spending \$8.48 billion on programs and services for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which includes \$226 million on priority transportation projects, another \$344.1 million over the next four years on new and existing municipal infrastructure projects, which will leverage another \$146 million in federal funding.

As a former municipal councillor, I understand the importance of investing in municipalities. I know many of my colleagues that are sitting on this side of the House and some on the other have been involved in municipal politics. They

understand that the funding arrangements from the province, as well as the federal government, go a long way in allowing them to do the projects that are important to the people they represent. So I'm proud that we're investing in municipalities and ensuring that they can do the infrastructure needs that the people require.

We have \$180 million waiting for approval in Ottawa. That's federal, provincial and municipal funding that's going to help – the hon. Member for St. John's Centre mentioned about water and waste water. This is what this is going to be for. This is important infrastructure that we hope to announce in the next little while. It's going to go a long way for communities in rural Newfoundland that need quality water.

Not every community in Newfoundland and Labrador is as lucky as the City of St. John's, who has the best water in Canada or arguably the best water in Canada. So we've got to do our part to try to invest in rural Newfoundland and make the water that the residents drink in all of these communities better.

No one should have to be on a boil order in this province. We're not a Third World country. We need to be investing in those infrastructures. Those are things we have to deal with. Many of the districts, the 40 districts around our province, have to deal with that on a day-to-day basis.

I know the residents in St. John's and surrounding areas don't have to deal with that, or very infrequently have to deal with that, but it's very important that we invest in that type of infrastructure. I understand that the Member for St. John's Centre agrees with that comment. We're hoping to make those announcements in the next little while; we're just waiting for the approval from the federal government.

These investments will stimulate the economy. We're talking about we're hurting the economy and people are going to be laid off and things. These investments are going to put thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to work in our province and in their community.

MR. HAWKINS: Half a billion dollars in infrastructure.

MR. B. DAVIS: It's half a billion dollars in infrastructure as the hon. Transportation and Works Minister has just said. It's very important that we put people to work and get these projects done for our communities. Right across our province we need this work to happen and it's important that we're investing in these things. We see that as the way forward.

We're not cutting the budget on infrastructure funding. We're trying to invest in the infrastructure where people need that, to put people to work, but also to make transportation networks better. The infrastructure that lies in the ground, many of the things we're investing in are not sexy. It's not great. You don't see the pipes under the streets in St. John's that we're investing in on Portugal Cove Road. You see it when they're digging it up and it takes a long time for it to get done, but it's expensive. You don't see it, the general public.

When you turn that tap on in your sink or in your bathtub or your shower it's very important that the water comes out and it's pristine. These are the investments that we are making. It's not putting a brand new building in place. We are doing that as well, but this infrastructure that doesn't be seen on a day-to-day basis is very, very important.

AN HON. MEMBER: We take it for granted.

MR. B. DAVIS: People take it for granted is exactly right. We've got to make sure that we sing the praises of this thing. These are things that make the days better for individuals on a day-to-day basis: the roads they drive on, the lights they go through, the water they drink and the water they shower with and clean the dishes with, all those different things. That's a very costly thing to provide those services for municipalities. So anything we can do as a province to help is important.

We have included \$18.5 million to support cultural and heritage initiatives; \$13 million in tourism marketing. I mean, that's important to bring people – and the hon. Member next to me here, he understands that's how we bring people in. Tourism numbers are up this year, which is important.

AN HON. MEMBER: Over 18 per cent.

MR. B. DAVIS: Up over 18 per cent. It's very important that we invest in that, making sure that the infrastructure that we put in place and letting people know to come to this place because they love – we love this province and I know the people, when they enter this province, they love it as well.

Another \$18.9 million invested in the Research & Development Corporation to develop opportunities; \$8.5 million to leverage federal funding for infrastructure development and diversification. These things are important and going to put a lot of people to work and invest a little bit of money to get a lot more money back in return. That's the important thing.

I want to take a second. The Members opposite are reading emails. If you were just listening to their emails every day, you would think the sky was falling like Chicken Little here; but, at the end of the day, there are a lot of people out there, they may not be vocal, but there are a lot of people who are sending us messages and calling us to tell us that the approach we are taking is the right one. They are not happy with it. There is nobody in this province happy that we've increased taxes or put a temporary deficit levy. No one on this side of the House is happy with it either.

This is the hand we were dealt, so we have to play this hand with what we have. Maybe people would have made different decisions, but, at the end of the day, the decisions we've made are in the best interests of the future of our province.

I'd like to read this from a senior who sent me a message – I think it was last night; all the days are running together a little bit because I'm not sure if this is Wednesday or Thursday or Tuesday.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is still Tuesday.

MR. B. DAVIS: It is still Tuesday, okay.

I'm a senior citizen who has not received an increase in 12 years, and I'm a low income at that. I drive a 10-year-old car; however, I'm not mad at the budget. I'm sad at the budget. Correcting a decade or two of overspending, while the main source of income is low and uncertain, is a task no one would want and no

one can envy. Maybe there are other ways, the hon. Premier – he mentions his name – but no one has come up with anything useful yet.

I'd like to make a couple of observations. As far as the libraries are concerned, I have often wondered why public and school libraries are not combined – the minister mentioned that just a few minutes ago – likely in school facilities. The public librarian could cover a few summer weeks, which are our down weeks anyway. This matter needs to be studied, I believe: one room in a town, instead of two, a larger variety and a larger number of books, both for students and non-students.

Also, as a senior, I think there is too much paid out to seniors' programs, with the money not really helping the needy. I know seniors who live in half-million dollar homes who go to church dinners sponsored in part by provincial government grants. It happens on a lesser or a larger scale across the province. Help the needy, not the greedy.

Also, I know places where the government spent thousands on seniors' halls for repair and heat and lights, while other halls in a town lie idle throughout the week. Better to pay a little fee to hire a church hall for eight to 10 yearly meetings than have the expense of keeping one up year in and year out. A building that, like all other halls in small towns, is closed 98 per cent of the time.

These are the type of emails we get. They're offering some solutions. They're offering some opportunities. Co-operation might save thousands and make for better community relations. That's just a thought. I'm not in your district, but I do appreciate your situation and the government's situation, because my situation is a difficult one too. I am looking at cutbacks since I know my income will not increase. Keep up the good work and, remember, while a lot of people are mad, they know a man's got to do what a man's got to do. Prod on and, in the end, you will be vindicated, I am sure.

That's just one of several that I've read, and I hope to get up throughout the night and read a couple of more that I've received. These are some of the issues that people are raising on a day-to-day basis with us as well. It's not all doom and gloom. There are suggestions. They

see it as a problem as well. We identify it as a problem, but it's important that we try to deal with this as positive as we can and put the facts out there.

Previous Members are talking about making sure we put the facts out there –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. B. DAVIS: – each and every time, and that's the important thing we should be doing.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise this evening at 7:20, as we get into the evening debate on these motions, and I'll talk in a broader sense about the budget and the implications for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and suggestions on how we might do things a little different.

I did listen attentively to the Member for Virginia Waters. He talked about some of the positive things and the investments and some of the things they're doing as a government. Some of them, in many respects, are a continuation of what we had started over the last 10 years. I don't think anybody in here, in this Legislature, the 40 Members would suggest there are not positive initiatives.

The gentleman mentioned from a municipal affairs perspective, in terms of enhancement to water quality and working on projects and investing in that. There's no one going to question that.

I know from my time in Municipal Affairs, we worked out a new fiscal arrangement with municipalities that have been worked on for two years. There are a number of great initiatives in that. A long process, a two year study was done with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, all municipal leaders, with

government and with all those partnerships. Collectively, through that we came up with new means for municipalities. Because what we heard from them, they were struggling in terms of revenue generation. We came up with a new way to give them access to gas tax and flow that into them, new dollars over a three-year period, and get rebate on the provincial portion of the HST which they haven't gotten before.

MNL at that time indicated it was historic in terms of a new arrangement with municipalities. The executive director of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador at the time heavily endorsed it, as did the executive to the best of my knowledge. That was started by our administration.

One of the other things, we had a pilot project related to looking at operations in regard to water infrastructure that is built out there, overall maintenance and quality, and how we continue to evolve that and make the changes so small communities and regions that even sometimes have the water quality infrastructure, at times are not being operated properly or they don't have the people to operate them properly. You look at things like regional assistance and regional coverage in regard to operating those systems. So we get the expertise, and you get an individual operating and working with many communities.

I know in my area on the Southern Shore, further down we have some challenges. That's something that can work collectively. When we talk about things, and the hon. Member got up and talked about things, no one is questioning positive initiatives or programs and those types of things that reach out and assist Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The question here is overall, collectively, the direction of the budget that has been taken in regard to an economic situation you're dealing with and how you're going to deal with it. Obviously, on the balance sheet you have to look at your expenses, you have to look at your revenues. There's some borrowing involved. How do you balance all that out and how do you deliver services and programs to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in that balanced approach?

The other side of that is to keep the quality of service and programs that people deserve, and how do you do that. In the process of doing it and raising taxes and coming up with different ways of raising revenue, how do you do it in a manner that doesn't shock an economy or send it in the wrong direction of where we are right now? That's so critical and that's so key.

The hon. Member respectfully said they're doing what's in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Well, it's a budget and it's a policy direction they're taking, but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will do the assessment on that. They're doing it today. They've done it over the past number of weeks and over the past number of months, and they'll do it as we proceed through this fiscal year. They see the number of increases in taxation, the number of increases in fees, and they'll see first-hand what that does to their household economy, if you will, and how they're going to manage it. How they're going to manage it is going to answer the question.

As someone mentioned earlier today, it's not as bad as you say it's going to be. Well, the perspective now is it is, but we'll see as it rolls out. As we roll out through the fiscal year and we see things like this levy, we see an increase in personal income tax, we see increases in, as mentioned in the bill, the taxes gone back on insurance premiums, and all those other – gas, the increase of 16.5 cents in gasoline, which hits people directly, whether you're just going from some service or you get up in the morning and go to work, or you're taking your kids to hockey. Whatever that is, that affects Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, every one of them, directly.

We'll see in terms of what the outcome is, but the jury on it now seems to indicate that this is not balanced, it's not the right approach and it's causing grave concerns for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from all walks of life, from those very young, low-income families, seniors, middle-class families. I know in my district I've certainly had discussions on the full scope of people in my district and their concerns in regard to how we see our way through this. Again, I get back to the comment on balanced approach and how we get there.

The hon. Member mentioned infrastructure spending. Infrastructure spending is enormously important, not only from the fact of the actual infrastructure and building our communities and regions, but the economic component of it too that allows work to be done, companies, entrepreneurs to garner these contracts, continue to retain professionals they have. Whether that's tradespeople or whatever in a slowing economy, because oftentimes if it slows, they need often to layoff. They can't retain people if they don't have contracts. Infrastructure spending, when it's balanced, allows that and allows companies – in most important times when an economy is slowing, infrastructure spending does help.

I know back in 2007, 2008 our administration at the time did significant spending at the time, as the global economy at that point or the Canadian economy started to slow a little bit, for that purpose, to provide some stimulus. We've seen on a federal level, from the current Prime Minister and their government, what they've done. They've gone beyond, I think, what they indicated in terms of running a deficit nationally and gone beyond that, but have directed funding through the infrastructure component. Everybody recognizes that.

The hon. Member said, I think, half a billion dollars this year is allotted in the *Budget 2016*. I'm not sure – and maybe the Minister of Municipal Affairs or Minister of TW can indicate whether that's all new money, or is some of it related to projects from prior years. I would suggest that some of it and a large portion of it – I'm not sure – is related to projects from prior years that was approved under our administration.

Technically, three years, two years in regard to various projects, get engineering and design work done, get consultants and all that process you go through. By the time you flow that money out, it transfers usually over two years, but in certain occasions it can roll into the third. It would be interesting to hear. That little over half a billion dollars, is it all new money? If not, there must be another component that's related to projects we'll say that's already in the hopper.

Some of it may have been executed last year; more would be executed this year. What would that total number be in terms of new projects

that the money is in the budget this year for, and what that number is. What number is out there related to Municipal Capital Works in relation to Transportation and Works that was approved in the last two or three years or part of it. It could be a completion of a project, it could be a beginning of the project. So what that number would be exactly in new dollars, and what represents work that's already been awarded and is in the process of completing. So that will be interesting to hear.

From an infrastructure point of view, the hon. Member mentioned that. I don't think anybody can dispute that. It's interesting, though. The contrast in terms of what we heard from time to time is that we've overspent on infrastructure in terms of royalties and that type of thing. Yet, in this budget, initially there was no good news in it, but now we hear there's almost over a billion dollars – or half a billion dollars in infrastructure spending. So it's a changing approach I guess from one perspective in terms of where you're going.

The other one that sticks out is the continued discussion on, are budgets overspent in various pieces and from year to year. This year, the budget that's been delivered here in 2016 has a couple of hundred million dollars more than was in last year's budget. So it's hard to bring all that together when you're thinking about here's the straight line and here's the plan of where we're going. Whether you're using infrastructure or not, whether you're reducing spending or not, whether you're raising taxes, what's the bigger picture, what's the plan and how, through all of investment and pulling on those various levers you have in terms of creating a budget, at the end of the day, where are we going to be one year, two years, or five years out.

That's not as clear, I don't think, as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would like to see it. Again, ultimately, at the end of the day, as I said, infrastructure is great. It drives the economy. There has to be a balance. Taxation, you have to raise taxes to continue to provide services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a balancing act. I think from we heard there are huge concerns in regard to how this is balanced and, in many aspects of those levers I've talked about, there's not complete

clarity in terms of what the vision and direction of this government is.

I look forward in the days ahead to continue to speak.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

What I thought I would do is, first of all, start with a comment – well, first of all, let me say I need to always remember how I got to this point. I'd like to reach out to the constituents, the residents and the fine people of Lake Melville, up in the Big Land of Labrador, and thank them very much for their support. When I do find my opportunity to find my way home, to have an opportunity to speak with them, I enjoy the conversations and the feedback, just has we're hearing through this marathon filibuster – it's my first time going through it; it's very interesting.

It's like working on a proposal that just never seems to stop. But I must say we have a proposal before the people of this province and that proposal relates to a stronger tomorrow. This was a campaign theme that the Liberal Party ran on, and I must say I still believe in and everybody on this side of the House still believes in.

I think it was the Member today for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune who was drawing reference to the fact around the stronger tomorrow. If it wasn't her, it was somebody that was – I have to say, sometimes I'm working away here, as I do, you have one ear and you're listening. I think at one point I was hearing alerts around moose sightings on the Outer Ring Road through to Blue Jays scores and so on, but somewhere in between there I heard about the reference to the stronger tomorrow for the Liberal Party.

AN HON. MEMBER: The nightly news.

MR. TRIMPER: The nightly news.

It's interesting. I know you're not supposed to use a prop in the House, so I'm not going to actually put it in my hand. On desk here, I have a glass of water. We all do, and the Pages keep us well stocked because, of course, you need water to keep your voice going. I look at that glass of water and I would say – because it's the kind of person I am. I like to think of myself as a positive guy; I'm an optimistic guy. I look at that glass of water and I would suggest that glass is half full.

Unfortunately, a lot of what is going on in the last three days in this filibuster – I think we're moving on to day four – is folks would say that glass is half empty. How can you talk about a stronger tomorrow with all you're doing? When, in fact, all that we're doing relates exactly to why we're trying to get to a stronger tomorrow.

I spoke – I don't know when it was; it was sometime during this filibuster. I talked about on Monday morning I was at Beachy Cove Elementary. I am going to bring them up again because that was one impressive group of youth. There I was in a grade four class and we were talking about science. My background is in science and I got to meet with the kids of this class. We sat and we talked about the future. To see the 30-40 children in that class, along with what they call their environmental agents, so the whole school poured in, we spoke in French. We spoke about the future. We spoke about science. We spoke about science week.

I can't think of any more inspiration, any more justification, for why this is all happening, why we find ourselves in this amazing filibuster. We are trying to make sure that the tomorrow for those youth, for those kids in grade four, in Paula Courage's class – I have to make sure I get her name right – have a future. By the time they turn 18, 19 or 20 years of age, if we were not to take these kinds of actions, guess what? Each one of those innocent kids with the bright, shiny eyes looking for the future are going to be facing some \$50,000-plus debt per capita in this province.

Talk about the pressure that would place on each one of those individuals, I just can't imagine. So I, frankly, Mr. Chair, have a great deal of guilt

about not acting. So I'm embracing this challenge because I look in the mirror every day and I say I know we are doing the right thing. I know it's tough and I know it's difficult. If you don't have thick skin, you are going to end up with it by the time you're done here. You have to understand that we're doing this for that future generation, that stronger tomorrow. I firmly believe that.

A few weeks ago, I found myself in the Nova Scotia legislature. I was on a personal trip, going over to see my folks. I decided to drop in on the environment minister for Nova Scotia just to have a nice little chat in the morning. She said, come on in. Let's go into the legislature. So in we go – and it is quite interesting. I look at this spacious room and I'm sure we could fit three of that Nova Scotia legislature in this room. The point of my story is that between the Opposition and the governing parties they are two sword lengths apart. They are firmly squared off with each other. The chairs are on top of each other.

Anyway, they are all squeezed in there and, in debates, I have to say, it gets quite raucous. The similarity that I want to bring from the discussion that I had with the ministers that morning and the people involved because we had a great dialogue – I was introduced to the folks in the legislature. I talked to them about the fiscal reality that we are facing here. I started giving them some of the financial numbers, the per capita, the debt load. The fact that in the next five years if we don't act, we are going to double the accumulated debt over the previous 66 years of the history of this province.

These numbers are just shocking. And as long and as often as we talk about them, I think we're going to have to continue to talk about them. Because unlike the folks who are taking the time to be here tonight and those that are tuning in, everybody is busy. They are busy out there. We need to continue to as simply, as clearly, and as frequently as possible, tell people why this is happening, why are these groups of newly minted politicians – so many of us – newly minted government, why are we doing all of these things.

As my colleague, the Minister for Transportation and Works said – which I thought was perhaps one of the best speeches in this House, maybe

two to three weeks ago, and it just came out of the blue and I didn't even see it coming. But, all of a sudden, I found everybody was turning around and listening to him. You talked about – with great vigor, perhaps some great theatrics but well intentioned and well grounded – popularity. We are not doing this for a popularity contest. We are not doing this because we want to get even with the people of this province. We are doing this because we care about the kids in the Beachy Cove elementary classrooms of this province. We care about that future generation; that's why we're doing this.

If people are upset right now, do you know what? We were upset. As I said a few weeks ago in a speech, I talked about the first two happy hours we had in the Cabinet. We're sitting there, all excited to be sitting at that amazing room, sitting around that table and saying okay, what can we do, what aspirations do we have, how can we go forward in making a difference to this great province.

In comes the Department of Finance and it was over that successive hours, days, weeks that we came to learn as ministers, then as caucus, and now, frankly, as the rest of the province has come to learn, we are in a fiscal mess. We are one notch above junk bond status. And unfortunately, we share another relationship with a place called Greece when you're talking about where to invest your money.

The good news is when you look at places like Greece, which are going through a financial challenge as we are, we are going to right this ship and we're going to make these decisions because if we don't, we're going to end up like countries like that. We're going to end up in a situation where we need to be bailed out. We are taking these steps now. They are difficult steps.

Another point that I heard this morning – again somewhere between them with the moose alerts and the Blue Jays scores – was: Why don't we do it all now? Why don't we take all the cuts, make all the tough decisions and put them in this first budget right now? Well, as you know, we were facing – that first day we walked in, we anticipated approximately a \$1 billion deficit. As we came to learn through the successive weeks, and then probably around late January, early February, we realized that we were actually

looking at three times that: \$2.7 billion, had we not acted.

So with all the tough decisions and pain that we've had to frankly roll out in this first budget, we have managed to trim it, but we still are looking at a \$1.8 billion deficit.

This enormous number is such a power and such an oppression. In my role in Environment and Conservation and the other four departments, I feel that huge mountain of debt on us every day. Every decision we make now is being challenged because of the debt and because of the fact that we now spend more – we've said it a few times, I'm going to say it again here now – on servicing that debt than we spend on educating the children of the province.

Those kids sitting in Beachy Cove Elementary, again, that amazing energy and innocence, decisions now are being made that challenge what we can do for those kids. We're doing our best. The Education Minister has been challenged, he's been criticized, but he understands the education system. Thank God we've got somebody who has a technical background who can really make the right decisions, make sure that we can continue to provide these kids the education they need and they deserve. Also, we need to make sure that we can do it in as efficient way as possible. We've got to provide that stronger tomorrow.

I wanted to say that in relation to – some of the Opposition Members have talked about the need to do it all now. I've had some say you're going too hard, you're pulling on that revenue lever too hard. You haven't pulled on your spending lever at all. As we've talked about it, we have tough decisions coming over the next two to three budgets. So there is more difficulty. There's no question the shock is what's hitting everybody right now. That's why we're doing our best to try to explain to everybody why these decisions are being made.

I would also argue, to the point that's been argued that we are somehow rolling this out or we need to roll it out in a faster or slower mode, if you look at our communications, we actually are targeting – we cannot get to surplus until seven years from this point. So it is very carefully thought out.

As with my greenhouse gas emissions bill that we worked on yesterday in the House – we did some good work here yesterday – we are finding a way to strike that right balance between the need to act fiscally responsibly, but also the point that we ensure our economy is supported, the people in it are supported and that we go forward in a very wise way. So, again, striking that balance.

Back to the colleagues that I spoke about in the Halifax legislature – and by the way, I think in the next year or so it will turn 200 years of age and will be the oldest legislature in Canada. I'm sure it does not pale in comparison to what one might find in the UK when I look at my colleague from there, the Minister of Health and Community Services; nevertheless, we're quite proud of 200 years of age.

In the Legislature, we did quite a comparison between tax rates, fees, other structures and moves by their government. I have to say, that is a common strategy we use in government in our departments, is a comparison to ensure that – oftentimes a lot of the hysteria that we're somehow driving people out of this province. My colleague from Torngat Mountains spoke about that this afternoon, that we're somehow, in 365 days, going to see half the population gone. The economy is going to be gone and so on.

Well, I can assure everyone, the decisions are made are frankly at or below an Atlantic provincial competitive level. We're very carefully moving them up. Unfortunately, what's gone on in the past is that the previous administrations have not looked for that opportunity in the fees, in the licences, in the adjustments to actually start to address the burgeoning debt. At the end of the day, folks, it's not that we have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem, and we're trying to get on it with our stronger tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Bragg): The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

Thank you for acknowledging me to give me a chance to get up and speak again this evening.

We've talked about a number of topics tonight, and I listened very carefully to what the minister had said. He's usually very much a gentleman, I have to say, for the short period of time I've known him. He seems to be.

That reminds me about the Blue Jays score this morning. When I was up around 6 o'clock this morning the Member for Labrador West asked me if I knew what the Blue Jays score was and I told him. I'm after hearing it two or three times today that I used my time to give out the Blue Jays score. So I say –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Did they lose today? Is that what you're telling me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Oh. I've now been criticized because I answered a Member opposite who I think he's missing the opportunity to get up and speak, but I did answer him. So I say to the minister, we'll try to provide information as best we can. You're usually generally a gentleman, and I'm sure you weren't meaning anything by your comments because that would be out of character for you, I know.

Mr. Chair, I heard a number of things said this evening, a number of topics being talked about by Members opposite, and I'm glad to see they're up. I was here last night and for several hours, probably from midnight until about 8 a.m., I don't think any of them got up. We held the night and we kept getting up in our place and speaking, and then as the media showed up this morning then they started to talk again. I guess they'll do that until tonight, but that's what happens in a filibuster.

I remember in filibusters in the past when I was in government side, to be perfectly open and honest, we did the same kind of thing. If the Opposition wants to continue with debate, then make them do their work. That's what we're here to do and we don't mind doing so. We'll do what we're here to do.

Mr. Chair, when I became premier last year – well, in 2014 – and came in the office, I had been out of Cabinet and so on for several months because we were campaigning. I removed myself from Cabinet when I offered myself for leadership. I came in and became acquainted with the status and what was happening with the finances and operations of government and so on, and very quickly made the determination that we had to change gears on where we were.

Some steps had been taken. I knew we had to take further steps; I was concerned about the price of oil. The Premier said – I think it was around Christmastime, it might have been just before Christmas or right after Christmas, I don't recall, but it was a fairly short period of time after he took office. It may have been early January – he made the comment that since they've taken office they've lost \$400 million in revenue because of the falling price of oil.

If we look at the price of oil and what happened with the price of oil – I'll refer to it later, I have it here. I looked at the five-year trend and I have a one-year graph and so on here – it significantly dropped. One of the Members over there mentioned earlier, they said that the current Premier – who was the Opposition leader – had written me around October.

I had been talking publicly, but we didn't know what was going to happen to the oil. We had publicly stated in our budget documents in 2015, we laid out for every dollar in change of oil, what the implications were. The change in the dollar Canada/US exchange rate, the implications there as well. We laid all of that out in our budget documents because we wanted people to know what the risks were. As oil dropped, people knew – and we talked regularly about how times were going to get tougher and harder the more oil dropped.

In October, the Leader of the Opposition at the time, the former Leader of the Opposition wrote me and asked me for an update. We couldn't provide it, because the oil was continuing to drop. OPEC, which meets in early December – December 4 I think was when they met. When they meet, it has big implications on what happens with the oil prices.

Just true to what we thought was going to happen is exactly what happened, because after OPEC met, they didn't take any significant steps to rectify the challenges that were being faced around the world. It's not a unique problem to Newfoundland and Labrador by any means. It's a problem that is impacting people around the world and countries around the world, and jurisdictions that are relying on oil. That's exactly what took place. They didn't make any changes. They didn't reduce production. They didn't reduce reserves; therefore, they didn't make a change in the direction the oil prices were going.

I've got the Bloomberg – I quite often use Bloomberg.com. If you go on there and look at oil prices and look under commodities, you can see in 2015 how prices started to drop in the middle of June, 2015. It dropped right till the end. After OPEC met there was a little bit of a stabilization for a period of time. There was a little bit of a stabilization for a period of time until, actually, the OPEC meeting met in December. When they met in December, then the price dropped again and went down, as we know now, to almost \$25, \$26 mark. Thankfully, it has been recovering ever since.

I raise that because I was faced the position then, the Opposition were saying: Well, what is your assessment? We knew, based on what officials were telling us, what the world forecasters in oil were telling us is that they were throwing their hands up and saying we don't know. We don't know where it's going to go. We don't know what's going to happen.

When OPEC meets, it could change and move in an upward movement in oil or it could move it down. If we had to have done based on what we knew oil was at the time, which would have been around – if I said the numbers and I'm off by a few dollars there, I'm sure I would be criticized for it. So we knew it was low and we didn't know if it was going to go low or not and it turned out it did, is exactly what happened. It continued to drop.

If I had to have said, well, based on what we know now, where are we? Today, Members opposite would be getting up one by one and saying I lied. That is what they would do. They would be saying I lied, and I wasn't prepared to

do that. I always said that I was always upfront to the best of my ability. We went through a campaign and said we have to raise taxes, we have to lower services and we have a fiscal crunch because of the fall of oil and we have to deal with it.

Members opposite went to the people and said no, no – no job losses, no HST, no increases, and they were elected. They were elected based on a set of promises that they brought to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we were not, based on what we said in our campaign. That's the history of it.

Members can get up and stand up and say, oh, I wouldn't tell them and they didn't know and all the rest of it. Well, most of the people in the province knew. You look at the budget documents, you look at the price of oil and you had an idea where it was going. Until it turned around and stabilized – which it is still not stable, it's increasing, but it's still not stabilized, people didn't know what was going to happen.

Mr. Chair, I only have a few minutes left in this particular time for me to talk today. I want to talk about schools again, in particular, my district. I was doing some research today to determine: How many housing starts have happened in my district? My District of Topsail – Paradise, most of it is Paradise, and I also have the east end of Conception Bay South. How many housing starts because housing starts quite often – well, not quite often, it's a good predictor of what you're going to need for schools and classrooms.

Between 2009 and 2015, a six-year period, between both communities there was approximately 4,500 new homes built between Paradise and Conception Bay South. Most, by the highest majority of them, about 3,000 were built in Paradise. That's 3,000 new homes over a six-year period built in the Town of Paradise. We know why the town is growing so fast: good contractors working hard, (inaudible) developers and real estate agents working hard there and so on and are causing a boom in housing, particularly in Paradise; but CBS, while the numbers have been down in the last four or five years, their numbers were still fairly strong.

They had some years where they built 299 in the mid- to late 2000s, and the number seems to have slid since then. But Paradise, about 3,000 homes in six years built. That means, while there was space in Mount Pearl, when we talked in government and years back – and I remember when I was councillor in CBS, going to government and saying, look, you're going to have to build new schools. There's a crunch here and new schools have to be built, and I remember the school board at the time, back when I was even a school councillor, saying, oh no, it's peaked out now and it's going to start to drop and said, no, it's not. It's not; it's going to continue to grow, and it did.

As a government, we knew we had to make changes. Now, there was space in Mount Pearl, empty seats, empty classrooms in Mount Pearl where Mount Pearl had peaked out and actually their demographic is aging and their population is declining, these people, when they're moving out of their homes and leaving the nest, they're going to Paradise and they're going to CBS and they're going to Torbay. So the school population was lessening there.

But that's turned around now because of Southlands and Paradise. There's no high school in Paradise – 20,000 people – and there's four elementary schools. Well, three currently, and one under construction, but the students that will go to the fourth new school are currently being bused to centre of St. John's at the former School for the Deaf, which is the district school or used as swing space.

What we have here is a circumstance that's growing whereby people moving to Paradise and their children are going to be pressed for space in the years to come. It's important to get schools built. The schedule's been changed and delayed. I know that's worrisome for families. It's worrisome for the people in both communities, in Conception Bay South and also in Paradise.

While my time is up and my 10 minutes is winding down here now for this particular time, I will use my time later to discuss this a little bit more. I believe there's a chance we can work this out, but it takes a long time to build schools, it takes a long time to build this infrastructure and government has always been trying in the

last few years to get ahead of it. I know the Opposition, when they were there, they encouraged us to get ahead of it as well.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I welcome the opportunity again to speak to the deficit levy debate we're having this evening. Again, I think it's worth putting in context the discussions we're having. Whilst there is a certain amount of commentary from the Members opposite to the point one might almost say of lip service, I really don't think that their protestations that they get just how serious it is are actually matched by the comments that then follow that kind of glossy statement at the beginning.

The magnitude of the mess, really, is colossal: a \$2.7 billion deficit, if unchecked, which through this budget we have managed to reign in to slightly over \$1.8 billion. Those are numbers and I think it's very difficult for people who don't see balance sheets and who haven't had the exposure to the budgets that the Minister of Environment alluded to that we had in Cabinet. I don't think they really have a handle on it.

Currently, a \$1.8 billion deficit for the current year equates to around \$23,000 per head. So my four-year-old grandson, Easton, out in Lewisporte, he currently is walking around with a debt the equivalent of a one-year-old vehicle. Already, and he's only four. Had that not been rectified thus far, then that in actual fact would have been the equivalent of a new SUV at the age of four. He has to carry that with him into the future.

My colleague for Advanced Education and Skills opened that concept up with very nicely describing how the attitude of the previous regimes has been to kick this debt down to future generations. That's grossly unreasonable. My colleague to my left here, as well as the

Minister of Environment, has spoken about how in the past our record of custodianship has not really been very good. We have taken what we wanted and left the problems for the next generation and the generation behind. Really that has to stop somewhere; we can't just continue to do that.

Back to the magnitude of the debt, at \$23,000 per capita where do we sit? Well, we're probably the worst in the country. What about internationally? If you look at Puerto Rico – you might say why pick that. Their debt is \$21,000 per capita. They've currently declared bankruptcy and are looking to the US government, federally, to deal with their issues. They're bankrupt.

Venezuela is another country solely dependent on one volatile commodity, the same volatile commodity on which we have been dependent. We swapped our volatile commodities over the years. It's gone from fish to mining to oil. In Venezuela they have the lights off for eight hours a day. The hospitals basically look like public washrooms with gurneys and patients on them and nothing else. That's what \$21,000 to \$23,000 per capita of debt does to you.

You have a problem. It's a huge problem. You need to fix it and you need to fix it quickly. We've heard about the therapeutic measures we can use, the increase in taxation, the options of borrowing, the reduction in spending and the looking at programs. The fastest of those is borrowing but it's contingent. It's just like a household. If you have a debt you want to pay off, you have to go to a lending institution. You have to show them your financial credentials, your earnings, your expected income and make the case.

We had to have a plan. Contrary to what the Members of the Third Party would have you believe, that plan is there, and the Member for Lake Melville alluded to that earlier on. It is a reasoned plan to take us back to financial solvency in seven years. It's realistic, but the key element of that it is independent – independent from commodity prices. It will work no matter what the price of a barrel of oil.

Remember the discussion about: well, you know, a dollar on the price of oil is \$23 million.

It is, so long as that dollar on the price stays there for 365 days on average. So, no, just because it went up a dollar yesterday doesn't mean to say we got \$23 million more in the bank. It doesn't work like that.

We have a plan. There is a vision. How can you fiscally, responsibly do anything if you are digging yourself out of a hole. The magnitude of the hole is shown quite clearly by the size of our interest repayments, \$980 million per year compared with \$890 million, which is what we can afford for education this year in total. Statutory obligation, education.

When you step back after that, what of the things we've heard about tonight. We've heard at great length a trail of negative comments. I would suggest to the Member for St. John's Centre that they have been extremely selective in what they have brought here to the House tonight. They have chosen to pick and focus on the negative.

One of the comments from the Members opposite earlier on was extolling the virtues of studying Hansard. So I listened to the Member for Mount Pearl North and I would quote here directly from Hansard: I ask the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that you should look at the good things that are happening. Do not focus on the negatives. That is attributed to the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

I would suggest that they take a leaf out of their own book, particularly with the Members from the Third Party. They're happy to ask and acknowledge the good news in the budget. They throw that sentence in and then completely turn round with this umbrella of eschatological gloom that the end of the world is nigh and the sky is falling. They ignore the good pieces in the budget that my colleague here, parliamentary secretary to the Department of Health has alluded to.

On a personal level, as an MHA for a district, Gander has a pressing need for a waste water management system. It is limiting the growth of the town at a time when over the last 18 months to two years the population has increased by at least 1,000 people. It cannot grow anymore because of the geography in which it finds itself. It has to grow in a certain direction, and the only

way that can grow is serviced by a waste water system that is at capacity. It will not meet the 2020 water standards that we have spoken about both in this House and elsewhere, nor can it literally take any more. The tanks are full. All you have to do is walk past some of the wetlands nearby to see that the tanks are actually overflowing.

That request for money, supported by my colleague from Municipal Affairs, sits on a federal infrastructure minister's desk with a total of \$180 million of federal funding that could come back to this province in partnership with our federal cousins. It will put people to work and it will deal with pressing issues of an urgent nature.

So those are good things in the budget that are not being brought out by the colleagues opposite. It's slightly galling to say the least, to have to sit here for 48 hours, even more, and listen to all the bad things when they pay lip service to – or actually refuse, point blank, to acknowledge any of the good and constructive things.

No, this budget is not perfect. It is a good, credible, creditable and reasoned attempt to deal with the mess the like of which this province has never seen before. There is no province, Mr. Chair, in this country that has had to deal, or is having to deal, with the magnitude of problems that we have.

Despite allusions to the orange province in the west, we are not in that situation where we can go to the lenders and the money market and borrow money. We don't have \$18 billion in a legacy fund, because previous administrations decided a legacy fund wasn't a good idea and that spending could increase while you cut taxation and ignore borrowing. This is why we find ourselves in this situation.

So I just wanted to get up here and point out some of the good things and some of the cognitive failings of the arguments from the opposite.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to start out tonight, Mr. Chair – we only get up on our feet, I guess, perhaps once every hour or so. So I backtrack sometimes to some of the previous speeches, especially when I'm particularly shocked at what I hear. When I heard the Minister of Education stand up earlier and say: Don't worry about some of the naysayers to your budget and the people who are expressing concerns, some of them still think they have to bring in a junk of wood.

My God, how insulting to say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; I'm astounded sometimes at some of the things that I hear said about the fine folks of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair. There's nobody in Newfoundland and Labrador that still thinks we have to bring in a junk of wood to keep the school going.

The people, I do believe, are incredibly intelligent, whether they have an education or a master's degree or grade 11. Many of our people in this fine province have learned through the school of hard knocks. They could probably teach all of us here in the House a thing or two about the realities of life and the realities of fiscal situations.

I'm going to speak as well to – I'm going to build upon a little bit of what the Minister of Health just spoke about when he talked about net debt per capita. He cherry picked a few countries that he wanted to use in reference, Puerto Rico being one of them. He said that with a \$21,000 net debt per capita they were on the verge of bankruptcy.

One of the things that alarms me about some of the messaging that the Liberals are using here is the fear mongering that they're using to people, to try and have us go into a panic mode so that we think the sky is falling when that is really not the case. To present net debt per capita, for anyone who truly understands accounting and finances, that's certainly only part of the picture. You also have to take into consideration your net debt to GDP.

Mr. Chair, he referenced – or I think maybe it was the Minister of Transportation who explained net debt per capita as the debt per every man, woman and child. Your debt per GDP is your debt per Gross Domestic Product. Your Gross Domestic Product refers to the industries and the goods and services that you, as a region or jurisdiction, are producing.

One of the things that Newfoundland and Labrador clearly has had until now – and I do have grave concerns about the economic retraction we're going to see as a result of the measures of this budget. We have had strong industries in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair. I'm sure the Members from Labrador can get up and elaborate for hours on end about the vast resources that we have in this province and the great wealth of our iron ore and our nickel.

Here on the Island we have great potential, Mr. Chair. We have some fabulous industries underway as well. If you look – and I read into the record yesterday some of the statistics from RBC, which talk about what the Newfoundland net debt to GDP ratio was – you can clearly see that, and someone sent us an email on it today, actually. They went and looked on the site for themselves, and they were quite surprised to see that Newfoundland and Labrador, 11 times throughout the '80s and '90s and into the early 2000s, 11 times our net debt to GDP ratio was in excess of 60 per cent.

Anyone who's gone to a bank to get a mortgage knows that your net debt to GDP ratio should never exceed 40 per cent. You probably would not get a bank loan you money if your debt exceeds the money you have coming in in excess of 40 per cent. This province, particularly in the '90s under a Liberal government, consistently ran a net debt to GDP ratio of 60 per cent. So I think we can all be very reasonable and recognize and acknowledge that over the years since Confederation in 1949, things have not always been perfect. Perhaps over the course of the last 60, 70 years, hindsight being 20-20, all governments would look and say perhaps we could have spent a little less.

I'm sure, and the Member opposite who once sat in Opposition before crossing, when we were trying to – and you have to give Premier Dunderdale credit, the year she tried to do some,

what she referred to as rightsizing, woof, the cries from across the way were vile. All we have to do now is look at Hansard and see the screams that we heard and the cries for more, more, more. It was absolutely outrageous, Mr. Chair.

I think some of the current Members who are sitting need to take some responsibilities themselves, because our government certainly did try to start assessing this situation without the fear mongering, without telling people the sky was going to fall, without having people worried there was going to be a bankruptcy around the corner, which is such incredible – I can't believe they would be throwing out that kind of messaging, because it's not just the 500,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador who are hearing the doom and gloom message, it's the international investors as well, Mr. Chair. If we're going to want to entice them to come and do business in Newfoundland and Labrador, we're hardly sending them the right message, I would say to that.

I could probably even buy into some of the messaging in terms of their concerns about where the budget is, if I could see they were making efforts themselves to address the spending, but we have a government that continues to add new expenditures to the bottom line, like full-day kindergarten – astounding. So I can't buy into the logic when the actions I see don't quite match the words I hear.

It is no doubt a challenging time for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have to deal with falling oil prices, but if we're truly going to make Newfoundland and Labrador a better place, if we're truly going to make our economy sustainable we really need to take a strong focus on diversification. I hope over the course of the next few years the conversation in this House of Assembly does turn more toward diversification and more toward the opportunities that lie ahead. I want to hear more about how proud we are of the people who live in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to hear more about the wonderful talents and skillsets we have and what we can offer the world, because we certainly do have a lot to offer the world.

With our hydroelectric resources, with our oil resources, with our mining resources, with our

tourism potential, with a knowledge-based export potential, with our fishery, Mr. Chair, huge opportunities lie ahead for Newfoundland and Labrador; the fishery in particular being a renewable resource.

When I worked in a prior life with community economic development, we actually did a presentation to the Standing Committee on Fisheries. I've often been very upset about how the federal government acquired control of our fishery, for the most part, with the deal of Confederation in 1949. Our quotas were traded with other countries. The return provinces, like Quebec, got a bombardier factory and the country got part of our quota of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are people who can cite instance after instance after instance where Canada gave a business venture to somewhere else in Canada using the resource of Newfoundland and Labrador. These are the things I'd like to see government talk more about. These are the things I'd like to see government address and fight for on behalf of our people.

I truly do believe that rural Newfoundland and Labrador can be sustainable. I've never understood why there are 9,000 people working with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The number of bureaucrats I think in that particular sector in some cases far outweighs the number of people in the industry. It has always baffled me. I think it's one of the reasons why we have such insane regulations in some cases.

I spoke to some of my fishermen in the isolated communities and a regulation came out, they had to cut two feet off the boat and then the next year they had to put two feet back on. It's outrageousness that happens because someone sitting in Ottawa is trying to make a decision about what's best for the fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, the fishermen in Newfoundland and Labrador can tell them what's best and how best to develop the industry.

Hopefully as we move forward we'll start talking more about diversification instead of doom and gloom, because Newfoundland certainly does have great potential and together,

co-operatively, I think we all can work to make a difference in making our lives better.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's great to get an opportunity to speak once again. I've spoken several times today as the debate has been ongoing for quite some time now. I think we're well past the 48-hour mark.

I just want to bring back, and I keep doing this every time I rise. I'd like to reference back – yes, and hello to the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune waving at me. Thank you very much.

I'd like to keep bringing back to the point, the actual piece of legislation we are speaking to. While I understand that any bill with respect to finance matters of the province gives any Member an opportunity to speak about anything they want because most matters in the province relate to spending – I completely understand that. I respect that you bring up matters related to money – but to those tuning in and to those here with us this evening, Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, is more pointedly known as the Temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. It's important to point that out because we can reference on and on about borrowing and doom and gloom, and we've heard this across the way. In fact, I've continued to hear most of the afternoon that this budget is all about choices. It's all about choices.

The Member for Cape St. Francis quite pointedly said that time and time again, it's all about choices. I challenged him this morning. I have great respect for the fact that he stood right back up and spoke directly to me, which I had no trouble listening, again, all about choices; but, I specifically said if we're going to speak to this piece of legislation – and even if you want to speak to any matters related to money, can you please name for me a revenue measure. Name a measure that you would have taken to increase revenue. I still haven't heard one; we're going past 48 hours. Name a measure that we have not taken to increase revenue.

The second thing I said was: Name a measure you would have taken to find more efficiencies. Efficiencies is a bit of a fluffy word at times because it means streamlining services and making a different decision. I'd like to remind the Members opposite that throughout our budget process one of the things which I learned the most about was through Estimates. The Estimates process, to those who are listening, are when we go line by line through every single department in government.

Throughout our Estimates process, in this spring session, we found just approximately \$100 million in savings – \$100 million in savings. Most of which were through line-by-line items such as Transportation and Communications, we're not going to go to that conference this year. The Minister of Environment and Conservation said we're not going to take the helicopter to do certain tours and researching wildlife. Property, Furnishings and Equipment, printing services, Supplies, we found line-by-line reductions through each and every single department.

While we were doing that, what was very interesting was that the Finance Minister heard words such as, well, I've never met with the Finance Minister before. We usually don't go line by line. We've never sat down with the Finance Minister and gone line by line to find savings. I just want to throw that out there in the context of the efforts that this government has made to find savings in areas which do not affect everyday Newfoundland and Labradorians.

The Members opposite had 12 years to sit down with departments. There are agencies, boards and commissions that have never met with the Finance Minister – have never met. It is on the record. She stated it on the record they've never met with the Finance Minister to look at opportunities for savings. In any event, that is the opportunity for savings.

A couple of things I wanted to touch on and then I want to get back to the levy because this is the specific bill. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune said we increased spending by \$400 million. Well, I'd like to remind the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, as well as the Members opposite and the Members of the Third Party and our Member with an

unaffiliated party, if you will, that \$221 million of that \$400 million in our increased costs right now of expenditures, \$221 million of that is for the unfunded teacher pension liability; \$221 million of the \$400 million you are stating we are spending extra is for the unfunded teacher pension liability which, for that matter, your government signed.

Your government, while in power, signed for us to spend \$220 million for the unfunded pension liability. The rest of that \$400 million, some \$189 million is going to pay down the deficit, which I'd also like to point out was referenced to you by the Auditor General on multiple occasions. I can't wait to continue speaking throughout the night. I have a document here – I'll hold it up for you; this is four years of Auditor General reports, right here. Four years of Auditor General reports right here in my hands. On multiple occasions, you were warned of overspending. You were warned that over a decade you spent 58 per cent more.

You were warned time and time and time again. So I just want to point that out. I'm not trying to play this blame game because you keep saying we're playing a game. I strongly suggest we're not playing any games. This is real. This is real life. We're looking towards the future. We need to chart the course for the future right now. But with all this in mind, you didn't take the opportunity to sit down with departments, you didn't take the opportunity to go line by line and what you did do was take the opportunity to decrease taxes to the highest earners in the province. Specifically in the years of 2007, further reductions to the highest income earners in the province happened in 2008, again in 2010 and, in 2008, you actually eliminated the tax on insurance premiums that we have now introduced.

For the better part of one in the morning last night until one in the afternoon today, we were supposed to be debating Bill 19, which was the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums which was a measure that you eliminated. At the same time, you decreased taxes to the highest earners in the province. You decreased the HST year over year, all at a time of which you had peak oil production and were further warned of your overspending.

I only have a minute or two left. It's easy to point out some of the things and some of the measures that you didn't take. I have no comprehension of a long-term sustainability and vision in a plan. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when the government of the day sat in the caucus room and said we're at peak oil now, guys, let's knock off the taxes to the highest earners, let's decrease the HST, let's eliminate the insurance premiums, let's take all of these measures into account. I would have loved to have heard the train of thought and the vision and the long-term planning.

But one thing I can't take away – I've said it time and time again and I'll give credit where credit is due. You've made some great investments when you had to. There was aging infrastructure, so be it. But while you took the peak oil revenue and made these great investments, how come at the same time you reduced taxes and eliminated taxes? It's one thing for people in our province to get used to paying a certain amount. Prior to 2008, everybody was used to paying 15 per cent on insurance premiums.

It was no news to anybody. No one was going around in 2006-2007-2008 oh, gosh, darn, I've got to pay 15 per cent on my home insurance and my car insurance. Nobody was saying that, but you take it away and now we have to bring it back. We have to bring it back because we are at a time of an unprecedented financial crisis of which our province has never seen before, to the extent of which we just borrowed last Thursday \$3.4 billion.

So it's one thing for people to expect to pay X amount of dollars time and time again. You take it away and add it back people are going to be hard for change. My heart is with them, and my heart is with them right now. But my heart is also with the future generations of our province. The health care we're going to have to provide in the next 10, 15, 20 years. We're going to have the oldest population in the country in 20 years' time, and we will not be able to provide health care –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: – services to them adequately without taking measures today.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking has expired.

MR. FINN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm happy once again to stand and to speak to Bill 14. We've been at this a while. I think we first started speaking to Bill 14 a few days ago, and here we are again. Again, it's 8:23 p.m. – I've been here since midnight last night, and it's been interesting to hear the different discussion in this House. Some of it is very interesting. What I find interesting is that government at this point is starting to talk about some of the positive things that might be contained in the budget or not specifically contained in the budget but that's coming down the road.

Again, I believe there is such a sense of despair in the province – and those are the kinds of messages were getting – and I really do hope that government takes this bull by the horn and communicates directly with the people of the province, that if they have measures that will strengthen the people of the province, that will strengthen our education system, that will strengthen our health care system, that will strengthen our communities – because all we've been hearing about are the cuts; the cuts to libraries, the cuts to schools.

A very important school in my district, a junior high school was cut. That was done by an unelected board of trustees when this government promised that they were going to have a duly elected board of trustees. This Minister of Education let that board of trustees close five schools, even though they haven't been duly elected to fully represent the people in their communities. I believe that's a travesty. I believe it's a true violation of the spirit and intent of why we have school board trustees and how our school board system works. It's a complete violation of that.

I think it's really important that the people have such an incredible feeling of despair. I'll continue to read out some of the emails and messages that people have asked us to read on their behalf. Then, if government is able to respond to these and say: Well hey, just a sec, we have solutions. That would be great. I'll be really happy to hear that – really, really happy to hear those solutions.

I also have emails from people who are offering potential solutions to some of the challenges we are facing as a province. I must stress that the people of the province know we are in an incredibly difficult financial situation. They know that. When we look at our history of the province, the people of the province, the indigenous First Nations people have gone through times of extreme challenges. Then, when settlers came we can see waves of times of prosperity, times when it was easier, waves of times when it was much more difficult.

Really, what it is, we all want the province to be able to weather this storm, to come out of it stronger. We do not want to see our people impoverished. We do not want to see our social programs impoverished. To date, government hasn't been able to show us anything other than that. So if they're starting to change that message, if they're starting to change some of the decisions they've made and the grim measures they have undertaken, then that's a good thing.

Then, I would think our filibuster has been somewhat positive because what we have kept pointing out is how despondent the people are and the province is. That's not a message we created. That's a message this government created. All they kept doing is hammering about the bad fiscal situation, just time again, pounding and pounding and pounding. We weren't talking about the bad fiscal situation. We were talking about the effects of the budget. The effects of the choices this government made and how it affects the people of the province.

I'd like to go back to some of the emails I have received. This was the one from the woman who drives a cab. I'll just read it again quickly: As a cabbie, I am paying about \$30 a week extra for gas. I don't mind the gas tax, she says, I understand these are difficult times. As a

grandmother, mother and mother-in-law of two well-educated, expensively educated young people, I fear they will have to leave and I will lose access to them and to my lovely grandson. They are so employable everywhere but here.

That's heartbreaking. Many of us in the province know this story. Many of us know the story of our young people moving away to get work, some by choice and some by feeling they have no alternative. We've seen that again in different parts, in different times in our histories where more people at different times had to move because of the economic situation.

One of the unfortunate things about this budget is that the budget itself – even on page 5, government itself tells us we can expect higher unemployment. When, in fact, what you would want government to be able to do is to reduce unemployment, to be able to get people back to work. Already we have the highest unemployment in the country and government is telling us that unemployment is going to increase. It doesn't look good, it doesn't look hopeful. People are grabbing, they want to be able to have some sense of hope they can grab onto.

She says: He has a master's in public history, which you would think would be useful here, and she has a philosophy degree with a diploma in adventure tourism. Again, you would think that they could stay, that they could get work here.

One of the other things she's mentioned is they've cut the physical breast exam from the clinic. I know there is research out there. I often follow research around the issue of breast cancer, as I've had breast cancer twice myself. I know there are differing schools of thought about whether or not manual breast exam is really that important, whether or not it produces the results one would hope. Some of the current research says it doesn't affect the rate of mortality. However, one thing it does do is it puts women in touch with health care professionals who could teach women how to do their own breast examination and it teaches women how to take care of themselves and it teaches women about preventative health.

Going for that manual breast exam in fact creates the opportunity for the nurse to talk to women about preventative health care, how to take care of themselves better. That's gone now. The nurses, who used to do that at the breast screening program, are no longer doing that. You go in for your mammogram and that's it. That component of teaching women about prevention, about self-care is now gone.

Now I know I found my first breast cancer on my own through self-examination, and that's really important. It's really important that it's taught to women in a way that we are learning to take care of our bodies. Not that we see our bodies always as a potential site of disease and that it frightens women but, no, it's learning about how to take care of yourself and learning about your body.

I believe it's a shame. It's a shame that program was cut. I have no problem with the empirical research that shows it doesn't affect the rate of mortality among women with breast cancer, but there were other elements involved in that process of breast self-examination. Again, it was way to teach women about self-care and prevention. So that's gone.

She said: My partner works in a public library and we aren't sure how that bumping will play out. We know the number of libraries that will be cut. The interesting thing too about the library positions that will be cut are almost exclusively women. They are women who work in their communities who were paid as professional librarians or library technicians, and it is women who will be losing those jobs.

She said: And on the bright side, well, there really isn't one is there, unless it leads to electoral reform. I'm hoping that is something this government, the governments and all three major parties on the federal level are looking at electoral reform and I'm hoping we will be able to do that here in this province.

She's pointing to the sugar tax. She said: Really, the sugar tax should be considered. I heard it wasn't practical because it hasn't been done before and it isn't being done elsewhere in Canada, but, she says, it wasn't true of taxing books. The revenue on sugary drinks would far outweigh the tax on books. Nobody else taxes

books across the country, yet this government is going to start taxing books. So she said, why not tax sugary drinks.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to rise today to participate in this debate. It's sort of a continuing debate on the budget issues, although we're focused on a bill related to the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy.

Just for the information of people watching at home, we're in the Committee of the Whole. Basically, the Committee of the Whole is an opportunity to examine a bill clause by clause.

The tradition of our House is that we often have an extensive debate on clause 1 of the bill. That's been our tradition. The Opposition is using that as an opportunity to continue the debate, to extend the debate. We're having a good back-and-forth discussion.

I think that's useful in terms of getting closer to the truth as we each present our information and people in the public have an opportunity to watch. In some cases, they're contributing to the debate by sending Members emails and messages in other ways as well. It's an interesting process that we're going through. That's where we're at.

Madam Chair, I think it's important to note that the fiscal situation we're in, I think we should all be cognizant of that, we should all mention that. We shouldn't be afraid to continue to mention that because that's the problem we're attempting to deal with. We have to be clear on what the nature of this problem is. We also have to be clear on what our solutions would be to this problem.

It's a difficult financial situation that we find ourselves in. We have about \$13 billion in debt, Madam Chair. We find ourselves paying more in interest on our debt than we pay to educate our children. That's a terrible situation for any province to find themselves in, but that's where we are. That's the nature of the problem that we have to deal with. We have to find a way to deal with that issue.

I think we also have to ask the question: Why are we in that situation today? Why are we where we are now? What would it be like if we didn't deal with this situation we're in; if we just continued to ignore the problem and think that we could sort of kick it down the road, as the Member for Corner Brook said in his comments to the House. Where would we find ourselves in the future?

If we continued to go the way we were going and ignore the problem we have, in the future – not in the distant future, Madam Chair, but in the near future – in five or six years our debt would double. Our payments on that debt would increase to a level where we would be approaching where we pay more in interest on our debt than we spend on health care. That's an unacceptable situation. So we have to find a way to deal with the level of debt we have now and ensure that the levels of debt don't increase.

So why are we where we are now? We came through a period where we were touted as being a have province. We had \$25 billion in oil revenue, we were at peak oil, peak production, peak oil prices and, Madam Chair, I think we were in the situation where we thought it was going to last forever. Our spending, our expectations continued to rise as if that situation would last forever; that it would never end. We began to make some policy decisions in terms of the way we operate in this province based on that expectation that this oil revenue would continue.

That, Madam Chair, was an unreasonable expectation I think. If you look at other jurisdictions that had discovered oil and what had happened to them, and if you had looked at the warnings being given by the Auditor General in his or her annual reports, you would find that was an unreasonable expectation. We are faced with a situation now based on the decisions that

were made over the past decade. So we're now dealing with the situation that we've been left with as a government.

Our plan is to deal with the difficult situation that exists, to find solutions, to put our province's finances on a fiscally sound framework going into the future. We need to look at realistic solutions. As I've listened in the debate, I've heard some small piecemeal solutions about how they would tinker around with a few things, but I haven't heard any alternatives to deal with the type of debt and the type of fiscal situation that we're in.

I think it's incumbent upon Members opposite, when they get up to speak, to tell us exactly what they would do to deal with the fiscal situation we're in because they haven't done that yet. We've been going since Monday, 1:30 p.m. and we still haven't heard the solutions that they would offer to dealing with this fiscal crisis we're in.

Madam Chair, to deal with the situation that we face requires a lot of political courage. It requires difficult decisions, unpopular decisions, decisions that many of us here don't want to make, but we are left with no alternative because of the decisions that were made by the previous administration. So we are faced with a situation where we have to take some drastic measures, many of which are unpopular, many of which we, ourselves, don't like, but that's where we are as a government. That's where we are.

Madam Chair, Members opposite have mentioned other approaches that have been taken in other provinces. For example, the Member for St. John's Centre mentioned the differences between the approach of Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador. We are in a very different situation than Alberta. If you look at our per capita debt, it's much higher in this province than it is in Alberta. The taxes that we have are much different in this province than they are in Alberta. The flexibility Alberta has to borrow is much different than the flexibility we have to borrow.

We have to design a solution based on the realities of Newfoundland and Labrador's situation. That's what our government has done. There are many things we don't like about the

way we have to deal with the situation, but it's a situation we can't ignore. Some would say we've ignored it for too long. So I think that's the situation we find ourselves in and we have to look at realistic solutions to the problems that we face.

Again, just in conclusion, I would ask the Members opposite, when they rise, tell us exactly what they would do to deal with the financial situation which we face. Don't just tinker around the edges, don't just tell us what you're against or what you wouldn't do, but tell us exactly what you would do.

Tell us your solution. Tell us what you would do to deal with the fact that we have \$13 billion in debt and that if it's unchecked, we'll have about \$27 billion in debt in five to six years. Tell us what you would do to deal with that situation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

It is nice to see you back in the Chair as a female Chair in the Chamber and lovely to see. I'm going to start off tonight picking up where the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port made some points, and then I'll finish off with the Member for St. George's – Humber and try and address some of the issues he raised.

The Member for Stephenville – Port au Port talked about how Newfoundland has the oldest population in the country. What I'm going to say to that is the medium age of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is going to get even older with the austerity budget that this government is imposing and driving the young people away, not even giving us an option to stay, Madam Chair. The austerity measures they've introduced, this style of leadership, is absolutely not going to solve the problem; it is going to make the problem worse.

So what would we do? For one thing, Madam Chair, we'd be trying to attract people to come and live in Newfoundland and Labrador. And you don't attract people to come and live in Newfoundland and Labrador by posing the highest taxes in the entire nation. That's not a way to have people come and live here; it's a way to drive them away.

We'd also be doing what we could to try and attract investors because we truly believe it is the private sector that is the engine of growth. So we would be creating the climate that would encourage an investor to come and set up a business on the Island portion, encourage a business to come and set up industry in Labrador. That's where our heads would be, Madam Chair, and that's where our heads have been throughout the duration, I would say, of our governance.

Let's talk about measures that you put in place to actually stimulate the economy. I refer to the Member who talked about we'd lowered tax rates in 2007-2008. Well, if the Member can recall, there was a global recession in 2007-2008, and what did our leadership of the day do? Our leadership of the day, among its many initiatives that it applied, which were all successful, one of them was lowering tax rates. Because what does lowering tax rates do? It stimulates the economy. It encourages people to take the money out of their pockets, put it in the economy and have the courage and the confidence to start that business and to buy that house.

No one has the confidence to be doing that today with the austerity measures in this budget. I can't believe. It astounds me that they don't see how they are making things worse.

One of the speakers – I believe it was Stephenville – Port au Port – also said that \$221 million of the additional spending this year is allocated to the teachers' unfunded pension liability. Well, I'm not going to stand here tonight and I certainly don't have time in 10 minutes to give you a lesson, but all you have to do is look and read Hansard and see the initiatives that all Members, on both sides of this House – and you have to give credit where credit is due; everyone who sat in this Chamber

participated and supported in these bills that we passed.

You have to give credit to the former Member, Tom Marshall, who certainly had the vision and the leadership and the education and the experience to know how to handle tough situations and he tackled our public sector pension plans, Madam Chair. If you were worried about having \$221 million to pay in additional spending, if he had not done that, I tell you we wouldn't be able to keep the lights on anywhere in Newfoundland and Labrador. He addressed the Public Service Pension Plan, the Teachers' Pension Plan, the Uniformed Services Pension Plan, the Judges' Pension Plan and the MHA Pension Plan.

The plan today is a shared responsibility; however, there is still some debt on the books from prior to when these bills came into force. Once that debt is paid in full, then that debt is gone from the books. He solved quite a serious problem and I certainly do encourage you to go back and take a look because I think you would find that very interesting. It was a worthwhile exercise that was done by all parties here in this House.

Now I'm going to move on; time goes so quickly. It's amazing how fast 10 minutes can go when you get up on your feet and you speak and you feel the passion for the people you represent. They are starting to say: What would you do? Well, we've been here for over 50 hours; we've offered you several solutions. You don't seem to be listening to any of them. You're not listening to the ones we put forward; you are not listening to the ones that are coming forward from the people.

So stop asking for solutions and stop telling us why you won't look at postponing full-day kindergarten – why not? Why you won't look at taking a million dollars from the contingency fund and keeping your libraries open? Why not? Why you won't look at taking a couple of million dollars from your \$30 million contingency fund and keeping our clinics open – why not? Why are you keeping a figure on the bill and then next year you'll say, oh, we have a \$30 million surplus if there was no emergency. If there is an emergency, guess what? Your federal cousins in Ottawa, the ones you have

such a great relationship with, they come to the table and help you out.

Why are you holding back services from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to keep a \$30 million line on the budget? We don't know, but we're soon going to find out. I'm sure we're going to find out where that money is really going to be spent, Madam Chair, over the course of time. We seem to uncover things as we go.

The other question that the Member for St. George's – Humber asked was: What would we do. I'll tell you what, instead of blaming us for investing in people on things that none of you guys are willing to say weren't needed or beneficial – not one person has stood up and said you shouldn't have done that; you shouldn't have built the Outer Ring Road, b'y. No one has stood up and said that, nobody.

Why aren't the Liberals – and this is something we would certainly be doing, absolutely. We didn't have a problem going to Ottawa and standing strong and proud of who we are and making a case for the people of this province. Why aren't the Liberals making a strenuous case to Ottawa to get an early equalization fix to help us cope with collapsing oil revenues?

Collapsing oil revenue – and we had the Minister of Health earlier talking about Venezuela and Costa Rica. Collapsing oil revenue is a big part of the reason that Venezuela is suffering. Collapsing oil revenue, imagine that. Sound familiar? Why should we be forced to endure the kind of pain that this austerity budget is bringing when other provinces are getting Ottawa's help this year to cope with their insufficient resources due to the oil downturn?

Why is Newfoundland trying to fix the problem? Why is the Liberal government trying to fix the problem on the backs of the working people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the middle class? Where is the fairness in that? If the Members opposite were as passionate about fighting for fairness as they are about attacking us for choices that you didn't oppose at the time that they were being made, then probably we wouldn't be here debating the massive tax increases that are going to crush our people and crush our economy.

Do the Members really think that Ottawa is stepping up for us enough in our time of need? Do you think it's okay they're giving so much to Alberta to help, they're giving so much to Saskatchewan to help and they're throwing us a few crumbs. Is that okay with you guys? Is that something that you're proud of? I tell you, it's not something that I'm proud of.

I would much rather see a government that was willing to stand strong with its people and represent us strongly in Ottawa, and demand more and demand better for the people to get us through this hump. Certainly a far better option than tax, tax, tax, cut, cut, cut.

I keep going back to, what would you do to stimulate the economy? We'd create that environment. We wouldn't be preaching a message of doom and gloom. We'd be telling people how confident we were in their ability to get us over this hump. We'd be saying bear with us, there might have to be some things – you might have to increase a tax or two. Gas might have had to go up a few cents, but 16½ cents, really; plus insurance, plus income tax, plus, plus, plus, really? I think we're going to tax ourselves into oblivion if this continues, Madam Chair.

We still don't know what budget number two has in store for us. I think we all live in fear of what that one is going to be all about. Maybe they will listen behind closed doors to some of what is being said by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and by those of us who sit here trying to bring their voice to the table. Maybe you'll rethink some of the austerity measures that you were looking at for the fall. We don't know, but we can live in hope.

What upsets me – and I'm running out of time real quick – is it seems like the Members opposite don't believe Ottawa should be helping us to drive new growth so that we don't suffer the economic collapse that the budget documents are projecting because of the collapse of oil prices. What would we do? We would certainly stand up for the people.

This is the message I'd like to leave with you at the end of this speech: Stop playing politics against us and start fighting for our people. That's what we would do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Well, I had a few things planned to say but when you follow the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune your notes sort of go out the window. I can't believe what I'm hearing actually.

I'm going to start with the pension. As my colleague, the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, alluded to in his remarks, why we're spending. She happens to mention that every time she gets up, that we're not being prudent. We're spending more than we did last year. We're spending \$400 million more than we did last year. She says it every time and the message doesn't seem to be getting through to her that \$220-plus million of that is to go into the teachers' pension, which she accepts that that's something they decided to do. Well, do you know what? You can't ignore pensions.

I have a classic story of what can happen when pensions remain unfunded. I would ask the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune – because I'm sure she doesn't have to call Wabush because there are people in her district who are ex-employees of Wabush and Wabush pensioners. Ask Wabush pensioners what happens when you leave a pension fund unfunded? You just ask them, when they just seen in the last four months a 25 per cent reduction in their pension plan because a pension plan was allowed to go with an unfunded liability.

We don't want that to happen to any of our employees, whether they're teachers, whether they're public servants, whether they're nurses. Any employee of this provincial government who have worked long and hard for us deserve a pension. That's what you worked all your life for and that's what the people of Wabush worked all their lives for. So are you saying we shouldn't be putting \$222 million into the teachers' pension?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LETTO: Well, stop. If you don't believe that then stop asking us why we are spending more than we did last year.

MS. PERRY: A point of order, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune on a point of order.

MS. PERRY: (Inaudible) normally they ask us to stand –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Member to quote the Standing Order.

MS. PERRY: I will get up and explain the (inaudible) his colleague who accused us of overspending.

CHAIR: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

I ask the hon. Member to respect the floor that has been given to the Member for Labrador West.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you.

It's just unbelievable, when you try to explain to them that \$400 million is extra because you have –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

She's really good at heckling too, right.

I'll go on from the pension because she said so much more and I don't want to run out of time.

Talking about our Liberal cousins in Ottawa, why we aren't going and why we're not going after more equalization money. May I remind the hon. Member, and I'll ask the question, why didn't they do it in 2009 and 2014 when the

opportunity presented itself to go to the federal government, to their federal cousins at the time, and demand more equalization payments? Why didn't they do it in 2009 and 2014 when they had the opportunity to do that? We can't – by legislation, we're not supposed to be able to do that until 2019, but we're working with our Liberal counterparts in Ottawa to make things happen. That may just happen. We just saw the levy adjusted in this budget.

The Member for St. John's Centre gets up and says it's only now we're starting to hear about the good things in the budget. Well, there are a lot of good things in the budget. It's because of our friends in Ottawa that we've been able to raise the threshold of the levy from \$20,000 to \$50,000, so that now 74 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do not – and I repeat again, do not – pay the levy. That's up from 38 per cent. So don't try to lecture us on why we should go to Ottawa.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs got up earlier tonight. He tried to explain to the Members on the other side on what we're doing with Ottawa with municipal infrastructure. Madam Chair, \$180 million worth of municipal infrastructure work is now sitting on a desk in Ottawa waiting for the signature so that we can put out to our municipalities in this province projects that will be shared by Ottawa, by us and by the municipalities, a three-way partnership, to provide good infrastructure, good water infrastructure, waste water infrastructure and create jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The Transportation Minister has a huge, huge plan in Ottawa that's awaiting approval, including money for the Trans-Labrador Highway where we're putting in \$63.7 million. When asked what would they do as a solution – what would they do. Create an environment for investment in this province, a great idea. In fact, that's just what we're doing.

The question I would ask again: Where have they been for the past 12 years? Why didn't they do it the past 12 years instead of relying on the \$25 billion oil money that was flowing in hand over fist, and instead of creating an environment – and one of the first things; I remember back when the oil started flowing, there were groups

in this province at the time who had a bit of a vision. There were a lot of conferences and symposiums on what's next, what's after oil. I'm sure that probably nobody in this room expected that time to come so soon. It came upon us pretty fast when oil dropped from \$140 a barrel down to less than \$30. I think we would have been better off if we had paid more attention to those people at the time and really put in a plan to deal with the situation after oil. That's where we are, folks; it's after oil, it's after iron ore and it's after all the commodities because we depended on them.

We didn't create an environment for investment. We lived off our laurels. We had the money coming in. We didn't need to invest and attract businesses and attract people to the province. Their Population Growth Strategy – that worked so well. It worked marvelous. In fact, the population went down. That's how well their population strategy worked. So don't tell us about creating an environment for investment in 2016 when they had from 2003 to 2015 to do it. Don't tell us. Don't lecture us.

The Member for Stephenville – Humber –

AN HON. MEMBER: St. George's – Humber.

MR. LETTO: St. George's – Humber – I still don't have all the districts right. He ended off when he said, ask what their solution is. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune gets up and says we shouldn't be doing that. Don't ask us what we would have done. Don't ask us. You should have done better things yourself.

Well, Madam Chair, I'll end by saying this – and I know it's been said before – we're playing the hand that was dealt us. I guarantee you there is not too many pocket aces in that hand. There are no full houses. There are no straight flushes. There are no royal flushes in that hand.

In fact, I don't think we've found a pair. There is not even a pair of cards in that hand. The hand should have been discarded but, unfortunately, there is neither other one there to pick up. There's no other hand there to pick up, so we have to play the hand that was dealt us. That's what we're trying to do. We're trying to do it responsibly. We're trying to do it respectfully.

I know it's tough. We hear it every day.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: But it's something that we have to do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's a pleasure tonight to get up and speak to this particular motion and bill, and just a continuation of the overall budget debate. I've certainly listened attentively to the hon. Members across the way and some of their thoughts and commentary on where we are to and what their thoughts are, but I'd like to pick up on a couple of those.

The Member for Lab West talked about a number of things there in response to my colleague in regard to the economy and creating that environment where the economy will flourish. I'm not sure, in the last 10 years, if he's aware of the economy indicators that we've seen in Newfoundland and Labrador, which are really unprecedented in terms of things like retail spending, consumer confidence, average household income. All of those key economic indicators have done quite well over the past number of years and have allowed Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to certainly have a return from some of the actions that we have taken in building that economy.

Now, a lot of times, from our perspective, it's about creating an environment, as my colleague as said. The entrepreneurship with the business community, sometimes you need to assist, sometimes you need to get out of the way, but they build the economy. As I said, some of the comments talked about that environment haven't been created. Look at the past number of years

with all those economic indicators. You look at our growth rate, GDP and all of the indicators have been very positive.

You look at various industries again, so I'm not sure what he's referencing. We have a tourism industry that exceeded over \$1 billion. We've got a wild fishery and aquaculture industry that has exceeded \$1.1 billion. We have an ICT sector that's gone to \$1.8 billion. So all of that is about growth, it's about activity, it's about an environment, about a growing economy and, through all of that, it's about bringing returns back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and who live here.

The other thing it does is it creates an environment for investment, anywhere from billions and billions that has been invested over the past number of years, based on the fact that the environment was here, where there was an opportunity for a return and people recognized that based on the environment that was created here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So you need to create that stability, that belief that there is opportunity here, that it's open for business in Newfoundland and Labrador and people want to invest, people want to partner and, through that, we grow our economy. And through some of the changes, certainly in terms of commodity prices over the past couple of years – we've have some challenges with that now. But it's still incumbent on whoever is on that side of this hon. House that they continue to create that environment and sustain that environment. That's about having a plan and a direction, and instilling confidence in the business community of Newfoundland and Labrador, in the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and certainly outside – not only domestically, but outside. As we know, with much of our commodities and partnerships and investors, a lot of those are national and international.

The hon. Member mentioned Labrador. Obviously we see various mining operations and the opportunities that exist in Labrador related to other mining operations and the hope in the future that we'll get further development. That will come from investment from far and wide. We need to make sure we create that

environment where we believe – create that environment first and foremost, but we certainly encourage that investment. It's so important to do it. As a government you have to always be aware of that and instill that confidence, both inside and out that it's ready and open for business to do that.

Some of the other comments were made in regard to the pension fund and the decision made by the previous administration. This was a long-standing issue that covered various governments over the past decades in terms of how we would come to grips with this huge unfunded pension liability that had no plan, had no direction over the past number of years through our administration – \$2 billion that was achieved.

Through the Atlantic Accord and some of the revisions that were done through equalization, there was a \$2 billion for the province that was done actually under a Liberal government, Paul Martin in Ottawa, to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. That was used to assist with the unfunded liability, but still the unfunded liability was great. It continued to grow.

It was the initiative of this administration, under former Premier Marshall, that work was done and acknowledged the work of the various unions to get this under control and to lay out a plan over the next 30 years where there would be a joint partnership, joint management, which was new and historic for the province in regard to the unions and government jointly managing the pension fund. That was agreed to and a lot of work done on that.

What it does, from a financial liability of the province and for our bond-rating agencies and everybody else, it shows that we've taken the initiative to deal with this liability. It's legislated and as I said, there's a joint partnership now that will oversee it, will look at any excesses in the fund over the next 30 years, look at any dropped balances, we'll say, over the next number of years. Collectively, that joint partnership will deal with that. Collectively, I think that's the way to go. It was this administration that put that together.

The reference was then there's \$220 million in the budget to go towards that. There's a commitment by both parties to invest in that fund to make it viable. So that will be on the part of the government, on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well on behalf of some increased premiums and other ways that public sector employees would contribute as well and get to where we need to get. Obviously, that's worthwhile.

To the best of my knowledge, the people on both sides voted for that. We had some legislation again just last week dealing with that and everybody agreed to it. So I don't know if there are any second thoughts over there in regard to if we should have done that or not, but from our side certainly not. We believe it was needed to be done to bring stability to the fund and bring long-term management to the liabilities of the province. We think it's still worthwhile.

When we look at the overall spending, I mean that's a component, that \$8.4 billion. So to say to spend more than we did last year specifically tied to this and this issue, but they're all choices. There are other areas that you have to decide whether you're going to spend or not going to spend. It's in the overall number. Again, it's about choices and what that number is.

The hon. Member mentioned Wabush Mines and legislation and what's gone on. My understanding is that legislation is federal legislation. It needs to be amended.

The hon. Member himself brought a private Member's motion to this House. We amended it because the actual motion, the way it was written wouldn't deal with, my understanding, the current retirees that are being dramatically affected now by what has happened. We certainly agree with that.

That's why we brought in an amendment to make it retroactive. That when our seven MPs in Ottawa lobby for it, they will make sure that the federal legislation is amended to help those Wabush miners that a lot of us have living in our district now. I have some in my district. I spoke to them during the private Member's motion that the amendment we brought forward will look at the here and now aspect of it.

What was originally brought forward looked at on a go-forward basis. Which probably in all intents and purposes wouldn't have done anything for the current miners that – the way they're suffering now in regard to the dramatic cuts they've seen in their monthly pensions. I've seen it first hand and heard first hand and have sat down with people in my district. You know 30 per cent of their income, up to 30 per cent has been cut, along with benefits – dramatic. So we're happy to play a role and bring that amendment into the House to make sure that in Ottawa they fight for a legislative change as soon as possible that is indeed retroactive and will deal with some of the things that are negatively affecting those retirees.

Some discussion, too, on equalization and the whole issue of greater access to Ottawa in regard to what we would do in terms of seeing through some of the difficult times we have. We've been through this before but as being part of the federation of Canada, there is an equalization fund. It's meant to assist provinces in time of need to provide basic or a reasonable level of services, comparative services to every province. The numbers are there in terms of what has been paid out this year and what Newfoundland and Labrador is getting.

The hon. Member indicated his legislation – legislation goes through Parliament and gets changed. That happens every day. So to suggest that we can't do it because it's legislation – we do it here, they do it in Ottawa. That's the decision that has to be made.

We still look, and we'd like to have help. I don't know why you wouldn't ask for help. We're a part of Canada and we're a Province of Canada. It's like any other federal-provincial program that's available. It was drawn down on and if you're not happy with the program, if you think you should have more, you make a case of why you have more; I guess you go and make the case. Why you wouldn't do that, I don't know. Someone will have to describe that I guess at this point in time where we are from an economic point of view.

So, Madam Chair, it has been great to stand to have a few words on the debate tonight, and I certainly look forward to the days ahead to having much more.

Thanks very much.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair reminds the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired, and recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks, Madam Chair.

I just want to get up and make some comments, to just respond to some of the things that were said. Earlier on I got up, I made – through light of a comment somebody had made to me. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune got up and really misrepresented what I said. What I said was somebody had messaged me the day that we had the motion about full-day kindergarten. She said something about how I had said that – made some statement about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians thinking that you have to bring wood to school. That's not what I said. So you can check Hansard, but I'll read exactly what was said.

The person sent me a message about the Opposition Member's comments the day they had the motion to cancel full-day kindergarten. The person who is an educator, who I won't identify, said: Their arguments were painfully weak. He said the Member's name – I won't say it, it would be unparliamentary. The Member kept saying it was same-day kindergarten. That's the Member for Cape St. Francis. The person said: He still thinks the kids carry wood to school.

That's what the person said. I didn't say this was a comment about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I don't know why the Member said that, but it's like I got up here one day and I said that comments that somebody had made were outrageous and nonsense. Then the Opposition, or emissaries of theirs, painted this as though I was talking about the population of the province. So you can manipulate what people say and present them as they are, genuinely, or you can fictitiously manipulate them. That's really up to you. That's your own decision.

I just did a bit of research on the Internet here, just to respond to something the Member for

Ferryland said. He said, why didn't we borrow more money – as if we haven't borrowed enough yet. We're borrowing \$3.4 billion in this year alone. Why didn't we borrow even more like the federal government did? Well, I'll tell you why. I just checked RBC statistics, a couple of things – I'll tell you this. These are indicators of relative wealth and financial stability for any jurisdiction.

In terms of net debt per capita, that's the amount of debt we have per the population that we have in the province. Alberta, just by way of comparison, has the lowest net debt per capita in Canada; \$2,359, according to RBC, for every man, woman and child in Alberta. The net debt per capita for Canada is \$17,905 for every man, woman and child in Canada.

The net debt for Newfoundland and Labrador per capita is \$27,817. So our net debt per capita compared to Alberta is about 10 times as much and the net debt per capita compared to Canada is about \$10,000 more per man, woman and child. We've got the highest net debt per capita in the country. That's relative to any other province and the federal government. So there's that.

In terms of the net debt to Gross Domestic Product ratio, which is another measure or auger of our situation, Alberta has the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in the country, 3.1. Canada is 32.5; Newfoundland and Labrador, 49.4. So we have the worst, basically, net debt to GDP ratio in the country. It's relative to any other province or the federal government. We also have the highest net debt per capita in the country.

With figures like these, if we continue to borrow beyond what I think is massive – \$3.4 billion is approaching half of our overall budget we are borrowing, and debt servicing is more than the entire Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. That's really not an option.

The federal government and the Government of Alberta are in a far more healthier fiscal situation. So they have those options, but because of the choices that were made previously, those options have been eliminated for us. We don't have them. It's really that simple. I just wanted to talk about those things.

The other thing, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune said that we're going to have the highest taxes in the nation as a result of this budget. There's no evidence – I would like to see it produced – in terms of income taxes, which includes the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. We are not the highest in Atlantic Canada, in some areas at least. I find it surprising that she would say we had the highest in the nation, therefore, and would like to see the evidence for that statement because I've not seen that reported or said by anyone. Maybe there's a reputable source to back that up, or maybe the Opposition has done some research in that area that they'd like to share with the House of Assembly.

The convoluted argument that we're presented here with – the Member for St. George's – Humber got up and said tell us specifically what you would do to deal with the \$2.7 billion deficit that we have. The Member got up and she talked about cancelling full-day kindergarten, \$3.3 million and little else. In fact, she talked about reinstating funding for other things. Increasing spending is not going to help reduce the massive multi-billion-dollar deficit that we face, and then more or less criticized that we were spending more than we ought to in any case.

The Member for Labrador West tried to explain that there are a number of different factors why the previous administration negotiated with public service pensioners, the teachers, in this instance. There is several hundred million dollars that needs to be apportioned for that.

The previous administration implemented the Job Evaluation System which increased overall public sector wages by 2.9 per cent. It's unclear to me that was even connected to any collective bargaining. That was another thing that we have to ensure that all of those public servants are paid the wage they were told they would be paid. By and large that's the reason why there's increased spending.

For the Member to get up and talk about on the one hand we need to reinstate funding for a variety of things and then also decry the fact that there's an increase in spending, it's really difficult to follow sometimes. It doesn't make a tremendous amount of sense. In the whole of the evening here, all we really come back to is some

\$14.5 million worth of program cuts that the Members opposite want to make.

We've made all sorts of arguments around full-day kindergarten. They said you eliminate the program and save \$30 million. That's not true. The fact of the matter is there was \$30 million set aside in 2014 for the implementation in 2016, and that includes a portion of operating funding from September till the fiscal year-end of this year. There are four major extensions that have been done to schools, 13 modular classrooms, 14 tractor trailer loads worth of equipment and a teacher PD that's been done.

Somebody got up and said that there was a half day of professional development. That's not true. There was 2½ days of professional development. And by and large, when it comes to PD, that is actually fairly significant in comparison to how much PD teachers traditionally have access to. So it's not \$30 million; it's \$13.3 million, annualized.

If they want to get rid of full-day kindergarten, they will get rid of 143 teaching positions. I went and spoke to the teacher induction ceremony with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association and the Faculty of Education at Memorial University last week and there are a lot of young teachers there who are looking forward to being first-time teachers. I told them, despite everything we hear about teacher layoffs and all of this jazz, I don't see any evidence of it.

In fact, I told the graduating class of teachers that since May 25 there have been approximately 400 job postings. Since May 25 there have been some 400 job postings for teaching positions of varying durations with the English School District. Now, if it was all dire and everybody should just move out then people will have to, I suppose, move into the province then if everybody is going to be leaving because of the budget. There are about 400 positions. These are term positions, these are permanent positions, these are fill-in positions, these are contractual positions, for maternity leave or educational leave. So some 400 positions, available jobs, in the education system, yet all we hear is this doom and gloom from the Opposition that the sky is falling and the apocalypse is just around the corner.

I don't know; this is not new information. You stand up here day after day, but it doesn't really appear to make any impact at all. If we somehow cut full-day kindergarten and save \$3.3 million, cancel the study for the fixed link to Labrador, we save that \$14.5 million, then that's somehow going to solve all of the problems that we have. Or borrow like the federal government has done, despite the fact that our balance sheet is in a state of complete and utter disrepair. We really need workable solutions.

We could invoke closure on the debate. There are ways to stop the filibuster, but we're interested in hearing ideas. But we don't hear any ideas; we hear words being twisted around, things being taken out of context, deliberately, the same things amounting to less than \$15 million being repeated over and over and over again for hours and hours. There's nothing new coming to the floor here at all.

I'll sit down again, but I just wanted to make those observations. I'm certainly willing to listen to ideas if people have them, but anything beyond saving that \$14.5 million –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate you recognizing me again this evening to speak again on the budget. One of the Members opposite mentioned earlier and talked about the focus on the negative and criticisms of the budget over here. We know that over there they focus on trying to highlight – they do now – and make a case for what's good in the budget. But I remind Members opposite that days before the budget was introduced, the Minister of Finance started to speak publicly to the people of the province and put them on notice and

started to warn them that this budget was going to have a negative impact on everybody.

There was no talk about it being a good budget or anything good in it or positive in any way. It was completely set up and rolled out prior to the budget as being a negative, bad news budget, going to negatively impact everybody in the province. Madam Chair, what happens then is that people's frame of mind instantly changed.

I heard Members over there say, yes, so you are telling everyone everything is going to be okay. Yeah, we did, and I still believe that there is a way that we can get through this as a province because I believe in the people that live here. The people in Newfoundland and Labrador, for so many years, had a tough go; we've always been the poor cousin to our other Canadian counterparts across the country. We struggled and we always relied on the federal government to try and give us some type of support to help us through the difficult times.

We remember all the times back in the '60s and '70s, the creative programs or maybe not so creative programs that were created between the federal government and the provincial government to find a way to get people to be able to feed their children and through some very difficult and, some would say, desperate times in the history of our province. It was hard for people; it really was.

Then after, when the '90s came through and oil money started to flow and things started to change, there was an idea of you know what, we have a future, we have a chance to make it here. Then in 2003 when we came in, there was a very difficult circumstance that existed back then.

The Minister of Education talks about investments in schools. I fully believe we have to continue to make investments in schools because back in the '90s the government of the day, the Liberal government back then, stopped doing that. Then every day we were talking about schools with mould in them. Children couldn't go to school today because the schools weren't fit to put them in.

I remember years ago in St. John's – I'm a townie. I live around the bay now, but I'm a townie, grew up in town. I don't have any say

where I grew up, where I lived and where I was raised. The community centre in Buckmasters Circle, which has been a staple for so many years, I remember at one point in time, I think it was probably as a result of one of the fires, there was no excess school or space running around. They put up walls inside the community centre to create a school out of it and they had to figure out what they're going to do with students. There was no excess, there was no swing space then like there is today with the former School for the Deaf.

The province was bankrupt when it came to infrastructure, roads and ferries, transportation – all the infrastructure. It was so significant that it took so long to make improvements on it. There have been significant improvements on infrastructure in the province over the last 10 or 12 years.

When the budget came out, the Minister of Finance set up how bad it was. When she came in and delivered her speech, they wouldn't even applaud her after her speech because they felt it was so bad in the province we can't applaud it. They didn't applaud when they were talking on the budget. They didn't applaud and say, well, good job, Minister. You know what, you made some tough decisions through a hard time, but we support you on it. They didn't do that. They agreed, yes, it's a bad budget.

They've given the message to the people of the province that it was one that was negative and people are still responding to it. What's happened over the last couple of weeks was that people felt cheated because of what the Liberal governing party promised last year. They felt cheated when they never got that. We had a smarter way forward and we don't have to increase taxes. We can have a smarter economy. We can spend smarter and wiser and all that kind of stuff. People felt that way.

What happened then is that as we got into the House of Assembly – and the Premier has made several statements where he's made commitments to do things and then reneged them and changed them. People are picking up on that. It's changed the conversation. The whole Nalcor thing changed the conversation off the budget and moved on to a different circumstance about, well, how can we trust what

this government is saying when they are changing their position.

We find ourselves here now today back talking about the budget and focused on the budget. The people of the province are not happy. They are not happy, and it's not the first time they weren't happy. There were times in the past where the people of the province weren't happy with the performance of their government. There are lots of times in past where the Opposition have stood here criticizing the government. I was over there when Members opposite – the Minister of Municipal Affairs there, a veteran politician here in the House, got tons of experience, knowledgeable, and he knows how to get us on the go. He knows how to do it. I give him credit; he knows how to do it.

He sat in this chair over here and I remember in 2013, we said we have to start cutting back and we have to make moves. He tore us apart, limb by limb, piece by piece. He tore us apart over there, laying people off – I remember the numbers used to grow and grow and grow. He was pretty good at that too because the numbers used to grow and grow and change.

The NDP did the same thing. The Member for St. John's Centre there, the numbers grew from 800 to 1,000 to 1,200 to 1,500.

MR. JOYCE: A real fisherman.

MR. P. DAVIS: What is that?

MR. JOYCE: A real fisherman.

MR. P. DAVIS: That's right. That's what he says; he's a real fisherman. The fish is bigger – how big is that fish that got away? Oh, it's huge, the biggest fish ever.

That's what happens here in the House. That's what happens. He did his job as an Opposition Member by criticizing us for making cutbacks, reducing spending, reducing programs, reducing staff and public servants. He tore us apart for it and did a good job of doing it. I give him full credit for doing it. That's what he did and he did a good job in doing it.

The Member behind him there was one of their staffers; Labrador West was one of their staffers.

I'm sure he was a great supporter of the party, people in the back room – we got people in the back room here and I ought not talk about the people in the back room, but I'm going to for a moment because they have them and we have them. We have people working here – while we're in the House, we have staff working out in the back. They don't make any overtime or they don't have any benefits like that. They don't get any of that kind of stuff. They sit here and do the work because they believe in supporting us, and hats off to them.

All the Members are over there are agreeing with us. We should applaud them and we should thank them for the work that they do as well, absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: That's what happens in the House. That's the discussion that happens. Members opposite in the government, they support the decisions they made and they argue for them. We find the discrepancies or holes, or leaks or the problems with them, people share them and how things are going to impact them and we deliver that. That's what happens.

I only have a couple of minutes left because I've talked about that. But one of the things I want to talk about before I finish up in the two minutes and 40 seconds I have left – because there is a clock on the wall which tells us how much time we have. People have asked me several times: How do you know how much time you have left? Well, it's written right up there, 2:40, 2:39, 2:38, so we know how much time we have left.

MR. KIRBY: They think you're looking at the wall.

MR. P. DAVIS: They think we're looking at the wall, yes, looking up at the cameras. The Minister of Education just spoke to me. That's the first time he's done that for a long time. I'll have to write that one down.

AN HON. MEMBER: Don't take it personal.

MR. P. DAVIS: No, I won't take it personal. I'm delighted he spoke to me because we have to talk to each other. We do. And while we do our things here in the House, we still have to

have a relationship. I go back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, he and I have lots of conversations off to the side here. We've had lots of conversations about matters that I need his help with or sometimes he's come to me and said: How does this work? He's done that since we've been in the House here and we have those conversations. We should have those relationships. We should be able to try and help each other out.

Yet when we are here, we are on opposite sides of the House for a reason. We have a different role, yet we still represent our constituents. Now, boys, you got me off course, where I want to go. I'm going to have to wait 40 or 50 minutes before I get there. Good job on you.

I want to talk about one of the considerations that have got us here. We made significant investments over the last decade on schools and infrastructure and development of programs. We had programs that weren't as good as the rest of the country. We didn't treat our people as good as the rest – and we had taxation levels that were higher and, yes, we reduced them to make them competitive. But I tell you, the circumstance we find ourselves in today is very similar to Saskatchewan and Alberta.

For Members opposite, I'm sure you're not trying to suggest that we are responsible to what happened in Saskatchewan and Alberta. They are tied to oil like we are and they're suffering, but they are knocking on the federal government's door. I say to Members opposite, you are probably in the back lobbying quietly with your colleagues in Ottawa, and I hope you are. But I tell you, you give them an easy out when you stand here and say oh, it is someone else's fault and it is something else's fault when you don't reflect on oil. Because you're telling Ottawa it's not oil's fault, it's something else, so don't fix us.

Equalization is about providing an equal level of services for a relatively equal level of taxation. The Members opposite said we're bring taxation in the norm of other provinces and the same – ministers, some of you have talked about that, about having a level of equalization or a level of taxation and we should have fair programs. But if you look at New Brunswick, it is receiving

\$1.7 billion this year in equalization payments. That would fix your problem.

Nova Scotia is receiving \$1.7 billion in equalization; PEI, \$400 million; Quebec is \$10 billion; Ontario is \$2.3 billion. Saskatchewan, Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador: zero. And we're all in difficult circumstances because of the fall in the price of oil and that's the fact. We'd still like to provide good programs and we try to develop that and when the Minister of Municipal Affairs –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: – was over here, he encouraged us to do more for programs.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to stand up here in this hon. House again tonight as we continue to debate the levy and Bill 14, and, just like Members opposite, we're also talking about the overall budget. Like the Leader of the Opposition, his voice is going and I guess after all these hours – we're into the third day of talking about the budget and various bills – all of our voices are starting to go. We'll endeavour, as the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune talks about. Every time she jumps up, she talks about she's full of vim and vigour. So we'll endeavour to do that.

In the morning, Members opposite – as I was here, because I've been here pretty much all day, I think I was gone for a couple of hours – would get up and they'd give us an update on what time of the day it was. That was good to know. They were talking about how it was 6 a.m. and 7 a.m. and here we are now well into 9 p.m.

AN HON. MEMBER: The sports news.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: The sports news.

MR. HOLLOWAY: And the sports news. Well, the Leader of the Opposition was doing that.

They'd start talking about emails they were getting. I just want to read out a couple myself. Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said, that we're cherry-picking what people are saying, I'm going to read the beginning of an email that kind of doesn't say anything positive about me, but it gets better.

It talks about: I haven't heard you speak once during the filibuster. I'm trying, for the life of me, to figure out why 55 people picked you over the former MHA for the Terra Nova District.

AN HON. MEMBER: I have one here too.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Yeah, good. I can't wait to hear it. The response was, well, probably because the former MHA for the Terra Nova District was part of the government that got us into the mess we are faced with today.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HOLLOWAY: Yeah. Just six months –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: Six months in, do you really expect the Liberals to solve all the problems they had nothing to do with in creating? There is no magic wand to wave and all this mess will be gone, but with time and patience we will get through all this. Perhaps the Member for Mount Pearl North or the Leader of the Opposition should stand up in the House and explain to all of us just how they helped get us in this mess.

People are starting to realize – and I appreciate that we're into this filibuster because now we've been able to shed some light and clarify. The last time I spoke that was one of the points I wanted to make. By allowing us and having this opportunity to not only listen to what the people – and I take the point. The last time I spoke, the person who got up after me from the Opposition

said it's one thing to hear people, to listen, but are you really hearing people. I can tell you we are. Obviously the people at home who are watching are listening. They're hearing and they're listening as well. It gives us an opportunity to kind of clarify some things.

We've been accused of not having a plan. I can tell you that part of my role as a parliamentary secretary to the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, we do have a plan. Our plan for building the economy is not about just taxing people and about cutting programs and services and finding efficiencies, but we have to make investments and we are making investments. I'll tell you, one of the areas – because we need to get away from this single commodity idea of oil and gas.

Now, there are some opportunities that are coming forward. And, as some people have said, the difference between us and Nova Scotia is that we still have reserves, we still have oil, we still have gas on the offshore that as the price of a barrel of oil increases that the oil companies will be back out there. We have a project in Hebron that as soon as that GBS platform is ready to go in 2017, we'll be producing more oil.

But in terms of diversifying the economy, I mean agriculture – one of the things that people don't understand is that we are living on a rock and I think people do get that aspect, but there is only 1 per cent of the land mass in this province that we can actually use for agriculture – 1 per cent.

Now, it turns out that if you want to grow vegetables or grow the agriculture industry in that 1 per cent, it is also a great place to grow trees. It is also places where we'll find minerals. There are quarries that we need. We've talked about road infrastructure that we need some of that base material. So we're into a bit of a discussion about, well, what's the best use of land. But I can tell you what's coming forward in a very short order is that, thank God, with our Minister of Municipal Affairs and also responsible for Crown land we are going to identify parcels of Crown land that we can develop into agriculture.

We've been out there encouraging people who are interested in growing the agricultural industry so that they can start helping us with being more secure in our food production. We'll have a bit of an approach, a strategy, that is going to come forward where we'll identify some land this year that will be used in promoting agriculture in the province. Next year, we'll also announce some other Crown land that will continue to produce some agriculture benefits for the province.

So that's part of a strategy. Research and development was mentioned here already here tonight by my colleague. Research and development and entrepreneurship and the Research & Development Corporation, it is the one entity that has been focused on – how do we have strategic investments? How do we attract new investments, foreign investments, the CETA agreement and the Agreement on Internal Trade? These are all strategies we brought forward that are going to help grow the economy of this province.

One of the things I've heard a lot of people talk about in my district – and I know it's an issue across the province – is what are we going to do about broadband. The strategy that we have, we're investing \$2 million in this budget over the next two years which is going to help deal with the broadband issue, both on the Island and into Labrador. We're also going to be partnering with our federal colleagues so that it's going to help us leverage more money.

When you have good broadband and good connectivity that also promotes business growth, and we know we need to do that for Internet service and cellular coverage. The 911 system – and certainly I would give the Members in the Opposition who were part of government, they decided to bring forward a 911 system. The challenge, of course, was topography. We weren't able to bring it in to the full extent of what was needed in this province because we have broadband issues. Well, we've addressed that and are going to address that in this budget.

In one of the emails there was a comment about it's going to be hard on seniors and seniors are going to be heavily hit by this budget. One of the things we have talked about in this budget is around the Newfoundland and Labrador Income

Supplement. We're investing \$63.7 million to offset some of the measures that are in this budget. That's meant to put money back in to help the most vulnerable in our community. That's a significant dollar.

Also the Seniors' Benefit; \$12.7 million in the Seniors' Benefit. Just to give you an example – as my time comes down and I certainly will be back – for a senior couple making \$26,000, have a net income of \$26,000, their annual supplement is \$510. Their Seniors' Benefit goes up to \$1,313. They'll get quarterly payments starting in October – and they'll get two this year – of \$455.75. That's significant for seniors who are on fixed incomes.

We recognize some of the measures that we've put into play. We're glad we were able to take some measures in terms of the Deficit Reduction Levy and how it's going to impact some of the incomes. For our seniors, we're still going to apply the Seniors' Benefit and the low-income supplement so that despite the measures that we've brought forward, it's still going to give more money to the most vulnerable in our communities.

I think these filibusters, and this filibuster, have allowed us to start to clarify, get some of the right information out there. I heard the Member opposite talk about no closure of libraries on the Northern Peninsula. I mean, that is not correct. I've talked to the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development who is the MHA for the St. Anthony area. He has said to me one library is five kilometres from another. My point is it is not about the closure of the libraries, but it is about correct information. A filibuster like this is allowing that correct information to get out there and I think that's why we are starting to see that the people of the province –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: – are starting to understand that there is a different message that needs to be conveyed.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to address the Member momentarily. I want to go back and finish my comments from the last time I spoke. He got up and he took the point to read an email that involves comments about me. I've had one here on my desk for a couple of days in regard to him and I kept moving it down in the pile, didn't want to use it, but he has kind of raised it now and he's kind of opened the door –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: That's right, Minister, he has kind of opened the door there now that he has done that.

It is a message that we received from a constituent. He said: This is what my MHA – and he names him – today replied to my request that he vote no to the budget. He calls him by name and he says: So you're saying – and I am quoting now; I'm told this is the response from the Member for Terra Nova that he wrote him.

He calls him by name and he says: So you're saying I should vote against the budget indicating a lack of confidence in the Premier and my colleagues. This means I will have to sit as an independent Member and struggle to get anything for my district. What he is saying is I'm advantaged because I sit on the government side of the House. If I sit on the Opposition side, you sit as an independent I'm not going to be able to get anything for my district.

He even goes on to say: In four years' time, voters will say I did little, if anything, for the district because I was an Independent Member. That's what he said to him. He said: My track record, thus far, has been positive – constituents will have to decide that. I'm confident it will get even better. If I were to vote no, I might as well resign now. I gave up a long-time career to become an MHA. It would take more than you to cause me to give up right now, so stop asking.

Then the gentleman goes on for a lengthy explanation of why he feels this statement was probably erroneous. Now, I hope the Member opposite doesn't believe that Members should give him specialized treatment because they sit on the same side of the House because we all have a responsibility to represent our constituents.

MR. HOLLOWAY: I campaigned on being honest. That was honest.

MR. P. DAVIS: So that was an honest statement.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: I just heard the Member opposite over heckling me saying that was an honest statement. Now, I was going to let it go, but he is over saying it's an honest statement. I'll have to sit as an Independent Member and struggle to get anything for my district because he's an independent.

I would suggest that Members of his caucus and maybe the Members of Cabinet and maybe the Premier are probably going to have a chat with him about how we're fair to each other. And while we're all elected to represent our constituents, government has a responsibility to all the people of the province. No matter if they have a government side Member or a Member who's not on the government side, if it's a PC Member or a Liberal Member or an Independent Member – I'm sure Members of Cabinet, and I certainly hope and I believe it's true what I'm saying, work for everyone in the province, not just for people that are represented by their own Members. The Member opposite just took the time to sing out to me and say, well, it's true. He wrote it because it's true. That's what he just said. Instead of staying quiet, that's what he said.

Madam Chair, I hope that's not true. I certainly hope it's not true and I don't believe it's true. I don't believe the Minister of Health is going to focus on districts and say who's the Member there. Members over there campaigned to say take the politics out of some of the decisions they make. That's what they did and they stand by it. That's what they do over there, they said take the politics out of it. What he just did was

put the politics back into the decisions. He says he's benefited because he sits on the government side of the House. That's terrible.

Madam Chair, I want to go back to what I was saying earlier about oil and Saskatchewan and Alberta who don't receive any equalization. Newfoundland and Labrador doesn't receive any equalization. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are both receiving \$1.7 billion.

If Newfoundland and Labrador is to receive equalization at a level of \$1.7 billion, it would essentially fix this problem that the government finds itself in today because of the drop in oil prices; the same problem that Alberta and Saskatchewan find themselves in today because of the drop in the price of oil. Newfoundland was more reliant on oil than Alberta as a percentage of their budget. Of course, the implications and impact on Newfoundland and Labrador per capita, per dollar for dollar, is greater than it is in Alberta because we relied heavily on oil

A lot of the funds, by the way, Madam Chair, were used to replace the funding we used to receive from equalization. When we used to receive hundreds of millions of dollars in equalization every year, funding from oil had to replace those funds without making any advancement or further investments in what government did or increased spending that government did. You had to use a lot of those monies from oil just to replace what was no longer being provided by the federal government on equalization.

Off the start, there was an uphill battle. It was an uphill battle, but people, Members opposite – and I talked about the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He did a great job as the Member opposite. He used to sit here and used to say we need more. Many Members over there who sat in Opposition would get up and ask for more. They'd say we need more.

We know the Minister of Justice – many times were talking about the dental program. The Minister of Health, I'm sure, is aware of this because I'm sure they talked about it in Cabinet. I would be surprised if they didn't. The Minister of Justice used to get up here in the House and talk about we not only just give top and bottom

dentures for seniors and low-income families, you should give both. He used the words and he said it was about pride and a person's own self-respect, and how important it was to do that.

We tried to work the program and had an overwhelming input and overwhelming response to it. There wasn't enough funded for the demand that came in the program. We want it to work. While they continued to put pressure on us, day in and day out, Members got up and said do more, do more, put more money into it. Not only that, they did it on lots of topics. While we were trying to do that and at the same time trying to reel down spending, trying to reduce the size of the public service, knowing that the reliance on oil was too high, we knew that prices were falling or unstable, and Members were still asking for more.

What's important about oil dropping and the implications – I'm just going to read from section 36.(1) of the Constitution: "Without altering the legislative authority of Parliament or of the provincial legislatures, or the rights of any of them with respect to the exercise of their legislative authority, Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to" – and there are three things – "(a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians;" – no matter where you live – "(b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities; and (c) providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians." That is what equalization is about: an equal service for an equal level of taxation.

Section 36.(2) says – which is regarding commitment respecting public services: "Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation."

That's reasonably comparable levels of public service at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. So that's what it's about. When Member's opposite say, oh, it's someone else's fault. It's the former administration's fault. You're taking away your own argument, very

strong argument, which you could be making in Ottawa. You could be in Ottawa saying here's our Constitution. Our Constitution says equal level of service at an equal cost. You're taking away the argument by blaming the Conservatives. You're feeding right into the federal Liberals, the federal government, who can say, well, hang on now, you stood up in your Legislature day after day and said it's not because of oil; it's because of all the terrible things and bad things that the previous administration did. You're taking away your own argument.

And while in comparison, we got the orange Premier in Alberta, as the Minister of Health responded to them, or replied to them as, and we got Saskatchewan's Premier, Saskatchewan Party – I think the colour they use is green out there in the Saskatchewan Party, if I remember correctly. So you have them not getting anything, and they're fighting for equalization.

They're fighting for us is what they're doing. They're fighting for themselves and they're also fighting for us because we're in the same boat they are. When right next door to our province, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are receiving \$1.7 billion in equalization in 2016-2017 – \$1.7 billion.

If we had a share of that you would be much better positioned and wouldn't be making all the hard and difficult decisions you're faced with today that are impacting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. But every time you say it's someone else's fault or you give another reason or you deny that it's oil, you're taking away the argument that fits right into equalization, that fits right into the Constitution of Canada, the Constitution that impacts every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, every Canadian to give equal and fair opportunity for all Canadians. An equal level of taxation for equal level of service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: We worked hard over the last 10 or 12 years to increase our services so we're comparable. We reduced taxation so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians would come back here, because they couldn't afford to live here and they want to live here.

When you make taxation more affordable and you make the province more inviting, they come back. That helps drive the economy. When you don't take it as taxation and you put that money back in their pockets, that drives the economy and that creates business and creates jobs. That's what happened until the oil crunch struck us and took the legs out from underneath us.

So fight for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Equalization and the federal government is where the big funding is. The small amounts of money we got, was it – \$27 million is nothing. For them to say we're going to give up on the recall –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll look forward to continued debate.

Thank you.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand again and take part in this debate. Filibusters are sometimes what you would call a forced debate. Over the last 48 hours there have been a lot of hours punched in here with very little sleep on both sides, but what I'm sensing over the last day is that there is a change. There is a change in what people perceive. I think that change comes down to the fact that this avenue is an avenue for the Opposition to continue to preach the doom and gloom that they've been doing, but it also gives the opportunity for the government side to present the facts, to get the right information out there.

If you go back to *Budget 2016*, it is a tough budget. Everyone on this side admitted to that. Everyone on that side admitted to it. Everyone on this side said with a \$2.7 billion deficit, there have to be extreme measures. The Opposition and NDP admitted that there have to be extreme

measures. Everyone admits that there's a problem with a \$2.7 billion deficit.

The government came out and said it's a tough budget. The Opposition and NDP are the ones that went out and told everyone that this is doom and gloom. The comments continued today. I'll read them again, some of the ones that I've heard.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune: This budget is going to gut the economy; the Member for St. John's Centre: Mass exodus of people leaving the province. This is what came out. There are other ones. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune just a few minutes ago: This budget is going to crush our people; it's going to crush our economy. These are the messages that are going out to the people of the province from the Opposition and NDP. These are the doom and gloom messages.

What I'm saying is that over the last 50-plus hours the message from this side is getting out. It's getting through the doom and gloom smokescreen set up by the NDP and the Opposition. We're starting to get feedback. We're getting encouraged emails; we're getting encouraged messages through Facebook. As long as this filibuster continues, we're starting to embrace it because it gives us finally a chance to get information out to the people that are tuned in. The facts are coming out.

I give the NDP and the Opposition credit because they jumped into the doom and gloom of this budget. No government that brings out a budget will go out and sell doom and gloom. That's done by the Opposition. That's their job, and I go back to mitigation versus magnification. Our job was to mitigate the budget based on a \$2.7 billion deficit. Their job was to magnify the impacts of the budget. They did good and they're still doing good, and I used the quotes from today.

You look at diversification. My colleague, the Member for Labrador West talked about a fixed link. The NDP doesn't want to see it. Maybe it's because of outside districts they represent, but Newfoundland and Labrador is a big region. It takes me two days to get home by plane, that's how big this region is. Sometimes, maybe we

have to sell that to some of the Members in this hon. House.

I'd like to go back to some of the comments the Leader of the Opposition talked about. He had some good things to say. First, I'd like to address his comments about pushing for equalization. Yes, we do have a good relationship with our federal counterparts. We do talk to them all the time. I know the MP for Labrador, Yvonne Jones, is the longest serving female Member in this House of Assembly. She has been around a long time, and she has a lot of information and she has a lot of dedication.

We do talk to our federal colleagues about the finances of the province. To hear them talk about equalization, well, Madam Chair, equalization by legislation is revisited every five years. The Leader of the Opposition and his government of the day in 2009, they could have negotiated equalization. They didn't do it. In 2014, they could have initiated and negotiated on equalization. They didn't do it.

Then he has the audacity to stand up here and say, why aren't you doing it. Well, guess what? It's not up for negotiation for another four years, 2019.

AN HON. MEMBER: Three years.

MR. EDMUNDS: Three years, three-and-a-half years. I find it very confusing when they had two opportunities and they didn't do it. Now they're saying you do it before the time is up.

The good thing I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about when he talked about his district, I heard the Member for Cape St. Francis talk about it earlier in the debate. He talked about the 4,500 new homes going up in his district. Now, to me that doesn't sound like mass exodus that the Member for St. John's Centre talked about. It doesn't sound like that at all. Three thousand new homes in Paradise over the last six years. That doesn't sound like hundreds of thousands of people leaving the province. That sounds like growth. When an increase in any item goes up it's called growth.

In Conception Bay, the part of Conception Bay that's in his riding, still up 299 new homes. I think that's called growth. I don't think that's

crushing our economy. If they're going to have 3,000 homes go up in six years, to me, I don't call that an economy that's being crushed. We said it was a tough budget. Yes, we admit to that. The Opposition admits that it's a tough budget. They understand why it's a tough budget because they've stood up and said why. When we talk about diversification and talk about the fixed link tunnel, they don't even want to see it.

My hon. colleague, the Member for Lab West, talked about the benefits after the Confederation Bridge was put across to Prince Edward Island. Do they not want to see development in Labrador? Is that what I'm hearing? When it comes to contributions to Treasury, I tell you what, Madam Chair, Labrador makes its fair share. In this time of financial crisis and downturn in economic times, it's what's coming out of Labrador that's carrying this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. EDMUNDS: We're carrying the province right now and we're proud of it. We're not just a storehouse in Labrador, we look for investment and we're finally starting to get investment in Labrador with this government, with our new federal government, Madam Chair, something that the Opposition and the NDP are still against. They don't want to see development in Labrador, yet they want to benefit from the resources. In this great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it has to work both ways.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I just wanted to pick up on some of the other points. We're still receiving emails, Madam Chair, from our public. I'm going to read more into the record.

I want to pick up on a point that was made by the Leader of the Official Opposition. He spoke about what happens here in the House of Assembly and how it is the role of government to be fair and equitable across all communities

and across all districts in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of whether the district is a Tory district or a Liberal district. That is something our government always paid attention to and I trust this government will do the same.

In his analogy, he referred to the Minister of Health and said he's sure the Minister of Health will see that all districts are treated fairly. I thought I'd take advantage of the opportunity because when we look at Central Health's cuts, it was only myself – and I'm the only Tory district in Central – and the minister who took cuts for the most part. I do believe the Member for Exploits as well did see some cuts.

I certainly hope that in the next round of cuts – we've had our fair share and then some – the other districts will equitably in turn receive the cuts, and myself, the minister, and the Member for Exploits will be spared in the next round to ensure it remains equitable across all districts. That's a point I'd just like to make because when I look at what Central Health has done I do feel disproportionately like the Coast of Bays region has taken on a bit more than its fair share this time around.

Now moving on, Madam Chair. I want to talk about some of the other points that are being raised here tonight by Members opposite. I want to pick up on the overspending issue. When I hear Members opposite talk about overspending I shake my head because they sound more right winged than the Harper Conservatives ever did sometimes. You've heard me say that in the House. I say they're extreme right, perhaps sometimes more than the reform. It astounds me because it's not the kind of language you're accustomed to hearing from Liberals. It certainly doesn't match Liberal ideology.

I had one email sent to me where a person said, do they even remember they're Liberals. Liberals themselves, traditional Liberals in the province are shaking their heads, some of them, at what's happening. Now some of them aren't. You still have your strong, partisan support; about 16 per cent in the last poll. We'll see where CRA comes tomorrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: Seventeen.

MS. PERRY: Seventeen.

Now they make the most right wing of the old guard reform party sound Liberal. That's what they said, they almost make the most right wing of the old guard reform party sound Liberal by comparison. It's astounding.

When they refer to waste and overspending during the administration of the Progressive Conservatives over the last 10 years – and the Leader of the Opposition just referred to this as well – they were talking about playing catch up. What they call wasting was really catch up, as the premier explained, with the rest of the country. Because we had mouldy schools. We had infrastructure in a complete state of disrepair. We had long waits for health care, among the highest in the country. We had crowded classrooms, we had eroding roads, we had jobless communities and we had out-migrating youth.

Madam Chair, I can speak to that personally, because in the '90s I was one of those youth who was contemplating migration. I had just graduated. I had completed my bachelor of commerce in 1993. All of my friends had moved away. Everyone had moved on to greener pastures in Alberta or Ontario.

I was the youngest of 13 children. My mother was in her 70s when I graduated from university, and I really didn't want to leave my mom. My father had passed away when I was 16. So I made a commitment that I was going to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador as long as I possibly could.

At the time there was a program called GMO, Getting the Message Out. It was one that piqued my interest and I bought into. I said, yeah, do you know what? We can be entrepreneurial in Newfoundland and Labrador; we can be innovative in Newfoundland and Labrador. I stayed and I established my own consulting business.

At the time, there were a number of industries starting to develop on the South Coast, particularly related to aquaculture and tourism. So I spent my time writing business plans for the first few years, and then became fortunate. I got involved in the Newfoundland Aquaculture

Industry Association, the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Association, the Central Newfoundland Tourism Marketing Association, became a member of the rural development association – of course, the rural development association ceased to exist around 1997 and the regional economic development boards were formed.

I was fortunate enough to find employment with the regional board and from then on I was completely and totally hooked on the potential of Newfoundland and Labrador and I resisted the trend about migrating. I remember in those days all we heard about was the brain drain and how we were losing all of our youth, all of our skills, and all of our expertise to the mainland because there wasn't any hope in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's perhaps why some of us speak so passionately when we get up here and why we are so alarmed about some of these austerity measures in this budget because we don't want a repeat of the '90s. We don't want to go back there. We want to continue the confidence that people have developed over the last 10 years and we want to continue to see this province grow.

Madam Chair, right here in this House tonight some of the Members opposite have said that the investments we made were great investments and they don't oppose any of them. They say they were needed. So it's great to see that acknowledgement. It's unfortunate that sometimes in some of the spin they throw out wastage and overspending.

They support the investments we made in repairing the mouldy schools, upgrading the hospitals, bringing down the wait-list for surgery, reducing child poverty, improving the roads and investing in diversification of our economy. So if it was not waste, then how in the world was it overspending? That's where politics is concerning, because in playing the game of politics and political spin, we probably are causing much more harm than good with respect to our efforts to want to move this province forward. The government, in particular, has a responsibility and a duty to instill the confidence in our people and ensure they're doing everything they can in the best interests of our people. That's what we did, Mr. Chair. The

investments we made were investments in our people.

I sit here and when they talk about wastage, I say to myself, my God, what are they telling our people. Are they saying the people of Newfoundland and Labrador didn't deserve these investments and that now we have to go back to the way things were before we started making these investments? Is that the underlying message here?

I'm scratching my head. I know we've been debating for 50-odd hours here in the House, but that one escapes me. I fail to understand why the Liberals think it's a good idea for us to go backwards as opposed to forwards. It's quite alarming to think they're telling our children and our youth that they have to go back to poverty when we've taken such great strides to move out of poverty over the last few years.

I'm going to give them credit; they are saying or admitting they don't want to be doing these things. So my question to that is: Why are you doing it then? If you don't believe in it, why are you doing it and why don't you stop. There are options, there are solutions and we have talked about them here in the House tonight.

I'm running out of time – 50 seconds. I don't think I'm going to get into the next issue that I want to speak about because that one is certainly worthy of 10 minutes in and of itself. I'm going to leave that – oh, Mr. Chair, welcome back to the Chair. Chairs switch out quite frequently here tonight as the debate goes on.

I, too, before I sit down, would like to thank staff on both sides of the House, from all parties and all sides, for the wonderful job you're doing in helping us represent the people here in this hon. House. Hats off to you and we look forward to the debate continuing.

Thank you so much.

CHAIR (Bragg): The hon. Minister of Environment and Conservation.

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

In the spirit of carrying on with that kumbayah feeling, I thought I would reflect on some other strategies and thoughts. I'm going to start with, first of all, my colleague for Labrador West. It's interesting, we're only a little over six months into this mandate and I must say I think we were six days into the game when I was sitting with my colleague, friend, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and dealing with a very difficult discussion around the Wabush pension plan.

I must say, the full reality of the tough decisions that were going to come, that was my very first one and the realization that a lot of our population, a lot of our hard-working residents were now grossly exposed because of financial – neglect is perhaps a word, I'm not sure, but the fact of the matter is that people who have worked all of their lives now were being told and were going to face the fact that some-25 per cent of their life savings was no longer available to them. So a huge tragedy. One that we had to make a tough decision to save what was left, but unfortunately it has meant a great hardship for those people.

My colleague, friend from Gander – the Rex 'Murphyite' of the House who has an amazing ability with lexicon, glossary, thesaurus or whatever else he uses – got me thinking about other examples around the world. I'm fortunate enough to have worked extensively around a circumpolar, and particularly in Russia. His references to places like Puerto Rico, Venezuela and so on, prompted me to say, well, maybe I'll talk a little bit – I have spoken before about my time in Russia. I worked there for 14 years. I was there from 1990 to 2004. I was living here but working there.

I learned a lot about extreme collapses in the financial stability of a country. I draw on that experience as I think about what's happening here. We are definitely not in that scale of problem; however, there are a lot of lessons to be learned.

I just thought I'd take a few minutes to talk about what I observed in the Soviet Union when we were going through Glasnost and Perestroika and what happened to the ruble. I arrived there in 1990, started working – I was actually researching at a place. It was actually a moose farm in the Komi Republic. I went in there a

Canadian. I just started working in this fine province for a few years and I was over there for a couple of weeks. I went to do my first money exchange.

The Soviet Union persisted for some-70 years – I'm going to get to a very relevant point of why I'm telling this story in a second – in a bubble. The ruble was very much of an isolated currency. You were not able to frankly exchange it with foreign currencies at all, but through Perestroika and Glasnost – and as it started to open up its border and that Iron Curtain came down, their currency was exposed. What happened was rapid inflation, such that when I made my first exchange at a bank, I went in – I probably had \$1,000 of Canadian on me. I was told that would be more than enough, but I didn't fully appreciate what was happening.

My colleague, the Minister of Health, when he spoke about what's going on in Venezuela, when you see this in front of you it is quite dramatic. There I walked up to the bank, along with a couple of other colleagues, I took out two 100 Canadian dollar bills, passed it to the bank with my passport and a great commotion ensued as they looked up what a Canadian dollar was worth. There was a lot of hubbub and bubble and so on, a lot of commotion. All of a sudden people came out to me with stacks of rubles that were probably something like this; almost, I would say, close to a foot high. I had two stacks of these. That represented 200 Canadian dollars. That's what was happening, hyperinflation.

It was such a rapid crash of their economy, they didn't even have bills that could keep up with what was going on. They were printing rapidly. I think at the time, maybe a 10 ruble note was as big as it got. I had so much of the stuff. The Russian was (inaudible), it's like cabbage. I took this money, I didn't even know what to do with it. I had to carry it. I had to stuff it in my armpits, every pocket I had. I walked out of the bank loaded down with \$200 worth of rubles.

As I walked along the street with my colleagues, I remember going to – there were nine of us. We went to a restaurant, a very famous one in Moscow called the Leningrad restaurant. We had a full course meal with the wine, the vodka, all the trimmings and so on, and it was just a few dollars. It was absolutely amazing.

Watching how economies collapse was a very dramatic situation. So over the next 14 years I watched how the Soviet Union, then the Confederation of Independent States, and then Russia had to deal with all of this.

Now, the reason I'm telling this story is because this was an economy that was massed in oil. There's nothing wrong with oil. Oil is a great commodity to have in your backyard if you use it and you develop it and you incorporate it in your economy wisely. Russia used it to excess. It covered all matter of sin.

Even as the company is struggling to keep up with western society, it's mass producing oil, it's oblivious to the price. It was oblivious to the production, because what I was doing there was cleaning up these oil spills that were happening as a result of the accelerated production. All they could do – instead of addressing their spending problem, they were trying to create revenue. They were just producing more and more oil on older equipment. So myself and my company found ourselves extremely busy in an economy that had just gone completely awry.

I talk about this because that very dramatic, really apocalyptic situation does pale but there is comparison for this province. We've spoken about this before because it was about 2007, 2008 when Newfoundland and Labrador was hitting peak oil production and peak price.

There's a very interesting graphic that the Minister of Finance – and President of Treasury Board, as we like to say – often refers to. If you look at this graphic, it shows revenue and spending. In 2007, 2008 there was a very pivotal point in our history whereby had we maintained our spending at our revenue level and we had just progressed to this point, dare I say – and based on what the financial officials are analyzing and suggesting – we probably could have had a budget not with a deficit of, it would have been \$2.7 billion, but has ended up at \$1.8 billion. We actually could have had a possible surplus just if we had maintained our revenue and our spending at that time.

I take the Member for Topsail – Paradise's point well. There were a lot of good intentions, perhaps, in the previous administration, a lot of good investment and we needed that. This

province certainly had been lagging behind. I don't take anything away from that at all.

What I'm saying that could have, should have happened was more of a check and a balance for what our revenues were doing and how we were spending that money. That's what this administration is trying to do now is check our spending with our revenue. We've got to get that under control.

As in your household, you wouldn't keep racking up credit cards; you wouldn't keep racking up debt. You've got to get it under control or someday soon the bank or somebody else is going to come out and take your house away from you. Then, you'll be in a tent in Pippy Park like I was when I first arrived. That's the point I'm trying to make.

Oil, as I say, is a great commodity. Frankly, I look at the Minister of Natural Resources, who works with this important commodity every day – there's nothing wrong with oil. In fact, it is going to be a very important portion of the solution of how we're going to get ourselves out of this mess. Hats off to the oil and gas industry. Let's keep doing what we need, but let's use that revenue wisely. Let's not just keep spending hoping that oil is going to cover up all of our sins. We don't want to end up in some kind of apocalyptic situation.

That was a key point I wanted to make. Yes, so it's the living in a bubble. I also wanted to talk about, in my last minute, the fact that what I saw in the Soviet Union through to Russia was a lot of chaos; there was a lot of mental stress. We are going to go through stress.

I think as I talked about my glass half full, glass half-empty example in my previous presentation tonight, what I want to do is make sure the people understand we are all together. We need to ensure that we stay positive. We can get through this. The future is bright for this province if we can get ourselves appropriately aligned with our revenues and our spending. That's a key point. I found it came to me when I heard the Minister of Health and Community Services and I wanted to throw that example out there.

So, thank you very much.

(Russian spoken.)

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm happy to stand and speak to Bill 14 yet again. It was very interesting to hear the Member for Torngat Mountains misquote me yet again. I suspect really what he's trying to do is to see if he can needle me and get a reaction out of me. Well, I guess my reaction – I do have a bit of reaction to being deliberately misquoted because I've already corrected him on this a number of times in the House where he deliberately says that I've said droves of people will leave the province, that there will be a mass exodus; he said a mass exodus out of the province.

Well, Mr. Chair, that's not at all what I said. As a matter of fact, every time I've talked about people talking about leaving the province I've qualified that. It is my hope that government will take measures to convince people that there is a future for them here in Newfoundland and Labrador, that there is a reason to stay, that the future is bright, that we are not a poor – I saw someone post earlier today in referring to parts of Africa – province. We are simply, at this point, a poorly managed province. We are a province that sits on an incredible wealth of natural resources, both in our waters and in our lands and in our people. It's about how we manage those assets. It's about how we manage those resources.

I would like to quote once again from Dr. House who was the Chair of the Economic Recovery Commission in 1989-1996. He says, "The economy does not operate in isolation. Successful economic development depends on successful social development and sound environmental management. Education and training, employment programs, social-security reforms" – that includes our health care system – "transportation and communications, infrastructure development – all need to be coordinated and integrated so as to contribute to economic development...."

So, Mr. Chair, that's what we're talking about here. How do we ensure that we manage our wealth of resources in such a way that they benefit the people of the province, that they benefit our communities, that they strengthen our communities and that they point towards sustainable growth.

Now, when the Member for Torngat Mountains sat down after his misrepresentation of some of us here in the House, I got an email, a tweet. Again, this is a message on social media. This is the beauty of social media right now that people all over the province can participate in this debate here in the House in real time.

This was from a Mr. Robert Hunt: Could you please do me a favour and remind the Member for Torngat Mountains that an increase in anything is not necessarily growth. I don't classify an increase in outmigration or an increase in unemployment as growth. I think perhaps that this is the problem with the government, they have no idea what growth is.

Of course I've mentioned this a number of times in the House, Mr. Chair, that on page 5 of the government's budget they say as a result of the measures they are undertaking we will see a growth in unemployment. We will also see a growth in the disparity between what people are earning and what it will cost them to live.

This is another email I received today. It's from Annette Michelin who lives in North West River in Labrador. She said: As a result of taking a prescription drug at our local hospital in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, I have 60 per cent reduction in my lung capacity. This apparently is a side effect of the drug that can occur in some individuals. As a result of this, I require numerous medical trips to St. John's to see my specialist.

Over the last two years I have spent in excess of \$15,000 in airfare, gas and hotels going back and forth to see this individual at the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's. Yes, I get a percentage of it back but I do have to put the money upfront and wait for reimbursement. Depending on my lung function, I can either fly or have to travel by road. My question is with the increase in gas, as this government is going to raise the per kilometre for gas, will the

government raise the per kilometre for gas for private vehicle to attend medical appointments and drop the required 1,500 kilometre must travel first before they look at you for reimbursement?

So what she is asking – she has to drive back and forth from St. John’s to North West River, Labrador, to see her lung specialist. Now with this huge jump in the increase in gas she’s asking will government then also increase the amount that they reimburse for people’s gas for medical travel. That would seem like a fair thing to do. All the people of Newfoundland and Labrador should have fair and equal access to medical services as any citizen in the province.

She also says: As well, when you have been diagnosed with a critical and terminal illness, will they look at free travel from remote sites of the province to attend the required appointments. I have met with the lung transplant team once by video and will require follow-up with them as my illness progresses. The expenses to families when transplant takes place, and you are required to remain in Ontario for an extended period, is huge. Again, you have to pay for this upfront and receive reimbursement once the paperwork is submitted.

I have been fortunate that I have saved for a rainy day; however, I did not prepare for the hurricane I find myself in with my family. Will this government look at other arrangements to help families who find themselves in this situation?

I believe that is a fair request. Regardless of the financial situation that the province is in, this is a fair request because we have an obligation to ensure that people have access to same medical treatment and top-of-the-line medical treatment as any citizen of the province. That’s a request that is put out to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance. This is a fair request. I would imagine that the MHA for this particular district would also want to take this up as well.

This is another health issue. She says: Keep up the fight. Gerry, I have another bone or two you can pick for me. Let’s start with the lack of specialized seating technicians here in Newfoundland. My son, Andrew, is 28 years old; spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. He has a

custom seat that was built at the Janeway. That was in 2013. He generally requires a new chair every three to five years.

This spring he was experiencing some serious skin issues and was requiring some reworking of his chair. I contacted the Janeway team and was informed there is now a two-year wait-list for seating because we only have one tech between the Miller Centre and the Janeway. This is completely unacceptable. Anyone who requires custom seating needs access immediately. Waiting means pressure sores, bedridden, and/or contractures. What is this government going to do to speed up the access for those needing this service? I say start recruiting people now.

I’m pretty sure we can get someone qualified for much less than the \$1.39 million squandered on severance pay. How about investing in the vulnerable who do need it? Until then I guess we wait, pray, and hope his body can withstand the torture of poor seating. And how about some support for wheelchair transportation on the West Coast, especially now with the price of gas? Running a 3/4-ton wheelchair accessible van would not be feasible for me or most people right now, but we have no alternatives. Oh, yes, we could stay home and rely on ambulances to transport the disabled person to and from appointments, but that wouldn’t be a brilliant use of tax dollars.

So, Mr. Chair, although government is saying that people are taken care of, we see the trickle-down effect of some of the decisions, particularly in the area of health with the cancellation of the over-the-counter drug program and these kinds of issues. I’ll be happy again to stand and to speak about some more issues in terms of how this is affecting the daily lives of the people in the province and in their communities.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Member her time for speaking has expired.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. George’s – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have another opportunity to speak in this debate on the bill related to the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. It's an interesting debate we're having here tonight. It's a lot of back and forth. It's a lot of good points being made.

I just listened to the Member opposite and the point she was making about the lady with medical difficulties. It's a very good point and it's a very good addition to the debate we're having here in this House. Because it's important that we as Members realize the impacts of the decisions we make, and the importance of the type of management policy we put in place, Mr. Chair.

It's those types of issues that we deal with as MHAs on a day-to-day basis as our constituents call us and look for assistance with government. So it's something we're all familiar with and we're all sensitive to, and that we all work to address each individual case, Mr. Chair.

As well, it sort of emphasizes the need for good and proper management, and the impacts that poor management has on the types of programs we can offer and the types of services we can offer for people in a real productive way. It's important that we have a discussion as well about where we're going, why we're in the situation we're in today and what we can do about it, Mr. Chair.

As the budget came down, and the ensuing public debate after the budget came down, one of the main issues that people focused on was the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. Myself and the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port attended several functions together related to the budget and public reaction to the budget.

One event we attended was a protest in Stephenville. That was a collection of about 50 to 75 of the angriest people in the area that we both represented. We were invited to attend this event. We were invited to come and to listen to what people had to say. We both went, knowing we'd be facing a group of angry people, but we thought it was important that we go anyway. We went and we listened to those people. This was before the changes were made to the levy.

One of the most often raised issues was the levy and the fact that it would apply to people with a taxable income of about \$21,000. Many people said to us, well, that's too low. So that's something we as Members were hearing, that we took back to our caucus, that we debated in caucus, that we discussed in caucus and that we emphasized the need to have solutions to.

Working with our federal colleagues, I was very pleased the government was able to find a solution to increase that threshold up to \$51,000 taxable income before you would have to pay that. Even with the levy the way it was, government had put in place mechanisms that would protect some of the low-income people. These mechanisms remained in place even though the threshold for application of that levy was increased, Mr. Chair.

I think that contrasts in many ways with the way that the people opposite operated when they were in power. When they had peak oil and they had peak oil prices, what did they do with the revenue that they were bringing in, Mr. Chair? What was one of the first things they did? They reduced the taxes for the richest people in this province. That's where their priorities were. That's the type of management they were bringing forward when they had the power to do something. That's what they did: lowered the tax for the highest income people first. That's in contrast to what we were doing.

Another issue that was brought to me – and I've spoken out about the closure of public libraries in the province. I presented a petition from the people of St. George's on this issue. I've got another one from the people of Stephenville Crossing that I hope to present later in this House. I've spoken out publicly. I think that closures of libraries, we have to look for a way forward to find a solution within the constraints that we have, to find a solution that will see these libraries continue.

One of the things I did, as well as meet with the people protesting about the budget, was I met with people who were involved at the local level with libraries. I learned more about the services they provide and the important role that they play in communities. That is something that I think is important that we do. The sense I get from ministers in this caucus and other Members

as well is that we have to work with the local people to find ways of solving that problem, Mr. Chair.

It is interesting that the Opposition has raised that issue as well. But again, let's contrast to what they are saying now to what they did when they were in power, when they had an opportunity to do something in a meaningful way. Even when we had peak oil, the highest oil prices, they closed libraries in this province. They don't talk about that now, but they closed libraries too when they were in power, even when they had all this revenue.

Mr. Chair, what did they do in terms of how did they operate? In terms of the CBS library – the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands talked today about the library in CBS. What did they do in that case? Mr. Chair, rather than focus on the importance of libraries, what they did was they used it as an opportunity to funnel money into the city, to pay the mortgage of the building that was being built there. In doing that, they really compromised the other libraries around the province that didn't have this sweetheart deal. That's what they did when they were in power, when they were in the position to make a real difference. That's what they did. So it's interesting to see what they're saying now.

We've got some reasons for optimism in this province. One of the main reasons for optimism is we have a group of people in government that have the political courage to make the type of changes that need to be made in this province. That's one of the reasons for optimism in this province.

Mr. Chair, it's easy to speak out against something, but it's more difficult to really say what you would do otherwise, what your alternatives are. It's easy to be all things to all people and not really say what you're for or against. In a lot of ways, that's what the Opposition has been doing throughout this debate. They've been criticizing but not offering any alternatives.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. REID: Well, keep them coming, because you haven't got anywhere near solving the problems yet, the level of problems that exist.

So, Mr. Chair, it's important that we continue this debate tonight, that we have a good debate about the facts and about the situation and we have this back and forth that allow us to find and look for solutions. I'm looking forward to hearing the solutions that the Members opposite will bring forward here tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm certainly delighted to stand here tonight and have a few words on this motion and, in general, the contents of the budget, having a broad-based discussion here for the past few days, and I'd like to possibly continue for another few days. It's certainly important that we hear what people have to say.

It's been a good exercise in terms of public engagement and people expressing some ideas and alternatives and thoughts on the *Budget 2016*. I know for us, as a caucus, we've had a lot of input through social media, through calls, through just general discussion with people over the past number of days in terms of wanting to present people's views, people's ideas, people's alternatives to some of the things we're seeing in this budget. Some of the things people present to us, we may not agree with, but the exercise here is to bring it to the forum and bring it to this forum as the people's House where people can be heard. I think it's a great exercise.

I was asked this evening in regard to the process and what we are going through in terms of the filibuster, was it worthwhile, and I said, yes, certainly. Any time there is an extension of democracy and people can be heard in the people's House, represented by the people of the province, 40 MHAs, I certainly do agree – I know the Premier mentioned as well that he thought it was a good exercise in democracy. People need to be heard and we have varying views and various discussions at times, but at the end of the day that generates good public policy. While we may not always agree, we get to

express that and people get to be heard. It's very important as well.

I've gotten input from all over the province, but certainly from my district, the District of Ferryland, people from my district responding and giving me thoughts that they want to have expressed. I did get a call the other day – and I just want to mention my colleague for St. John's Centre, she spoke just a little while ago and she talked about some of the changes in the budget and the trickle-down effect, which I think is very significant. Some of that is seen now but may not be seen until we go through the full gamut of the tax increases and the fees and all those kinds of things that, in many cases, are cumulative but will flow over the period of time during the fiscal year.

She talked about the trickle-down effect, which is extremely important. I think in one of the cases she referenced the fact of the medical transportation program and where someone maybe is getting reimbursed or gets a per diem based on a certain amount of travel. If that person is travelling and now they have 16.5 cents on gasoline, as well there is 2 per cent HST on that, that is extra costs that they would incur. That's a great example. I won't say basic but very ordinary in terms of what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and citizens would deal with, but you may not know that until you exercise or had to access that program. At that point, you would know that there are extra costs that come right out of their pockets.

That is net income; it is dollars you have to expend in a particular week or a particular month. Based on that, you have less money. Very quickly, it comes right out of your pocket. I guess that is some of the things that we have with this budget. We've said it over and over again in regard to the balance and how much you take, how much you borrow, how much you drive through new economic activity, to drive to revenue and, collectively, how you come up with a balance sheet that is in the best interests of all Newfoundland and Labradorians and see us through a period of time where we get back to generating greater revenues, as has been mentioned before in regard to the great natural resources we have.

There is a bright future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, without a doubt. We just need to articulate the plan and the vision to get us there. There are some great opportunities in the future. We've been able to develop an economy over the past 10 years on infrastructure in all regions of our province and communities, post-secondary institutions, an environment where we want families to stay, grow, get a profession, contribute to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, but we need to see ourselves through this period to make sure we don't lose our greatest asset, which is our people.

I just wanted to share – back to my point I made in regard to my colleague when she talked about a trickle-down effect. I had a call from a gentleman in Colliers and he said he had started a business a couple of years ago. He was a taxi driver; he bought a couple of vehicles. We talked about the trickle-down effect and what can happen in that case. He shared with me a story in regard to he had bought two taxis. He had two vehicles he operated himself but he always had a backup vehicle and just two simple indicators.

He was making a living. Obviously, he was starting out. It was challenging, but he was doing okay. Now when you see the 15 per cent put back on insurance, which for two vehicles and you look at the increased gas of 16½ cents, and then on top of all that goes your HST. He calculated the cost that it would be for operation of his taxi stand. He said to me: Keith, I'm not going to be able to do this. When I look at the extra cost that I'm going to incur right now for this, this is going to be challenging for me.

He was questioning whether he actually could make a go of it. So that gives you an idea of, as I said, that threshold in terms of how far do you go in terms of generating revenue through a taxation and fee process, and at what point it becomes negative in terms of what you're trying to do raising revenues and pulling too much money out. Because then you're shutting down other activity and other activities in the economy.

This is a case of a small business. Based on the measures that have been taken, you're shutting down that small business, that entrepreneur. So that's a double whammy, if you will, because

you're taxing and you're taking a lot of money out. Then conversely you have – as a result of that, you're getting someone who is self-employed that looks like they're not going to be able to continue to operate because of the measures. So that's where we are in terms of looking at the threshold and going too far in terms of some of the measures that have been taken in this budget.

Also, from a perspective of my district and talking to people from all demographics, from some of the changes in regard to education – in my area from Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove; Goulds region, as part of – Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove is not, but certainly Goulds south to Bay Bulls is part of the City of St. John's, and on down the Southern Shore, Southern Avalon to St. Shotts. So when all that region, and especially from Bay Bulls, Witless Bay area, Bauline South, north seeing over the past number of years a lot of growth. With that has come the need for significant infrastructure, certainly related to education, recreation, road infrastructure.

We've worked over the past number of years to facilitate that, recreational facilities as well, and we've worked from an educational point of view in regard to providing school infrastructure and buildings. We had some in Witless Bay. We have a K-6 school getting into double and triple streams now in regard to the amount of young families we have and young kids. It's a very positive story in regard to development, significant development, the residential – that part of it, too, tremendous growth, but with that comes the need for infrastructure.

Over the past number of years we've gone with temporary classrooms adjoining to Witless Bay School and St. Bernard's. I think we built on two classrooms. I have three portables there now with the vision and intention that we would go to a middle school. That would take the stress off the K to six in St. Bernard's, and take the stress off Mobile Central High, which is seven to 12. So that was the plan.

Last year there were monies allocated for a consultant to do a study. The study was done. The consultant went out and looked at possible building sites, looked at what the indicators were for future growth and more youth coming to the

region, and the general consensus was that a middle school needed to be built because when you looked at the infrastructure of St. Bernard's it wasn't conducive to any significant build. We looked at Mobile – right now, when you get those double and triple streams moving through, it will be a few years before they hit Mobile High. So the backlog is in St. Bernard's in regard to the cafeteria being used by kids for lunch and all those types of things.

The decision was made to build a middle school. Unfortunately, in this *Budget 2016* that was cancelled. When we looked at growth and supporting economic growth, it certainly wasn't positive for the region. People are really dismayed in regard to all the work that was being done in a growing and burgeoning region. On the economic and social side of things, that's not going to be done.

There is a solution now that's being proposed, that we add classrooms on to the high school in Mobile. That does nothing to relieve the significant problems we have in the K to six St. Bernard's School in Witless Bay with growing population, with youth and young kids. So we have a huge issue there that we need to deal with. That's about all kinds of growth. It's about people living in communities and regions that have access to medical care, good road infrastructure, education – and that means facilities.

I'm happy to speak tonight in regard to that, not only for the people of my district but overall in terms of driving our province and making the right choices. So I certainly appreciate the chance to have a few words and look forward – and in the days to come I will certainly be speaking to it again.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair reminds the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It's wonderful to stand again tonight and have the opportunity to participate in this debate. Like others before me, I'd like to again acknowledge the great work that all the support people who are making sure we are working around the clock have been able to provide. We recognize the people at the Table and people behind the scenes that are supporting all of us in the House of Assembly. We certainly appreciate their efforts in ensuring that our great debates and discussions can continue because without their support, of course, Madam Chair, it would be very, very difficult.

Madam Chair, I want to again – I think its context is really important in this debate and discussion around this year's budget about the serious situation that Newfoundland and Labrador finds itself in fiscally and how difficult it is, and it will be if we do not address the problems. Just as Canada faced its own financial, what I'm going to call, challenges – some people would call it crisis – in the 1990s, Newfoundland and Labrador are experiencing much the same situation where, Madam Chair, it's just not appropriate for us to continue to have this kind of spending. We just don't have the revenues to support that kind of spending. We have to try and – as an old expression would be, cut the cloth to suit the garment.

Madam Chair, last night I mentioned, and I'll mention again today, that if we do nothing – right now it took us 66 years to amass \$11 billion in debt; 66 years. Think of all the schools, all the hospitals, all the roads that were built over the last 66 years. It took us all that time to amass \$11 billion in debt.

Madam Chair, if we do nothing that's going to double in the next five years. In five years it's going to double. Madam Chair, we really do have to get our fiscal house in order so that we do have the funds, the latitude, the opportunity that this great province has.

Madam Chair, I've been speaking over the last number of months to this debate and I've pointed out that – and this comes from a lot of what the Auditor General has been telling us over the last number of years. I've read into the record the last dozen years some of the things that the Auditor General has been saying. I look at health care, for example, Madam Chair.

Health care, in the last 12 years, has gone up by 142 per cent; from \$1.2 billion to \$2.9 billion. Our cost of debt servicing – that's not paying down the debt, but ensuring that we can pay the servicing of the debt, the interest rate, not paying down the debt, but just paying the interest, this year is \$950 million.

The Education budget – I note that we've had some great discussion by the Education Minister, great information that he's put before the House. Madam Chair, since 2000, we've had a 71 per cent increase in the budget of education, a 71 per cent increase, but a 36 per cent decrease in enrolment – a 71 per cent increase in cost, 36 per cent decrease in enrolment.

And even with that, I noted the Conference Board of Canada gave us a D when it came to our investments in education, saying we're not keeping up with where we need to be in terms of international expenditures and in terms of the outcomes of education – that's the word I'm looking for. It's been a long few days so sometimes the words don't come to you.

Think about that. Even though our expenditures are going up, our enrolment is going down, our outcomes are not improving. So, Madam Chair, we're going to have to reflect on how we improve those outcomes, how we ensure that the investments that we are all making – and it is the people of this great province making those investments.

Over the last two months, Madam Chair, we've spoken a lot about how this government, the new Liberal government, has had to make adjustments to the amount of taxation that we've had to collect. It's been noted time and time again that we are going back to 2006 levels of taxation. There were some significant decreases in taxation in 2006.

I'm just going to read to you, Madam Chair, with your indulgence, what the Auditor General said that year because I think it's important. Over the last number of days, the Opposition has been talking about choices and how we have choices. Well, there were choices back in 2006 and 2007, like there are today. We've had to go back to that year of level of taxation. In 2007, we had some significant decreases in taxation. That year – and I reflect on the summary report

of the Auditor General's report and I am quoting here – he said: The province must have a surplus of \$300 million each year for the next 40 years to eliminate the existing net debt of \$11.6 billion.

Think about that. In 2007, the Auditor General pointed out to government, at the time, saying we have a debt problem here. We're \$1.6 billion in deficit. If you have surplus of \$300 million a year for the next 40 years, that is what it would take to eliminate the net debt. We talk about the burden we're leaving to future generations; that's significant.

He also went on to say that the surpluses were, in large part, due to oil revenues and with the mid-year update for 2008 – and that was mid-year that year – projecting that oil revenues for the year will increase from \$1 billion to \$1.6 billion. While this is good for the province, these revenues are generated from non-renewable resources and are very vulnerable to change. He was so correct. He said: In addition to those factors are the factors of aging infrastructure, aging population, out-migration, interest and currency rates exchange vulnerability.

Madam Chair, if you listened intently to what the Auditor General said in 2007, he was pointing out we have a major problem. He was pointing it out then. He pointed it out the year before. He pointed it out every year since that time and probably every year before that time.

It is important to recognize that we have an issue here, but it is also important to recognize that this budget makes investments in our economy. It makes investments in trying to address some of the infrastructure challenges that we have. My hon. colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Works, has spoken eloquently on the investments that are being made, about \$570 million in infrastructure investments. That's a lot of money, Madam Chair, in infrastructure investments. While it might be pared down from previous years, it's still a significant sum of money and very important to make those infrastructure investments.

I know in my own department, in Natural Resources, we made investments in making sure, for example, that we address some of the challenges around orphaned and abandoned

mines. We're going to be doing some dam work this year to make sure we are addressing some of the concerns in that area. We've increased the junior exploration program. We've continued to make investments in ensuring we have the geological survey, just to name a few things.

So there are investments being made in our economy. We do have a challenge, Madam Chair, when it comes to our finances, but we are so adept in this province. We have such innovation, ingenuity, commitment to our communities, commitment to our province, and I know that we are going to be able to overcome these challenges and go on to have an even brighter future and even brighter opportunity in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It's unfortunate my time is running out. I'll have lots of time during this evening to speak to the budget. But I want to leave you with this thought. In Natural Resources, of course, we have a huge prospectivity in oil and gas, and I'll speak this evening on the opportunities that we have, the 30 basins that have been identified, the over 350 prospects, and indeed –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. COADY: – Madam Chair, it is a bright future for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

MS. COADY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm very happy to stand again and to speak to this bill. As I have said a number of times this evening, government is putting its gaze on reducing the deficit and reducing the debt, but, at times, the result of that is laying a debt and a deficit on individual people and individual communities. Those are some of the choices government has to reassess in terms of how are

they are impoverishing our people, how are they impoverishing our communities, when, in fact, what they need to be doing during this very tough economic time is strengthening our communities, strengthening our individuals, strengthening our social programs.

Madam Chair, I would like to read a letter that was written by Mr. Joseph Keefe, who is the Chair of the local service district of Black Tickle-Domino. This letter was written yesterday, and it's addressed to the Minister Carolyn Bennett, minister of indigenous and northern affairs, Government of Canada.

Dear Minister Bennett, we are the residents of Black Tickle, a southern Inuit community of 140 people. We are about to lose our only medical service permanently. Further, our only fuel provider is ending operations here. We are in crisis, experiencing a lot of pain and fear, and we appeal to you for help.

We are located on an island off the Labrador Coast in NunatuKavut territory. The provincial government settled us here year round in the 1960s. Before that, we used to move into wooden areas for the winter and come out to the island to fish in the spring and summer. There are no commercial flights to Black Tickle, no road in, and only a weekly coastal boat in the summer and fall months. We are very isolated but we are deeply attached to our land, to the sea and to our community.

Woodward's, our only fuel operator, is pulling out of our community on September 1, 2016. Put bluntly, if you don't have fuel in the Labrador winter, you die. You cannot go through the winter here without fuel.

The provincial government has offered us three empty barrels per household to store fuel for the winter. The nearest place we can buy fuel is in Cartwright, which is 60 miles away, a two-hour snowmobile ride. With widespread unemployment in our community, we simply cannot afford to travel by snowmobile to Cartwright to retrieve fuel. Such travel requires fuel itself and we can only travel to Cartwright when the sea ice is frozen from January to April. We are extremely worried about people freezing in their homes or causing fires by trying to generate a bit of heat without fuel.

Another dimension to our crisis is the fact that Labrador-Grenfell health authority has eliminated the sole nurse practitioner position in our community as of October 1, 2016. We have a lot of sickness because we do not have running water in our homes and we have limited access to a potable water dispensing unit that is not consistently funded.

Minister Bennett, we have 28 children in our community from birth to school age whose parents are frantic with worry over what will happen should our children take sick or suffer accidents. We have had children suffer febrile seizures and the nurse saved them.

We also have elders with COPD, lupus and chronic pain who are treated by the nurse almost every day, and we have other people with other serious medical issues like diabetes. How can we live here without a nurse? Families and elders are experiencing great stress at the thought of leaving the community they have lived in their whole lives. If they go, there will be no one left in our community. We are being forced out. We don't know where to go or how we will afford housing in other places. This is the place we want to live. It's where our ancestors lived and we hunt and fish like they did.

We want our Aboriginal rights respected, as the Canadian Constitution promises us. We want access to health services, as the *Canada Health Act* guarantees us. We feel that the spirit of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is being dishonoured and we are the ones who have to suffer for it.

We have appealed to our MP and our MHA, without results. So now we appeal to you to help save our community. We hope to hear from you in the next week, as every day the crisis deepens, especially in terms of mental health. Sincerely Joseph Keefe, Chair, local service district, Black Tickle-Domino.

They have cc'ed it to Senator Murray Sinclair, the Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Mr. Todd Russell, President of the Nunavut Community Council; Yvonne Jones, the MP for Labrador; and the MHA for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

Madam Chair, again, it's so easy for us to stand in this House and speak in generalizations about the good things that government is doing, but what we have to look at are some of the decisions that have been made and the trickle-down effect on individuals and the trickle-down effect on communities.

This is perhaps one of the most desperate pleas for help that we have heard in this House in a long time. I believe that the people of Black Tickle are not exaggerating. I believe that the issues that the people of Black Tickle are articulating and clearly setting out in this letter are ones that affect their community, that affect the health and well-being of the community.

If one were to be cynical, one would take from this that this is forced resettlement by neglect. I don't know if that's the plan of this government; perhaps it is. Perhaps this government feels that we can't afford to support the people of Black Tickle so that they can live safely in their community. This is not fear mongering. This is simply relaying – these are the people of Black Tickle who want to be represented in this House tonight.

They have clearly articulated the challenges and the concerns that they have. One is the discontinuation of their only fuel operator, but also the very clearly articulated need for their nurse practitioner, which they have lost as a result of this budget.

I'm not sure how government will respond to this. I think it will be interesting to hear from the MHA in that district, or perhaps hearing from the Minister of Health as to his assessment as to why it's okay for the government to remove the nurse practitioner from that community, and why a community belonging to Newfoundland and Labrador would have to appeal to the federal government for, as they say, they feel it's their very survival as a community.

Mr. Chair, I believe that, again, what we have to look at are, in what ways is this budget creating deficits and debts to individuals and to our communities. And if government is truly committed to strengthening our communities, to ensuring that the people of the province are strengthened, that they have the services that they need in order to survive, in order to thrive

and to be treated with equality and dignity in our province. Then I believe that what needs to happen here is that government needs to respond to the people of Black Tickle in terms of their requests as to they feel that their community is in danger if they do not have a nurse practitioner. And I believe that this is a genuine, desperate cry for help. It cannot be any clearer than it is in this letter. The people of Black Tickle are asking for equality in health care services, the same as any person in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, at this point again, Mr. Chair, I will take my seat and I look forward to standing and speaking to this bill again.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR (Bragg): The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It has been, as has been said a number of times, a long few days in the House and as a presiding officer, I do a lot of sitting at the Table, so it gives me extra pleasure when I get the opportunity to stand for a few moments, stretch and speak on behalf of my district and on behalf of the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair in the Labrador Straits and in Southern Labrador.

I have a unique district, lots of challenges in my district. I have 18 communities, so that means 18 municipalities or local service districts, starting at the Quebec border going north as far as Cartwright and I have three unconnected communities which come with their own set of unique challenges.

I have Williams Harbour soon going to be moving out by their choice, Mr. Chair. It's just a handful of seniors left and they have children and grandchildren in other places, so they have made the decision to go. The first line of the relocation policy says it must be community initiated and community driven. I have Norman Bay that doesn't have an airport, a couple of dozen people there and a school. When I want to go to Norman Bay, in the wintertime, I travel by snowmobile, and I love that. I made the trip

myself at Eastertime, and I was a little bit wary because there was a polar bear in the region at that time. So I was glad that my snowmobile didn't break down before I got back. In the summertime, I take the ferry and I go to Norman Bay.

I want to mention Black Tickle. The Member for St. John's Centre brought a letter. I've seen the letter. I've been copied in the letter. She brought a letter of concerns to the floor of the House of Assembly on behalf of the people of Black Tickle. I'm very familiar with the issues in Black Tickle. Black Tickle has a lot of challenges – 150 people on an island in the middle of the Atlantic.

One time, Mr. Chair, thriving with fish, many people from the Island, they went there to fish, to earn a living. Black Tickle is home of some of the best bakeapple picking berry grounds around. But I was surprised to hear the Member for St. John's Centre get up and speak about Black Tickle. I wonder if she's ever been there. I wonder if she knows the issues. I wonder if she knows the people. Many times I've gone in, fly in on a little Twin Otter and then hire a four-wheeler and go door to door, or sometimes if I have a backpack I walk.

Want I want to say to the Member of St. John's Centre is since I was elected in 2013, I have worked extremely hard for the people of Black Tickle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: They lost their industry, and that's huge. When a community, any community, loses its industry, that poses a lot of challenges. But when you're on an island in the middle of the ocean, there are no easy answers.

I respect the Member for St. John's Centre reading the letter. What I didn't hear was any solutions being offered. No solutions on what we can do to help. I was in Black Tickle two weeks ago, held a public meeting, great attendance at the meeting, and I said to them, help us help you. What are some of the solutions? The truth of the matter, Mr. Chair, in this province under the government we have community employment enhancement programs for communities that struggle to get enough

insurable hours to file for Employment Insurance to help them make it through the winter. I can tell you over the last three years, despite having 18 communities, the budget that I was given to work with, I put more than half of it, every single year, into that one community, more than half of the district budget, because I knew the need was there.

We put \$92,000 one year, \$113,000 the next year, and \$99,000 last year into that community. And sadly, yes, they still do live in poverty. We do everything we can for them, but times are tough right now because there is no industry there.

In addition to that, they have never had good drinking water in the community. They have a water treatment plant there and I've advocated every year for them to ensure that they do have good drinking water. And it was only this week that the Minister of Municipal Affairs signed off on more funding for the people of Black Tickle to have drinking water.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Because the Minister of Municipal Affairs has stood many times and talked about it's 2016 and people should have access to that basic right of clean drinking water.

Mr. Chair, the reason we are into this filibuster and discussing a budget here is we have some issues in the province. I listened for the last two or three days to people get up and talk about why did you cut this and why did you cut that and why are you doing the blame game. To some degree, Mr. Chair, I'm absolutely floored that they could get up and talk about that – I would be remiss if I didn't talk about why we are here, the reality. There are realities. And it's been repeated many, many times: almost \$3 billion in debt; 527,000 people; \$20 million a week in interest. Because things have been mismanaged and let go for so long, can you imagine what \$20 million a week could do in rural communities like mine and for people like Black Tickle, if people had been responsible with the taxpayers' dollars of this province?

In the process of bringing down the budget – no doubt, the Cabinet and the Finance Minister had tough choices to make – they went out and they

asked departments and groups and agencies to find efficiencies. One of the efficiencies that the health authority in Labrador saw fit to bring back was to remove medical services in October that are there, the medical services, as they exist now, to the community of Black Tickle.

What I can tell Members of this House and what I can tell the people of Black Tickle – and many people around the province have been supporting them and other communities – is that I have been advocating very, very hard to ensure that the people of Black Tickle do have medical services beyond October, the date that they are scheduled to lose it right now. I have had a number of meetings with the Finance Minister, meetings with the Minister of Health, and we are looking at options to ensure that these people are not left without medical services.

What happens to Black Tickle in the future? I don't know. I don't know what happens to Black Tickle in the future. All I can tell you is that as long as I am their Member and I am a voice for them, I am looking to work with them for a solution.

The other thing I want to say, Mr. Chair, Labrador, it's a lot of rural communities, three Aboriginal groups, a lot of unique challenges; but one of the things that I'm very, very proud of as a Member of this Liberal government – we've been listening the last number of days as Opposition and the Third Party talk about the negative things of the Liberal government – is our Premier went on the record saying that he would work with NunatuKavut Community Council to work towards a Lands Claims Agreement. What a Lands Claims Agreement will do, Mr. Chair, is to breathe new life into places like Black Tickle.

The Members talk about our federal cousins in Ottawa and the great relationship we have, and I'm happy we have that relationship because we also have Prime Minister Trudeau going on the record – he has a great respect for Aboriginal peoples – saying that we need to come to the table and we need to start the Lands Claims negotiation process for these people.

Now, I'd remiss if I didn't mention that this morning I heard Members opposite talk a lot about us going to Ottawa in December and

cozying up on a sofa and having a photo op. Well, if I don't know if Members opposite realize, but I was one of the people that went to Ottawa in December and we went on our own dime to Ottawa. We might have taken a few snaps, as my grandmother would call it, while we were up there, but we went on our own dime. I went to Ottawa. We had a nice Christmas dinner with the Prime Minister. And I am very pleased that in this tough, economic time in our province that we do have support in Ottawa. We saw support with this levy. We have been debating the levy here for a number of days but the truth of it is we've made progress on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: It's very unfortunate that the levy had to be a part of that budget that came out on April 14, but now, Mr. Chair, because of support from our federal Liberal friends in Ottawa, we now have 74 per cent of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador that will never pay a cent on the levy – 74 per cent of the people; three of every four people will not pay the levy.

We're debating the taxes – Bill 19, we're talking about taxes. It's unfortunate that we had to impose some temporary measures to get us through what is an absolute crisis, a crisis in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair, but we have heard our Finance Minister say again and again that as soon as things begin to turn around, those taxes will be gone. I said it last night, Mr. Chair, and I have to say it again. Do you think it gives us pleasure to do this kind of thing, to pass out fees in the province? But the truth is what it is. We cannot stick our head in the sand. Somebody mentioned where's the stronger tomorrow that you campaigned on? We want a stronger tomorrow, but some of the choices had to be made or we would not even have a tomorrow. That's the truth of where we are. We would not even have a tomorrow if some of those –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – measures were not taken.

I see my time is expired.

CHAIR: I remind the Member her time for speaking has expired.

MS. DEMPSTER: I look forward to getting on my feet again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Point of order.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs, on a point of order.

That point would be, Sir?

MR. JOYCE: Yes, the Member for St. John's Centre, would you please forward all the letters and correspondence that you wrote the Department of Municipal Affairs on behalf of Black Tickle, if you're so concerned about Black Tickle? So I look forward to the letters so I could pass them on and work on them.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: No, I'm standing to speak now, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: I thought you were speaking up against the point of order.

MS. ROGERS: Well, I could speak against that as well, Mr. Chair. I'd be happy to speak against the point of order. I'd be happy to table the documents that I read from, from Black Tickle. As a matter of fact, the good people of Black Tickle have asked me to read this on their behalf because they want it represented here in the House, and so that's precisely what I have done

this evening, and it's very interesting that the Member for –

CHAIR: Order, please!

On the point of order, private Members can't table, but you are more than welcome to pass it across the floor at a later time if you like.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland, or was it Topsail – Paradise? I know they look so much alike this hour of the night.

The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Chair, just to be clear, I think the Member was rising to speak in debate, was what she was doing and I'd be quite fine and yield to her, but I'll speak for a few minutes. I was just trying to understand what Standing Order 36 was, just having a look to see what it was. I'm sure the minister can sort us out.

I do want to speak about Black Tickle, actually. Now we're on the topic of Black Tickle, I'm going to speak about Black Tickle. I have never been there, wanted to go there, and actually have a niece who taught there. She graduated from Memorial University with her education degree, had a huge amount of debt, got her degree and went through university and had her debt, wanted to pay off her student loans, didn't want to spend a significant amount of time to do so, and she searched the province for a place to find employment for September right after her graduation to teach.

She was fortunate enough to secure employment actually at the school in Black Tickle. She grew up in Conception Bay North, went to school in Conception Bay North, went to university at Memorial and right after graduation found her way to Black Tickle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: When she went down in the fall of the year, of course it is Labrador – and I'm sure the Member for the area who needs a Snicker's bar, by the way, because you weren't like you were in the Chair. You need a Snicker's bar. You know the Snicker's bar when you are

hungry and you turn into – you know the commercials.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, that's what you need.

So she went to Black Tickle. We honestly thought and I honestly thought she wouldn't last down there, to be honest with you, because she was quite used to and very comfortable with all the amenities and conveniences and all that kind of stuff. Black Tickle is a very remote community, an island on the south coast of Labrador. Essentially when you are in there for the winter, you are in there and you have to have reasons to come out. She was teaching, so it wasn't easy for her to come out. She came out for Christmas, that kind of thing, but she spent her time during the winter there. What did she do the year after? She went back again.

I think she probably taught there for maybe three years actually, Mr. Chair. I think she went back maybe three years and taught there and enjoyed it. I've talked with her many times about the challenges of living in a rural community where you don't have those amenities, you don't have what many of us take for granted and you live a very different lifestyle in Black Tickle than you do in other parts of our province. Some would say much more akin to a more traditional lifestyle, especially for people in Labrador.

But she absolutely loved it. She left Black Tickle only because she got an opportunity for a job at the former board office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. She worked there for maybe a year or two in the board office, but she wanted to go back in the classroom. For the last number of years, she's been teaching in the Innu school in Sheshatshiu and teaches high school.

There is another story coming that I'm going to share with you because there were media reports on this last week.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a good story.

MR. P. DAVIS: It's a good story, yes.

She is a lovely, young woman. She has married a man from Happy Valley-Goose Bay. They have a daughter, a preschooler, and she's

actually going to school this coming year. She's teaching school. I've had great privilege of actually visiting the school in Sheshatshiu, been there a couple of times, and actually have been in her classroom with her students, which was a total honour from when I was down in that area. This year when she started school, I think there were 14 high school students in her class. One of the interesting things about the Innu – talk about adapting – the Innu school, they were working towards trying to have a higher level of students graduating from high school. The school program that traditionally is used in what we know as our education system, many of us use; there was a conflict with their values and with their traditional ways. In the spring of the year, the elders would declare in the communities it's time to go on the land. And that means the families would go on the land. The students would have to leave the school, go on the land and they might be gone for four, five or six weeks' type of thing. They'd come back and they'd miss so much of their school year that they weren't graduating.

If they went back and did the school year over again, come to the end of the year, they'd go on the land and the same thing would happen again. So what they actually do down in the school now, they'll do six weeks of a program. You'll do six weeks of math, mostly all day long, and they'll have one alternate in the day, you might do geography as an example. When you do your six weeks of math, then you write your exams and you have your math done.

Then they'll also do traditional programs. When I was down there they were doing six weeks of quilting, which is a traditional program. The kids were making – boys and girls were right into it. I was amazed when I went in; they were into it. But they weren't making quilts like our forefathers, parents, or grandparents, or aunts, or uncles traditionally would make, they were making them with video game logos or movie stats or stars. They were making them designed of topics that were relevant to the students. I was so impressed with what was going on – I was there when I saw it happen. I was so impressed.

Then, when she started teaching this year down there with the high school students, they came in and she said to the students: You're going to work hard and all of you are going to graduate

this year. You're all going to graduate. By the way, let me finish what I was doing because when they do the math and whatever they are doing in the spring and it's time to go on the land, well, next year they come and they'd only have one course that they had to go back and finish to graduate. So if there's one course being taught when it was time to go on the land, that's the only course they'd have to finish to graduate. The school worked with them. They changed how the curriculum was delivered and there are more students down there graduating, and that's my next story I'll tell you.

So this year when she goes in her class – I think there are 14 students in her class this year. CBC carried the story on it this week. She went in and she said: You all work hard and you're all going to graduate, and I'll work with you. When you graduate, we're all going to Florida. The students said, yeah right, we're going to Florida; down in Sheshatshiu, we're going to Florida. All year long they raised money, they studied hard and they worked and she took the 14 students to Florida last week. They went down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: It was the students and the teachers, the community and chief who all worked together to make sure that would happen. They did sales throughout the year. They did bake sales. They did all kinds of draws. They would do events in the afternoon and on the weekends. Anytime there was an event or something going on in the community they would use the opportunity to raise more money.

I think it was about \$50,000 they raised, the minister was saying. The minister is familiar with it there, the MHA for the area and the Minister of Environment. I think it was about \$50,000 they raised, but it was a real community effort. I think they all graduated, if not all, pretty much all of them.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: What's that?

AN HON. MEMBER: They all went to Florida.

MR. P. DAVIS: It was 14 of them that actually went to Florida. I was just hearing some –

AN HON. MEMBER: I got 14 certificates.

MR. P. DAVIS: You got 14 certificates, there you go.

But it's a great story and it has to do with Black Tickle and how ingenuity and creativity can adapt and cross lines of traditional values versus what people on the Island would be used to versus what our traditional Aboriginal people would be known for and what their values are. Sometimes you have to adapt, and it's not always easy to do it.

When the Member spoke – I know she speaks very passionately for her district, it's not always easy to do it. There are some communities in our province, remote communities in Labrador and on the Island as well, where it's not that easy. They can't jump in a car and run down to Costco or to Walmart, or they can't go to Shoppers Drug Mart or Lawtons. They can't run over to that local hospital or clinic, and that means they have to adapt and change their lives.

I know there is a huge investment made by government, and still is. I know there are some changes on it but like for skedevac flights, the medevac flights for Labrador, it's so important to people in coastal and remote parts of Labrador so that they can go to Goose Bay and see the doctor. In Western Labrador, look at the beautiful new hospital built in Western Labrador; a big significant project. It wasn't squandered money, I know, and I'm not saying you're saying it was, but it's a great project and important to the area and Labrador West. The Members over there are agreeing with me. A great project, a really good hospital and the community is very proud of it.

When you adapt and you cause air flights, medevac and skedevac flights and so on, that's how people have to live down there. It's very different than they do in the urban areas of our province or anywhere else in the country for that matter, but it's because our people make it work. They make it work.

When a government gets in power, or if government is already in power, whatever the case may be, and you make changes, I know it's hard to do. We know that. We know it's hard to do. It's hard to go into someone and say you

can't have your X-ray services after 4 o'clock because, here's why. But the community is going to push back and people are going to be upset, and they want to be heard. They want to air their concerns and they want people to listen.

I just used X-rays as an example because it's one that has been talked about in the House, but there are many of those where you have to change and try efficiencies, and you look at: Well, what's the cost of operating? What is the value you're getting from it? How is the other way to provide those services? We get all of that.

What people are looking forward to are answers. That's why we're still here, because people are asking for them. Are they being critical? Yes, many of them are. Are they being critical of us? Yes, some are doing that too, because it's not all going to go one way and not everyone's ever going to agree.

The reason why we're here is that people want to have those concerns aired and they want to have a say in their own community and their own lives.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I talked a lot about different things over the course of the last few days and I just wanted to have a little bit of a conversation about what I would call the necessary shift in thinking that is going on and that we need to attach ourselves to.

What we see in a lot of the debate here in the filibuster is really a fundamental lack of understanding of what amounts of money represent. For example, as I suggested a number of times, the notion that if we simply cancel the full-day kindergarten program and save \$13.3 million that we could all walk away and our budgetary crisis would be largely solved, despite the fact that is nothing more than a drop in a very large bucket when it comes to the \$2.7 billion projected deficit.

We had a Member also stand up and say, well, \$27 million is nothing. Now, my grandfathers were trap skiff skippers. They went fishing in open boats, and that's what I come from. Sometimes I say – if they were alive today they wouldn't like me saying – I come from nothing, because my ancestors really didn't have anything.

Up in the side of the hill up in Lourdes Cove they call it winter house hill, and that's where they more or less lived in almost like a cave in the wintertime. Then in the summertime they'd go down and they'd have like a hut by the beach. That's where they'd fish in the summer and then they'd go up to winter house hill for the winter. Then my grandfathers were miners and they both died young from miner's disease.

My family worked hard and I managed to end up where I ended up. I managed to be lucky enough to be one of the 40 Members of the House of Assembly. It is an ultimate privilege and sort of a dream come true for all of us who get an opportunity to serve here in the House and to be able to have our say and try to do the right thing for the people we represent and for future generations of people in the province.

To me, \$27 million is a whole lot of money. Now, \$13.3 million and \$27 million, you add it together it's still not going to do much for the \$2.7 billion deficit, but it's a lot of money. If somebody gave you \$27 million you'd say, wow, that's a lot of money. At least it would be for me because like I said, I come from nothing.

We need a necessary shift in thinking that every penny we spend counts. That has not been the case for so long. I'll give you an example. Between 2004 and 2012, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador spent about \$20 million – and that's a lot of money in my opinion – through the Department of Business, supposedly to give out grants and loans to businesses to create jobs. They created less than 100 jobs with \$20 million, and a quarter of those jobs were seasonal jobs. For \$20 million we got less than 75 full-time jobs. That's the truth.

Somebody emailed this to me – in fact, I won't name the Member opposite who was a Member for that department, but this is a fact. The person said, bring this up and point this out. I guess my

point is, in addition to this necessary change in thinking about how precious every red copper is we have to have a better approach to economic diversification. We can't spend \$20 million to create less than 75 jobs. If you go look, there's a good chance that very few of those jobs even exist anymore. So we've got to do a better job.

I know my colleague, the Member for – it used to be The Straits White Bay North – St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows; my colleague, the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, is also responsible for Forestry and Agrifoods. We're trying to build opportunity in our forest industry. It's been hit awful hard. I mean when the previous government was in power there wasn't a whole lot they could do with the downturn in the cost of fibre and paper and so on, but mills closed. Two big ones closed, Stephenville and Grand Falls-Windsor.

We had a situation where companies couldn't access the fibre, the forest that's out there to create jobs. We have companies in the province that want to do that and we're trying to do a better job of enabling that, to make sure they can get the product to bring it to market, to resuscitate that industry.

The fishery has been clobbered and clobbered and clobbered. I don't know, I'm 45 and I'm not sure if I even remember any good stories about the fishery. I remember 1992 awful well.

People say, well, we should have cut more jobs in the civil service. I disagree. One of the first things I did when I became Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, I got all the staff people together in my department and I said: I'm not going to sit around a Cabinet table and create another cod moratorium by laying off thousands and thousands and thousands of people through some knee-jerk reaction.

The Members say you should have cut more; you should be cutting more public service positions. Well, we shouldn't create our own cod moratorium. Fashion a rod to beat our own behind with. We can't do that.

In the fishery, in recent years we've had all sorts of plants close down: Hant's Harbour, Salvage,

Jackson's Arm, Little Bay Islands, Port Union, Black Tickle, St. Lewis, Marystown and Burin. We lost one of the best secondary processing plants that we had in the province down in Burin. We're fighting now to make sure we can do something with LIFO to try and make sure that we salvage what is left of our fisheries, because so many communities in the province are affected by our fishery.

Then, look at shipbuilding in this province. I said this when I was in Opposition, I've said it here. We've built ships for hundreds of years in Newfoundland and Labrador – expert shipbuilders. Shipbuilding is going downhill here. The previous administration, to their credit, did have a ferry replacement strategy but it went right out the window. They threw it right out the window.

The ferry replacement strategy, rather than building ships here in the province like we did for hundreds of years, those ships are being built in Romania. The one we got doesn't even work, and they didn't even plan to dock the thing. There's still \$1.5 million – a lot of money left to be spent. I wonder why we didn't utilize our own expertise, try to rebuild the shipbuilding industry, try to do something to incent the business sector to do something with that and get back to basics on that. All of the industrial fabrication spinoff that comes from that, doing things like allowing the third Hebron module, sending that out of province. The argument is, oh, we can't do it here. That no-can-do-attitude doesn't work.

In infrastructure, somebody got up over there and said, well, construction companies are all going out of business. Somebody said it was six months ago or what have you. That was around the time of the election. There are hundreds of millions of dollars of spending in this budget on community infrastructure, municipal infrastructure – in my own district for the Team Gushue Highway extension.

If I had the time, I could read off pages and pages and pages of details on spending. Some \$830 million worth of infrastructure spending on roads, on safe drinking water, all sorts of initiatives that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs has been working day in and day out trying to leverage money from the federal

government to help build our communities and make sure people have services they need. There is not one iota of recognition from the other side that that's even in there.

One of the Members of the Third Party got up and said one day that it was only \$30 million of spending.

AN HON. MEMBER: A slush fund.

MR. KIRBY: A \$30 million slush fund, they said. There's \$830 million or so in there for infrastructure. That's about 1,000 jobs a year for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as a result of this budget.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm delighted to follow on that positive note that we just experienced over the past few minutes and continue on.

In regard to recognizing things in the budget, I say to my hon. colleague, through the evening and earlier on I was up and others have been up and discussed the issue in regard to infrastructure and recognizing the tremendous work that has been done over the past number of years and the work that is being done now. I acknowledge the Minister of Municipal Affairs in terms of leveraging extra dollars or any dollars we get. I don't think anybody has been negative towards that or not recognized the importance of that from an economic point of view and certainly from building infrastructure in our smallest rural communities, in our towns and cities. It's extremely important.

I do know I mentioned before that there has been considerable –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: – several billion dollars over the past number of years has been invested in infrastructure. Somewhere around \$6 billion, I think, and that takes into account the full facet of public infrastructure from schools, hospitals, roadways, municipal affairs. All of those initiatives we built over the past number of years and extremely important and are needed and more needed. I think everybody agrees on that. I know in my prior roles, from time to time we deal with Members on all sides of the House, and that doesn't really matter.

Just last year, I remember dealing with a situation in Hopedale with the MHA where there was a situation in regard to an emergency water problem. We worked together collectively. I think it was a project to put \$600,000 that was an emergency. It wasn't in the actual first round, we'll say, or recognized as projects, but because something came up and had to be dealt with we worked collectively and certainly saw it through. I was just speaking of this the other day, and I think that's in motion now and is being done.

That project was done based on the fact that we worked together collectively with someone on the other side of the House. It didn't matter; it was an issue that needed to be done. We worked together so we can get it done. We can't always get it done but when we can, we certainly do. So that was money well spent and well invested.

The Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair as well, I know last year at one point there was an issue with a dump in regard to an incinerator. There were issues that needed to be resolved. We worked with her in the department to find that expenditure. We were able to identify it and execute a plan to deal with it, and certainly happy to do that. So there are all exchanges between colleagues here.

The Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture as well comes to mind. There was an issue in regard to a shortfall on a particular project in Sandy Cove –

AN HON. MEMBER: Salmon Cove.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Salmon Cove, sorry. Salmon Cove, yes, indeed. There was an issue about getting an extension of some extra dollars in regard to completing that project. He, as an

MHA, and what you do, we certainly advocate and come and meet with officials and the minister and we try to see if there's a way forward.

Based on the business model, I think the fact that the tender was there and there was indication of a good cost, at that particular time, we were able to make some dollars available so the Member could get that approved and the community could move on and get the project done. So that's how – it doesn't matter which side of the House, you certainly work together in regard to getting those projects done. We agree that's money well spent when we can do that. That's how we're successful and building infrastructure.

I mentioned earlier when I was up, in regard to working with municipalities and some of the things our prior administration did in setting up a new fiscal framework. The components of that were related to looking at water infrastructure and upgrading the supply of water in many communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. A lot of infrastructure has been invested over the past number of years, but certainly there is more to do.

There are boil water advisories and there are boil water orders. There's a significant difference in what it means to a community, but, in some cases, the advisory is often related to various aspects in operations and those sorts of things. Some of that can be managed and improved, and that's some of the initiatives that were put in place to complete – oftentimes, infrastructure is in place and, for whatever reason, it may not be operating properly in that regard.

There were other parts that I spoke about before in regard to access to additional revenues through the gas tax, through rebates of HST, and also there was a component there that looked at accessibility of land for municipalities where basically land could be frozen for, I think, five years and they could pay for that as they go rather than try to do it upfront. So if they were going to do a development, they could outline a business plan and, over a period of time, access that for development, which is progressive and extremely important for municipalities as well.

Another component of that too – and I understand there was a review of a local governance structure in the province. As part of that, there was a consensus that we needed to look at overall governance structure. We have municipalities, we have local service districts, and we have the areas that are unincorporated. Out of that new fiscal framework and discussions of a two-year period, there is an acknowledgement that we need to look at that and is there a greater regional governance focus in regard to management of our various areas and local governance of our areas and what that would look like.

There was a committee struck last fall. I think if I'm correct, in speaking to the minister, that's something that's being looked at and seeing how it would roll out in regard to the discussion on that, in the overall governance and looking at that, with the intent to look at – and in some regions, we have that going on already. I know the Northern Peninsula, if I remember correctly, there's regional fire service that is used and has been very successful.

So you have a large range of communities that you're able to provide that service at a more equitable basis and actually provide it – in some cases, you can't because you have a string of very small communities and the capacity to do that is not there. But this is all looking at where the capacity is not there, to build that capacity, but build that capacity by joint partnership.

Through our waste management structure now, we have regional boards as well; another option in regard to a means to maybe have that regional governance through something like that. The waste management boards, we had legislative authority in how they managed local governance structures as well.

So these are some options moving forward that the past administration brought in through consultation and direction and investments of dollars that we hope the current administration would look at now moving forward to deal with some of the challenges, I guess, in terms of the overall local governance. The bottom line is that it is a provision of service that's consistent in regions of the province. Where you are in a particular part of the province means the delivery is different, the type of service could be

different, but that's why having that higher level of regional service function by a board, or whatever the mandate is, or whatever the structure is, allows the provision of that and obviously there would be the collection of taxation for that.

That's something that I think all would agree we need to look at and see what that would look like. That oftentimes doesn't mean losing the identity of a community or an area, but you have a stronger management component or regional component in terms of delivery of services. We've seen it, as I said, fire protection in some regions and waste management.

I think that is something that is really important as we move forward to sustaining our regions and parts of the province that we really look at that. I encourage government and the minister certainly to pursue that because I think it's important, as I said, based on sustainability.

I think there needs to be more weed work done, more integration, in regard to the economic side of it too, business development, entrepreneurship. The development of region is based on the delivery of service through local governance, but it is also based on driving opportunities and economic development. That needs to go hand in hand. So you build the infrastructure where there is a greater opportunity for investment, greater opportunity for economic development, and that bodes well then collectively for a region, for communities all over.

I mentioned before that we've had success with that in the Coast of Bays, in that area. My colleague can certainly speak to that in regard to aquaculture and some of the successes there in identifying areas where there are opportunities for economic development and supporting that with the infrastructure and the things you need. I certainly encourage that.

On the other side when you look at economic growth and diversification, you look at the local governance piece from that perspective and how it's tied in to economic and social development. I think it's extremely important just based on history – it always happens – you have some urbanization going on, you have some regions that lose population, other regions that have an

increase. We have to look at that, how we provide that governance and structure and services for Newfoundland and Labrador right throughout the province.

Madam Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts and look forward over the next couple days of bringing some more.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Good to rise again in this debate to discuss this bill related to implementing some of the aspects of the budget, in particular the levy that has been changed recently. Madam Chair, in these comments that I make today, I want to look at three central questions that we have to look at as we focus on this debate here today. There are three basic questions that we have to look at.

The first question is: How did we get to where we are today? How did we get in such a terrible financial situation? How did we get to where we are today? What went wrong? What could have been done differently, Madam Chair? Those are important questions, I think.

The second question that is central to this debate is: How can we get out of this situation? What's the recipe? What are the solutions? What's the way of dealing with this financial crisis that we find ourselves in, Madam Chair? That's the second question.

The third question that I think we should focus on here tonight and in this debate as it continues is: How can we make sure this doesn't happen again, that we don't find ourselves in this same situation again?

Those are the three central questions that I think are important as we continue this debate tonight. I ask some of the Members opposite, maybe, to focus on those three questions, because I think they're the three primary questions that we should be focused on as we look through this and we look at how this budget impacts on people. We should look at these three questions in terms of how we got where we are, what is

our solution to getting out of this situation that we're in, and how do we not get into this situation again.

So those are the three central questions that we should be focused on. So I just want to talk about each of those questions just for a minute or so each. Madam Chair, how did we get to where we are? I think it's a combination of the circumstances that we face, but also it's a lack of proper management that we've had in recent years. We've had warnings from the AG in his annual reports. We've had warnings that we were headed in the wrong direction, that we're overly dependent on oil, that we weren't diversifying our economy. Those warnings weren't heeded, they weren't listened to. So I think that's part of why we're in the situation we are today.

Also, Madam Chair, we didn't learn from the circumstances of other places that had discovered oil. We didn't learn from their experiences. We didn't see what they had done wrong and learned from it. So that's something else that went wrong.

We also, in recent years, continued to live beyond our means. We continued to spend more than we were bringing in. We continued to pursue projects that maybe we couldn't afford, i.e. Muskrat Falls, Madam Chair; so those types of things that we were pursuing that we shouldn't have been pursuing.

In terms of the second question, how can we get out of this situation? What are the real solutions that we're proposing here, Madam Chair? If we look at the situation and the way this debate is evolving, the government has put forward a budget. Their solutions are clear. They're on the record. They're outlined in detail.

It's interesting that as this debate goes on we have not seen any sort of concrete plans from the Members opposite as to what they would actually do. They say they recognize the severity of the problem, yet, they have no detailed plan as to how they would deal with the problems that exist, Madam Chair. It's important that people realize, that people continue to ask questions, continue to ask: What is your solution to dealing with the seriousness of the problems that we face.

Leadership is not about just holding your finger in the wind and seeing which way the wind was blowing, and then going with the wind. I don't think it's about finding a parade and then jumping in front of the parade. It's about engaging people; it's about discussing things with them. It's about trying to listen to what they have to say, but also adding to the conversation and adding to the debate to enhance the understanding that everyone has so we can work together to find solutions.

That demands an honesty about what would you do to solve this problem. I don't think we've heard that yet in this debate. So I am encouraging the Members opposite to give us a comprehensive – don't just throw forward a few popular ideas. Give us a sense of what difficult decisions you would make in this debate tonight. I'd like to hear that.

The last question was: How can we make sure this doesn't happen again. A few months back, Madam Chair, we talked about the idea of the legacy fund. I think the two first questions – how did we get where we are today and how can we get out of this situation – leads us into the third question: How can we make sure that we don't get into this situation again.

One of the things I did, the first private Member's motion of the session, was the idea of this legacy fund, Madam Chair. I think that's an important aspect of how we move forward. I think this province has lots of undeveloped potential for natural resource review and oil revenue offshore, maybe onshore as well, and other resources. I think we have to look at how we manage our natural resource revenue and how we get long-term benefits from that.

One of the ways that other jurisdictions have sort of used that revenue is in the form of a legacy fund where part of the revenue royalties – rather than just expand the services of government or expand the bureaucracy or to spend money as it comes in, take some of that revenue and put it into a long-term fund that can be used to sustain the economy of the province over an extended period of time. Rather than spending money as it comes in, it's about spending resource revenue in a responsible manner.

Those are the three questions that I think we should be focusing on as we go forward in this debate. I am looking forward to hearing Members and how they would answer those questions. How did we get where we are today? How can we get out of the situation we're in? How can we make sure this doesn't happen again? How can we make sure we don't get into this situation again? Those are three questions that I look forward to hearing from Members on.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I have a few issues that I would like to address in terms of what could be done differently. Of course, it's disingenuous to think that it's easy to just come up with a detailed budget. We know that to come up with a detailed budget requires the work of a huge team. It requires the input from every department. It requires the expertise of economists. Basically, what would determine what someone would do differently is the approach someone would take to (a) analyzing what are the issues, and then analyzing a specific approach or different approaches to addressing the challenges in the fiscal reality we find ourselves in.

What we would do differently is first of all – and again I'd like to use a quote that I saw. It was an economic activist from an African country who said that Africa – she was speaking about continental Africa and saying Africa is not poor, but it is poorly managed. I truly believe Newfoundland and Labrador is not poor, but has been poorly managed. We have a wealth of resources, both in the water and in the land, and in the people. Those are resources that have been poorly managed in the past number of years.

We would build a budget based on values and principles. Those would be the guiding values and principles that would inform any choice and any decision. We absolutely would not put everything on the table because we know during a recession it is so important for government to stand up, to take leadership, to have a steady hand and to strengthen both the public sector

and the private sector to help us weather this storm.

I know it sounds somewhat like colloquialisms or jargon but, in fact, only when we have overall, overarching values and principles, those will inform every decision that is made, both in terms of what wouldn't be done and what would be done. Not putting everything on the table, because not everything should be on the table. This is a government; we're not talking about trying to balance budget sheets in a business. We would build the budget around very clearly articulated values.

We would also invest in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We would invest in jobs. Because, at this point, we have a growing unemployment problem and that unemployment problem is continuing to grow. There is nothing in this budget that addresses significantly the issue of unemployment.

We would replace bogus consultations with meaningful debate and give citizens the information they need to help make informed input –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – informed input in terms of the realities of their community, the potential –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask Members for their co-operation in keeping noise down a little bit.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

So citizens can make informed input based on the realities and the possibilities of their own communities, so that they know what will strengthen their communities. Together, they can work towards identifying solutions and possibilities for sustainable communities, for the health of their communities.

We'd analyze the overall impact of the budget on people. As we can see from the number of emails that we've received, when we look at the

trickle-down effect on how the budget is affecting individual people or communities – so we would look at that. In fact, are some of the measures in the budget creating more unemployment? Are some of the measures in the budget making our health care system more expensive? Are some of the measures making our education system not as responsive as it could be?

We would put a gender lens, a disability lens, a youth lens, a seniors' lens, on all the decisions made in the budget. We would use those lenses in building the budget, not just on what we have cut, but those lenses would be used in terms of building the budget. We certainly would not have come up with the levy. The levy was a regressive flat tax. We would incorporate the needed revenue into personal income tax increases and increases in corporate income tax. As we said in our platform, we had budgeted a 1.5 per cent increase in corporate income tax.

We would replace the doubling of the gas tax, which has a disproportionate impact on rural people and communities, and we've seen that. We've heard from rural people. We've heard from the rural communities on how disproportionate the impact of the doubling of the gas tax is on people. We'd replace that with a measured carbon tax. That would be based on polluter-pays principle, following a thorough public debate on the options. So rather than doubling down on the gas tax, we would look at a carbon-based tax on polluter-pays principle.

The minister announced –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: I'm sorry; I can't hear you.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: Well, we wouldn't double down on it, and that would be determined.

The minister announced a \$570 million infrastructure budget; however, the minister did not announce a \$138 million cut to the infrastructure budget. We'd reinstate that and we would focus on green technologies. We do know that the number of jobs – the research has been done –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: It's an interesting time of the night, Madam Chair, as renewed troops arrive here in the House after having a chance to go home and rest up and perhaps shower and get renewed and get ready to carry this –

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you a woman of the (inaudible).

MS. ROGERS: Well, I just might be. I believe that I'm going to step out for a few minutes. It's that time; I've been here since midnight last night, so it is time to take a little bit of a break.

AN HON. MEMBER: She has been a trooper.

MS. ROGERS: I have been a trooper; it's true.

Green technologies, we would refocus. We would reinstate the infrastructure cuts and then also use that money –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We wouldn't have made a cut to infrastructure spending because we know that infrastructure spending can be a stimulus to the economy. It can create jobs. We'd also use that money to leverage federal money because there has been a commitment from the federal government on infrastructure spending money. We would do what this government said they would do and have not, to date; we would do a fair tax review.

We know that people are willing. People are willing to pay taxes when they know that the taxes are fair, that the taxes are strengthening their communities, when the taxes are strengthening the public services that are a benefit to all people. People are willing to do that. They are willing to do that and that's part of our culture.

We would review Muskrat Falls. I believe that this government has taken that step to review Muskrat Falls. We wouldn't have locked into a \$1.3 billion transfer of money, no questions asked. So I believe that the steps that

government is taking towards reviewing Muskrat Falls are a step in the right direction. It will be interesting to see what that report is. I believe that we should receive some kind of reporting by the end of June.

We would have kept it simple, not a bombardment of tax measures. The budget needed to be absolutely streamlined. We would focus on a population growth strategy. We know that the population of Newfoundland and Labrador is actually shrinking; it is not growing. Also, we have the fastest aging demographic, in terms of the proportion of our population, in the country. We'll have the highest proportion of seniors in the country. That means it's a drop in tax revenue. Also, we need more people to take care of our seniors as well.

So we would focus on a population growth strategy that would look at immigration, that would look at supporting young families. How many of us – I know that many of us in this House have heard from young families saying we don't know if we can afford to have a child, or we don't know if we can afford to have a second child. Part of the effect of a population growth strategy is an effective child care strategy that enables families to have children and enables families to get to work and participate in the economy.

There are a number of other measures that we would look at, Madam Chair, but I can see I am running out of time. I am happy to have had the opportunity to stand in his House and speak to the budget again.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity this evening to stand and have a few comments. First of all, I want to start off – it's been a long few days and I know this is still actually Tuesday in the House

of Assembly, but it's the first time I've had an opportunity to speak today.

This happens to be World Oceans Day – whoops; about 17 minutes ago, it was World Oceans Day, so I apologize. It is still World Oceans Day in the rest of Canada –

AN HON. MEMBER: It is actually World Oceans Day tomorrow (inaudible).

MR. CROCKER: True.

It's important we take an opportunity to recognize the value of our oceans to our province, our country, and to the world as a whole. The ocean and its benefits and its fisheries are what brought us to Newfoundland and Labrador over 500 years ago. It is one of the things that keep us here today.

It's very interesting. The fishery in our province today still employs around 18,000 people. It adds \$1.2 billion a year to our economy. The fishery has changed over the years. In 1992, we lost our ground fishery and we went into a period of decline for four or five years and then we had an abundance of shellfish, first crab and then shrimp. We're starting to see a transition again in our oceans. If you look around the province we see shellfish on the South Coast in 3Ps retracting to a point this year, unfortunately, where the crab fishery is dismal to say the least. On the Northeast Coast of the province in 3K we see declines in shellfish. As we see declines in shellfish around the province we see a recovery of cod. We see the cod biomass now back to over 500,000 tons.

One of the things in Budget 2016 is that, as a government, we have seen an opportunity and an importance to allocate some funding for a new program, a Seafood Innovation and Transition Program. One of the things this program is going to do – we've committed \$4 million over the next two years to go back to our processors and our harvesters who really haven't participated in a ground fishery for 25 years. It will be 25 years July 1 next year that the cod fishery was put to moratorium.

One of the things in this budget that we did do was we allocated \$4 million over the next two years to help our harvesters and our processors

transition back to a ground fishery. As we see, again, an ecosystem shift, it's very important that we help our harvesters and processors get back to a more traditional ground fishery. That was one of the things we did in this budget this year with regard to a transition in our fishery.

Another thing the Premier laid out very early on – actually it was in my mandate letter back in December – was the creation of a ministerial fisheries advisory council. This council is going to advise the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture as we go forward. Our first task will actually be codfish recovery.

This council is going to be made up of all the stakeholders, whether it be harvesters, processors, the FFAW, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador. So we're going to bring everybody to the table and talk about the best way we can get the most from our resource and from a recovering ground fishery. This is one of the things we're going to do.

One of the other things we did in *Budget 2016* was we put in over \$450,000 for bay management. One of the things that's happened over the last 10 years in our province is we've expanded our aquaculture industry. This past year our aquaculture industry, I think, was about \$150 million. Down from – in 2013 it was closer to \$200 million.

In 2013, we had a bad year, but we've recovered. All projections are that this year we will have our largest harvest of aquaculture fish in this province in its history. As a government, we plan on growing that in an environmentally sustainable way. When we look around and think about the fishery, Madam Chair, it's a very important part of our province and the fabric that brings us together.

I'm just going to move off now and go more into *Budget 2016*. I just sat down a few minutes ago and I hauled out the Estimates book. When you look at Estimates, it's something we've all went through here over the last number of weeks. We come in and the Opposition has an opportunity to ask us questions line by line by line in our departments.

I just picked out six departments tonight randomly and went to the Minister's Office.

When you look at the Estimates book, page 2 of each department is the Minister's Office. If you look at the expenditures in the ministerial offices from 2015-2016 in six randomly selected departments – I'll give a couple of examples. In 2015, the Minister's Office in the Department of Finance was \$295,000. We've reduced that this year to \$264,000.

In Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development, in 2015 the ministerial office was \$389,000. This year it's \$279,000. So in the Minister's Office alone in that department we were able to find \$110,000 in savings. The Department of Natural Resources; in 2015 the Minister's Office alone cost \$372,000. In that department we were able to reduce the Minister's Office to \$266,000 this year. I'll give one more example, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services; \$221,400 in 2016 and \$268,000 in 2016.

What we've done, even though we've had to make cuts and changes throughout, we did start on the first page of the budgets of each department. That's very important to do because that is one spot – and those savings for those departments total over \$400,000 this year in six government departments. I would assume if you went down through them you would find the same thing throughout.

As we go forward, the choices that we had to make as a government weren't choices that myself or anybody on this side of the House ever came into public life to have to make. It's not something anybody would want to do.

As I said here last night and I'll say again tonight, I have a 15-year-old and a 17-year-old. I have two boys. I can assure you that like my colleagues throughout all this House – and I say everybody in this House – we want to make sure that we create a better, more fiscally stable province for our children. That's our responsibility. It's our responsibility to ensure we have a province that has a fiscal footing that our kids, our grandkids and future generations have something to stand on.

When you think about where we've come as a province, we went through a period of time where we had \$25 billion in oil revenue. I'll go back to the Department of Fisheries and

Aquaculture again; when we had our highest oil revenues in this province is when we saw some of the least investments in our natural resources.

It's a Dutch disease really, if you really think about it. We took our focus and we focused on a non-renewable resource when the renewable resource, the primary renewable resource that brought us here – nah, we sort of let it slide a little bit. When we have an opportunity to do significant investments in our renewable resources, with the money – you talk about legacy funds. Why not take money from non-renewable resources and build resources that are built on our renewable resources?

Anyway, Madam Chair, my time is running short. I got through one page and I'll get another opportunity between now and – I think my shift ends at – 1 p.m. tomorrow.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is indeed an honour to stand here again as we get into the next day of the third day of our outline and discussion around our budget.

Right now we're still debating the levy bill, Bill 14. There are a number of bills that we've switched back and forth in. The other bill that we were into part of yesterday was the tax on insurance bill. There is no doubt we'll get back to debate that over the next few days.

When I left here this evening after our debate all day I had an opportunity to go to a meeting in my district and sit down with some people. Some were very aware of what was ongoing here. They had been watching and listening to it. Some of it is entertaining. Some of it is informational. Some of it, they shake their heads in total bewilderment. Some other people never had a chance to understand what it is we are doing here. Some, in a sense of what are we debating, what are the potential outcomes, what are we hoping to achieve.

I went through a number of things – and I will have all night to talk about the different components, about what our objectives here are and where we are moving towards it. One person asked: Well, Brazil, do you do anything? Are there any things there of substance for the day-to-day operations? Not if you were in government or the Liberals, or the NDP or any other party was in government, what do you do?

I explained a little bit about the House of Assembly and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I said: Only in the last day have we also done some work around pieces of legislation that are important to the operation of government, regardless of what party is in power. Regardless of what we are debating right now, there are still important things that have to be done in any sitting of the House of Assembly. Every administration puts through legislation and bills that either enhance existing bills, or are developed to add to how we protect our citizens or how we engage our citizens, or particularly how we negotiate and deal with other jurisdictions or protect certain entities in our province.

I said: Just in the last 24 hours, there are a number of bills that we debated and that we discussed, and there are a number of times that we agree with each other. We get along and we understand that what we are doing here is in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They mentioned: Give me some examples. I said: Tonight, I'll outline a few that we've done recently that makes sense for everybody in the province. That will be a step forward on certain things. That won't make us regressive but will make us progressive when we move forward.

I talked about some of the ones, like Bill 38, that we debated and approved unanimously in this House yesterday, around the *Schools Act*. It may be a small part of it, but it's an important part. What this entails, under Bill 38, is outlining the

process that the Department of Education has to work and establish elected school boards, but to do it in such a way that it is comparable to both school districts that we have in the sense of school boards. We have the francophone school district and the English School District.

There was an opportunity here to put in play the wording under the legislation so this could move forward. As I realized, the Department of Education has as its mandate now to put off elections for school boards to ensure that we have fully democratically elected school boards – a very positive thing. Something that the previous administration had in play, and I know this administration is going to move forward on. So it's a positive.

What we discussed yesterday and debated and then passed was around making things uniformly done so that when the school elections are held for the school boards, both the francophone school board and the English school board can be simultaneously, through the same process, done in a way that's very inclusive and very effective and very cost effective. So we have that for a period of time.

That was Bill 38, debated in this House of Assembly and passed. Something that will stay in legislation until there's a need to either update it or make dramatic changes. That will move us forward. That's one of the ones that we did just in the last period of time while we're still debating the budget, which is the most important thing to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. But, at the same time, we can't stall what we're doing as a government. And as the representatives of the people in this province, we got to make sure things still move forward, so we continue to do things like that.

Bill 17 is the *Income Tax Act*. This was around three different components here that had to be debated, and then legislation, obviously, passed so that it could be imposed as part of the operational procedures for the Department of Finance, which would then set out, in legislation, exactly how we move forward and the responsibilities in each area. It was changes to, for example, the dividend tax credit, and that was around changing the tax regime for corporations so that there would be more revenues generated from those agencies.

While you never want to see tax increases or rebates taken away from (inaudible), it was a necessary move to ensure there were revenues coming in and that there was some equality across the board in who was going to be taxed in certain areas. So that was one of it.

The HST and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, there have been debates here around this budget and the impact it's going to have on low-income individuals. The Liberal administration has proposed a realignment of a lot of the existing programs that go to support low-income individuals. I might add they've done it in such a way that there are some additional monies there – not substantial, but there are some additional monies there for people with low income. So that's a positive. I see that as a positive.

What's happened here, they've moved around some of the additional existing programs and streamlined it so it fits under one heading to make it more efficient and more accessible. So in our debate yesterday, we wanted to ensure three things happened. One was that people were exactly aware of how they would access this, and they would know that three existing programs now are going to be rolled into one. They're going to be done in a different time frame on a quarterly basis. The fact that from the former administration, there was always a process that, on a quarterly basis, people would be received monies to offset expenditures, particularly if they're coming from a low-income bracket, and that would be to offset their heating requirements – it would offset some of the other costs of living challenges that they may have.

So because we're into a debate in the budget line and the time fashion to get it done wouldn't work in the same time frame that the minister had committed to, there would be two pay payments come out in October when all of this is passed and put into play, so I wanted to reassure people. While I understand monies are needed every quarter – we're going into our summer quarter – if a lot of this is to offset the cost of heating your home and that, at least you get an opportunity come the fall when you're ready to fill up your oil tanks. Or if you're on a payment plan with Newfoundland Light and Power,

you'd have that ability to be able to ensure to them that you can make your payments.

We had the discussion. The minister, in Committee, answered the questions that I had relevant to how this is going to be implemented and how we get the information out. The key thing that we all agreed to was communications. There is a sector in our society who are not connected when it comes to newspapers or public service announcements on radios or even mail outs. so we need to find a collaborative way to ensure that people have access to it. If it means they need to have their income tax filed in an appropriate time frame, fair enough, that they do it. If it's an application process that they must fill out, that they get an opportunity to do that.

We do not want anybody to fall behind, particularly, if you have some challenges around your ability to maintain your finances. That's based on the principle that you come from an economically depressed area or your actual income is at a standard that's below what we would consider the poverty line. We wanted to ensure that. So that was one of the other bills we debated yesterday. We wanted to ensure that was put in place so people would have access to the additional monies that are being put forward as part of this budget.

That was one of the other bills that we did as part and parcel of the administration that we do in the House of Assembly. All parties have an opportunity to look at a bill, determine whether or not we think it's in the best interests of the people of the province and talk to our constituents. Sometimes our constituents may be agencies who represent the sectors in our society to see what their views are on it and to get from their perspective exactly whether or not this is in the best interests of the people of the province.

The intent in the House of Assembly is that you put legislation and you develop policy that is for the betterment of our society, that people move forward. We want to, particularly, reflect their needs and their desires. Sometimes you must put the majority ahead of the minority, but you try to have a balance there. You try to ensure that the majority of the people are going to benefit from it, but that the minority are not in any way,

shape or form distressed over the changes to legislation or that it has a major impact.

We've seen that, unfortunately. There are some pieces of legislation that, while it favours the majority of the people, there are some people then who get segregated from that and have to brunt the negative component of what's being implemented. Unfortunately, that's the way our democratic system works. You're not going to get a piece of legislation that's perfect for everybody. Or rarely do you get that. There are always opposing views unless you are doing something that is so dramatic it's increasing everybody's stake in life and everybody can benefit from that.

These are a couple of the things we talked about. Over the next dozen times or so tonight and into tomorrow I'll get an opportunity to talk about some of the other bills. Then, from there, we'll go on into some of the issues around the levy itself, and around the tax on insurance and the negative impact they're going to have. We'll talk about a number of other things as we go through over the next period of time.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to stand and have a few words here, Madam Chair. I know most people are gone to bed and not listening here tonight. I don't blame them because it is late in the night. We are having, what they call, a filibuster and I understand that totally.

Madam Chair, I always said that when you're in a House and when you're going to have a debate you need the facts. It's easy to take facts and just throw them out and hopefully some of it's going to stick. I mean, that's what happens.

I always said, let's deal with the facts. If I make a statement which is incorrect, I'd like for someone to correct me. I have no problem

standing up and apologizing about what I said. I don't mind apologizing when I'm wrong. Usually I don't say much. I usually do my research.

I know the Member for CBS got up here on several occasions, taking it and just throwing this stuff against the wall. I have a lot of respect for the Member. This is nothing critical, a lot of respect. I know you're a rookie and all that. I know someone was feeding you the information. I know all that.

Madam Chair, he stood up in this hon. House and said for the next four months this year the Town of CBS is losing \$400,000. I'm going to go through a bit of stats here. This year for the full year – it's only six months this year. So what he's going to lose the Town of CBS this year is \$175,000.

Hold it – hold it. Madam Chair, the 2016-2017 HST rebate; \$350,400.01. The 2016-2017 gas sharing, \$153,225 for a total of \$503,000 with the sustainable partnership in CBS. Now, that's the kind of information that you have to correct when you're in this House.

Guess what? Next year they're going to lose \$350,000. I agree, that's what they're going to lose totally next year, the Town of CBS. I agree 100 per cent. They're going to lose \$350,000 next year. The 2017-2018 HST rebate is \$606,168 and \$204,300 in the gas tax for a total of \$810,000 for a net of \$625,000. You can apologize at any time. I tell you, Madam Chair, I always said that when you make statements in this House you should do your homework.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Here is the homework. I said it – there's no way in the world I said it. I said it to the Member and I went over privately – I have respect for the Member. I do. I know you're a rookie. I know people are just handing you information. I have no problem with that, Madam Chair.

When you put out that information – and I went over privately, I said, b'y, check your facts. As he kept saying it, I said, well, he's serious about

this. So I said now I have to correct this as the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Madam Chair, guess what? I'm sure the man is going to stand up and apologize and say the information that he had was incorrect.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I'm sure he is because he's an honourable man. I have no doubt he is going to do that, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I heard the Members opposite talking about – and I heard the Third Party talking about rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't know where they want me to start. When you're spending in the vicinity of \$180 million in capital works in the whole of Newfoundland and Labrador, somewhere in Newfoundland and Labrador, some of that is going to be spent in rural Newfoundland and Labrador to help out rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I just look at the Member here for Burin – Grand Bank. Canada Fluorspar Inc.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: The mining project down in St. Lawrence. No one wants to talk about that great project. I have to give the previous government credit, they started it. We heard about it for years.

AN HON. MEMBER: Never finished it.

MR. JOYCE: No, never finished it. They had the \$17 million in the bank for three or four years. We asked where it was at and there wasn't one cent used out of it in three years.

Was it \$17 million or \$18 million that they had?

AN HON. MEMBER: Seventeen million dollars.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, \$17 million they had in the bank. Every year we stood up: How much is used?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Zero. How much was used the following year?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Zero. I can tell you, with the Member here, that money is being used. That mining company is moving ahead down in St. Lawrence. Look at Grieg Seafarms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: That will benefit St. Lawrence and all the area. That's the kind of stuff you don't want to talk about. You can't talk about it because that's in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. You can't talk about that. We have to stand up and talk all doom and gloom, everything is all bad.

Sure, there are some tough decisions in the budget. Absolutely, but there are a lot of business opportunities also, Madam Chair, a lot of business. There in the Burin plant – a lot of opportunities in the Burin plant, a lot of opportunities.

AN HON. MEMBER: The \$34.9 million, what was that about?

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: The \$34.9 million.

MR. JOYCE: Oh, the \$34.9 million. That was the Small Communities Fund that wasn't signed. That's only for the small communities so that didn't matter. That was outside St. John's, that didn't matter. That was never signed off. That wasn't.

The Member for CBS, I know he's over there smiling, but take a guess where we made the announcement at – in CBS when his own town

got a million dollars, but they didn't even sign off on it.

So when you want to talk about rural Newfoundland and Labrador, let's put the facts out there. Let's not just take a bit of mud and throw it against the wall and say what's going to stay and what's going to stick. Let's deal with the facts, Mr. Chair.

I can look around this whole room and some people asked me tonight – some people stood up and said: Well, what wouldn't you spend? Do I give credit for some money that was spent in rural Newfoundland and Labrador over the years? Definitely, 100 per cent; I would never take that away. I always gave credit where credit is due. But they said: What wouldn't you do?

Well, Madam Chair, I tell you one thing I wouldn't have done. I wouldn't have put \$11 million in a pellet plant down in Roddickton. The pellet plant in Roddickton, guess what? They set it up for failure. They put a pellet plant in Roddickton and they never even gave them a wharf to ship the pellets out. Never even shipped the pellets out. And guess what –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Guess what? They had all these pellets they were going to make and never even had a shed to put them in. Talk about a set-up for failure. That's the kind of difference, Madam Chair, that we won't be doing on this side. We will do our homework.

I just look at other things that are positive in this budget: \$74.6 million for low income –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask Members to take their conversations outside the Chamber if they want to have discussions.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, they can't handle the prosperity. They can't handle the hard work like the Member for Burin – Grand Bank. They just can't handle when you talk about that. In

Placentia West – Bellevue, just look at the work this Member is doing. Just imagine how many times he lobbied for water and sewer and other projects in his district. I can look around all the Liberal caucus here. There is so much work here in the capital works program for water and sewer I can tell you. I'm willing to bet the Opposition and the Third Party won't bring it up once. Do you know why? Because it's good news.

I laughed earlier. I got a laugh earlier. The Leader of the Opposition, who I got respect for, the Member for Ferryland, who I got a lot of respect for – and he was teasing you, Madam Chair, because you were up on a couch with Prime Minister Trudeau and they said, look at you snuggled into the couch, paid on your dime. Do you know what I say to them? The only difference is you're up and out in Ottawa, minus 30, and they locked you out of the door of the prime minister's office. That's the difference.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: You got in with your prime minister; they locked them out, minus 30, the two of them huddled together to try to stay warm because Harper kicked them out. That's the difference here. That's the work we got done with our MPs. Because of that work, Madam Chair, there are so many changes to the capital works program, the municipal infrastructure program, that it's going to benefit every town, every part of this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, every area. There is going to be regions of this area that never seen water and sewer before. They are going to see it, Madam Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fox Cove.

MR. JOYCE: Fox Cove-Mortier, how many times have they been trying to get water and sewer down there? How many times? But I can guarantee you one thing, they are on the list. They are gone for recommendations.

Madam Chair, I have 30 seconds left. I don't want to leave your district out, Madam Chair. Do you know why? Because you work hard for your district. I heard the Third Party here tonight, Cartwright- L'Anse au Clair – I heard the Member here tonight stand up and talk about

Black Tickle. They are in a tough situation, but I want to put it on the record that the Member for St. John's Centre not once contacted the Department of Municipal Affairs or me to make any discussion to try to help out the people of Black Tickle. I want that on the record that you contacted me on many occasions, and we just helped Black Tickle with their water.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll be back and I expect an apology at any time.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

They probably should have given the minister a bigger applause than that. That was a pretty good show.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Yeah, I enjoy his rants. Sometimes he makes a lot of sense; other times, he don't, but I'm good with that. Actually I hear that a lot across the way, to be quite honest with you, Madam Chair. We are starting to enter our day four. We've heard a lot of good rants. We've heard a lot of them that made sense. Some don't make sense, but I'm glad to hear that the town I represent are getting extra money under HST rebates and gas tax.

I'm not going to get up and say that's a horrible thing. No, I will qualify it to say – I know the minister has friends up there in the town office. He gets a lot of good information. That's fine; I'm good with that too.

The information I've been relaying has been public information. It has been reported in the local papers. It has been documented in council meetings. I know there are a lot of people in this House that self-admit they have trouble doing math. I understand that, but regardless of the gas tax and insurance, it is still going to cost the town \$350,000. So that's great we're getting extra money as a town, but still you have to subtract the \$350,000. Regardless, if you buy 50 apples and 38 are rotten, you still only have a dozen apples. It doesn't make any difference, you can play with all the numbers you won't – but I am glad the minister pointed that out and I'll make no apologies. I'll thank him that we are getting extra money. I don't know who is responsible.

But on that note – I was going to save this for later. Yes, I am going to do it now actually. The minister made a great point – coming in over the road, you are thinking about what topics you are going to do. Our main message over on this side of the House, all Members here on this side, we are here in people's House and we are presenting their concerns.

The minister made a reference about a meeting held and my two colleagues huddled together and froze. That's his play. It was a cold night up there and the meeting never went well. And I mentioned this last night. Some Members may not have heard it. At the time it looked great; it was in December. It was before the swearing in or after – I am not sure; I think it may have been before the swearing in. It was this big trip to Ottawa.

When the news came out that the Premier was going to Ottawa to meet the prime minister and they were having a face to face and it was all great, everyone was happy and next thing we seen there was a couple of nice photo-ops came out of it; they were all jammed up on this nice, big sofa up there in the prime minister's office. I think it was red. Now, I'm not sure if that's red all the time because I know the former Conservative government like blue, but it was Christmastime too so maybe it was just a Christmas theme or whatever. Anyway, they were all jammed on the sofa. I mean, I laughed because I remember the picture. They were all there and there were seven MPs.

I'm glad they left enough room after to squat the prime minister in. They were up in the prime minister's office and they got this nice photo. It was a great photo-op. Everyone was like yes, wow. Boy, they gave notice we are going to cancel the HST increase, this terrible, terrible move made by the former government. It was a job killer; it was horrible.

So they went up and they all come to an agreement and they walked out and everyone was happy. I was amazed actually. You look at them and you see them moving around when they were getting – I was thinking: Are they going to let the prime minister sit down? I mean, heaven forbid. At least you let the Prime Minister and the Premier sit down before they tried to, but they're all jammed up.

Lo and behold when this happened, when the photo op was done and the media clip was done that they had requested getting approval for lifting the HST, all of a sudden then they come down and in between that everything is doom and gloom. She's gone, she's over.

That was the \$110 million photo op. It's the best way to describe it. Now, I'm sure in today's developing world the framing and the pictures might have cost a couple of hundred dollars for all of them. I'm sure they have it on their walls. At the end of the day it was a \$110 million photo op in Ottawa, up in Parliament Building for Christmas. They may have done some shopping while they were there.

Everyone should go to Ottawa, by the way. I don't know if some Members here have served in Parliament up there. I've been there several times. Ottawa is a beautiful city.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's cold.

MR. PETTEN: It's cold during the winter, you're right. The Rideau Canal is a beautiful spot. I know former MPs were accused of doing a lot of skating on the Rideau Canal. I don't know if there is any truth to that, but it is quite a beautiful area to do that.

To go back to the minister's point, he likes to make jabs. I do enjoy his rants, I have to be honest. I think some of them are pretty humorous. We get along, we respect each other.

I'm the rookie, as the minister rightly quoted, and I'm quite happy about that.

This is a great learning curve to get in here and participate in the debate, to represent your people, to be that voice. I was involved before. A lot of times you are the voice behind the scenes. Your opinion was coming out, but it wasn't coming out of your mouth, it was coming out of someone else's. I'm sure the minister went through that role one time before and you wanted to put your own stamp. So I'm proud to say I'm a rookie as the 19 Members opposite feel that way.

It is an honour to represent my district. Any time money is spent in my district, extra money, I'm very happy for it. The minister wants me to apologize, that the town is getting extra money, and I can't do it. I'm sorry, Madam Chair, but that's something I will not do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: In saying they're getting extra money – I want to just caution him that with that money comes a cost. Unless they're waiving the insurance and the gas tax for the Town of CBS alone, they're still going to be out \$350,000. I'm glad there's extra money to offset that, but the bottom line is they're short \$350,000, what they would have had without these taxes. I want to thank the minister for pointing that out to me. I make no apologies.

I just want to go back in my last couple of minutes to this levy. I'm not sure of the exact dollars. I have the bill somewhere. I think the minister suggested it was \$44 million, the new adjusted figures. When we were debating Bill 19 on the insurance it was \$111 million, so we're bringing it to about \$150 million.

The HST increase would have given us \$110 million. The contingency fund, which there has been a lot of debate about – and I haven't even gone down that road. I kind of see the merits with having a contingency fund for unforeseen things that may come up and disasters. In a time like we're in now, sometimes you question if that's valid.

Say if we threw that on top, we'd be up to \$141 million. That would almost eliminate the need

for these two bills we're filibustering, but again, it's about choices. The government opposite were duly elected by the people on November 30. They were put in place to make choices and those are their choices.

On that note, though, I do hope they keep their picture close by. I really believe that as the time goes on, down the road, life's road, when they look back it was the \$110 million photo. I commend them all for it. I have to check with my local MP in my area just to make sure he has his in his office. He's just across the way from where my constituency office is. I am going to check and make sure he has his up on his wall, because he should.

On my last minute, I just want to say it's great tonight. I went home after being here all day. I went home and watched the news. This afternoon I pleaded that the Premier – which I said he's our Premier. He's not just your leader, he's everybody's Premier. He actually did a media scrum. It was the top news story. He broke his silence.

I have to commend him for that. I say that with all seriousness. I said earlier today the President of the United States has a daily media scrum. He did his today and I commend him for that. I think if the media wants to speak to you every day and ask you the issues that are important to the province, we should.

I did bring that up today, but I wanted to follow it up and say that he did actually acknowledge that he did do a media scrum. I think it's a good thing and I hope he continues on a daily basis, as the media may want to at any time, I guess. It could be several times a day. I'm glad he did it. I'll have lots more to say as the night goes on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Chair, as the Member was talking about choices there, I was looking through the Estimates document and I very gently removed this page. I very delicately extracted page A-3 from the budget *Estimates 2016* document because it is about choices.

Let me tell you about some of the choices that have been made just in a handful of years. In 2013, the second year I was a Member of the House of Assembly, the total public sector debt in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador was \$6,700,600,000. We'll just say, for all intents and purposes, \$6.7 billion. That's what it was in 2013.

AN HON. MEMBER: Manageable.

MR. KIRBY: Yes, a manageable level of debt for a province of our size with the economic situation that we have, the population that we have.

Then, choices were made, and the next year, in 2014, our public sector debt nearly doubled in one year. Our public sector debt went from \$6.7 billion to \$11.5 billion in just that one year from 2013 to 2014. Somebody chose that path for us. The Members opposite, when they were on this side, that's what they chose.

As if that wasn't bad enough, the following year in 2015 the public sector debt went from \$11.5 billion to \$12.2 billion. As we've all known and, of course, we learned upon taking office and having a very good look at the condition of the public Treasury of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we noted with much surprise, disappointment, and in my case, absolute horror, that the public sector debt of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador was adjusted up to \$15.7 billion – \$15.7 billion.

In 2013 – that's not very long ago, just a few years ago – the public sector debt in Newfoundland and Labrador was \$6.7 billion. It stands at \$15.7 billion today.

AN HON. MEMBER: Three years.

MR. KIRBY: In three years, Mr. Chair. I mean, you couldn't cause this sort of damage to your Treasury, unless it was absolutely intentional. Their choices – there was no care taken at all with the public Treasury. You have to ask yourself: How did all of this happen? People say: Well, it had to do with oil. That all never had to do with oil.

One of the problems that we had was the revolving door that was on that seat right there.

The revolving door that was on the Premier's seat right there. It was just in and out. And the same thing as you go up along here. It was a bunch of revolving doors; ministers in, ministers out; premier in, premier out; churn, churn, churn. So no one is keeping an eye on anything in any departments because it is just a constant churn up and down, people coming and going, plugged in here, plugged in there. Like I told you, before I came into this department, in that handful of years, there were five different people as minister of Education.

In the space of five years, we had four-and-a-half premiers; if you count Frank Coleman's almost premier, whatever that was all about. No wonder this kind of stuff went on because they were asleep at the switch and there was no care taken with the public Treasury. Now we have to do something about it.

The Members sit there and they say – think about it: \$15.7 billion in debt and a \$2.7 billion budget and the only thing I hear over there is cancel full-day kindergarten and save \$13.3 million, and that's it. That's the totality – and don't tax anybody anything. Keep all public spending where it is, except get rid of full-day kindergarten and cancel the \$753,000 proposed feasibility study for the fixed link to Labrador from the Island. That's all it is – and get rid of the seniors' advocate. I think that's \$500,000. That's a luxury according to the Member. It is a luxury, they say, to have an advocate to look out for seniors.

That is the solution to this mess that they created. They absolutely wrecked the public Treasury in just three years; went from \$6.7 billion to \$15.7 billion for a province our size, to just drive that up like that, and that's the limit of solutions. We've been here since, what – I mean, I feel like I haven't left this week. We've been here since Monday sitting nearly around the clock and all they have is \$15 million to throw on the table.

The Member for St. George's – Humber got up and said I have three questions. Tell us what you would do. Basically, what are the solutions? Well, I don't know what the Member was talking about putting this lens and that lens – if you put any more lenses on it, you'd be able to see the state of the sand shifting on the other

planets. I mean, there was no rhyme or reason to what the Member got up and said. I didn't hear any solutions.

I got up and I explained earlier the situation that exists as it pertains to the province's situation. I went on the Internet here earlier and looked at RBC's figures for net debt per capita. They say, do what Alberta did, just borrow billions of dollars. Well, Alberta has the lowest net debt per capita in Canada. Every man, woman and child in Alberta owes \$2,300.

AN HON. MEMBER: But they have the same number of moose, though.

MR. KIRBY: It has nothing to do with the moose, I will tell you that much.

Whereas, here in the province, we have almost \$28,000 for every man, woman and child – 10 times the amount of net debt per capita that we're all responsible for in the end.

AN HON. MEMBER: Going to go to \$50,000 if nothing was done.

MR. KIRBY: Going to go to \$50,000 per person if we allowed this train wreck to continue to go right off course.

They say cut \$15 million and just launch the province right into oblivion, because that's where we are headed. Launch it right off. It is like that urban legend about buddy who went over Signal Hill in the car for a bucket of chicken. It is like go up and just launch right off over the edge because that makes about as much sense, and I don't even mean to make light of it because that's what it's like. It is like launch the province out into the Nethersphere where we will never ever be able to resurrect ourselves again to build back what we had.

Look, in 2013, that level of debt was manageable. We could have done something about it. But, for some reason, the thinking was you could just take the credit card out and put it in the ATM and there was an endless supply. Well, guess what? That money is being lent by somebody. If you wreck your credit rating like that and then you go down to the bank and you say, oh, and by the way, lend me another barrel of money so I can drive it up even more – well,

what's being said to us now on the international bond markets is that hang on now, look at your balance sheet. Look at what you're after doing. We expect you to be responsible with this debt. And we're borrowing \$3.4 billion this year.

Like I said earlier tonight, I don't come from wealth. I come from nothing. My grandparents were trap skiff skippers. Large families in rural Newfoundland, they come from nothing. That's a lot of money in my view. The Member got up and said \$27 million is nothing; \$27 million is nothing. I don't know; that mentality has to change. These are extremely large sums of money and we've got to get things in order. If you've got solutions other than \$15 million you've been talking about for about 60 hours now, I'd love to hear.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, colleagues in the House of Assembly. Welcome to Tuesday, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to Tuesday.

MS. COADY: (Inaudible) Groundhog Day.

MR. KENT: It does. The Minister of Natural Resources is saying it's Groundhog Day. It feels a little bit like that. So I did get a few hours' sleep. I saw my kids. My colleagues are very happy with the fact that I got a shower, so here we go.

AN HON. MEMBER: So are we.

MR. KENT: Thank you for that.

This is not a playoff beard. Much like the Member for Bonavista, this is a filibuster beard. There isn't time to shave because there are too many important messages to bring here to the House of Assembly, and they keep rolling in. I've got my phones charged up, which should get me through another few hours.

I'd like to do a little Twitter shout-out to our Page this evening. Here's a message from her mother, live from Twitter: MHAs, treat your Page good tonight. She's been up since 3 a.m. and had an exam this morning and is going all night tonight too. #filibuster16. Sabrina Andrews, ladies and gentlemen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: In the last 48 hours or so, or maybe in the last week or so, perhaps, her mother has become a master of the Twitter-verse. So I'll hopefully generate a few new followers for her this evening, or this morning, whatever day this is.

I'd also like to give a little shout out to our friend, Charlene. A lot of us have been receiving emails from a lady named Charlene. I haven't met her. I don't know her. I believe she's active on Facebook and Twitter. I have seen some of her tweets as well.

So her latest message, which probably won't get the same kind of applause that Sabrina just received, this is just from minutes ago, I think: All Liberals resign. If you wanted to do right by the province you would all be PC, NDP and Independent right now, not Liberal. You are doing right by yourself. Transparency; yeah, your version of transparency shows exactly how selfish you all are.

Those are fighting words. There is some anger in that message, no doubt. I understand why people are angry. While I don't necessarily support all of those sentiments, I do applaud people for speaking out. I do applaud people for bringing their passion to the House of Assembly, to social media and bringing it to their MHA's offices. That is all part of the democratic process.

I respect the fact that citizens like Charlene, in her case, dozens and dozens of times have taken time to write MHAs and share their concerns. Beyond the message I just read there have been several substantial emails that have raised issues and presented ideas and so on. That's good to see.

Back to some of the correspondence I've received in the last little while. This one came in on Wednesday. In the House of Assembly there

was no Wednesday, but in the real world there was a Wednesday: Have you got them wore down? All I hear is unions should help and come to the table. How stupid do you think the Nurses' Union leadership is? Option number one, come and get a rollback; or number two, wait and take our chances. Can we ask for an incompetence vote and get rid of them all.

This one's from somebody named Gerry, who's not an MHA to be clear. I gather from their social media profile they're not an MHA: Please let the Minister of Education know that we, the people, do not want to hear him bashing the previous government. Well, too late for that. The people made a choice and the previous government is no longer in power. What I want to hear is the ministers and other Members of the House, a direct response to our emails.

I thank the Opposition Members for reading these emails out. That is exactly what we want. We are all concerned about this budget. Please speak to our emails. Take some notes while the emails are being read out. Group them into common themes and then speak to our concerns.

What we need is hope that we will be listened to. Up to this point we are not being listened to. This is the government's chance to speak directly to us, the people. I, for one, watched the proceedings until 3 a.m. so we are listening. Please speak to our concerns. We are not interested in the Education Minister having temper tantrums. It is too late for that as well.

Please grow up Mr. Minister. Thank you.

That is from Gerry Cooke in Grand Falls – Windsor, the beautiful Town of Grand Falls – Windsor.

AN HON. MEMBER: Perfectly centred.

MR. KENT: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: Perfectly centred.

MR. KENT: Perfectly centred, that is a good slogan.

AN HON. MEMBER: That is a good slogan.

MR. KENT: It is a good slogan.

This message is from someone else named Gerry, actually. I don't see a last name here, but –

AN HON. MEMBER: Is it the same Gerry?

MR. KENT: I don't know if it's the same Gerry.

Mr. Kent – oh, sorry, Mr. Chair, I didn't mean to say my name. It's another parliamentary rule. Strange customs and traditions here, but I thank the Minister of Natural Resources for not rising on a point of order.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's your father, Mr. Kent.

MR. KENT: Oh, it's my father, Mr. Kent. Good point.

Please relay a message to the Member for Torngat Mountains. If he is willing to sit back and wait for adverse things to happen to our province that we have talked about in all our emails, then we are in a terrible state. Just because he comes from an area of Labrador where basic services are a luxury, all the more for this Member to listen to his constituents because they will become more worse off than they are now. Thank you.

MR. LETTO: Did he just say that?

MR. KENT: The Member for Labrador West is asking did I just say that. Yes, I did. I am reading into the record, Sir, messages from people in this province who want their views brought to the House of Assembly. That's the obligation I have, and I'm taking that responsibility rather seriously.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I'd encourage you to do the same.

Here's a message from a gentleman who wrote early yesterday morning suggesting that government compromise on the insurance tax: Change Bill 19 and reduce the increase to 5 per cent.

There's a reasonable suggestion. People aren't saying that government shouldn't do anything. Sensible people recognize that something has to be done, that there are challenges government has to tackle. It's just people are upset with the approach this government is taking.

Now, that said, the obvious question that needs to be raised is if you're going to reduce the insurance tax to 5 per cent instead of 15, that revenue has to be found elsewhere. So we can't look at any of these issues in isolation. It's good that people are bringing forward suggestions on how things can be done differently because there are other solutions that I do think need to be explored.

I want to take us back to Bill 35 for a moment because I continue to get emails from people across the province. This one is from a member of the vaping community. She writes: As a member of the vaping community there are times I feel it difficult to figure out which product is good for me. Therefore, I go to my local shop, and with them being able to allow me to sample product and try devices that has allowed me to continue be quit smoking. One shop in particular comes to mind as it is the shop I always go to. I think they're being –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think they are being unrealistic with what they want. I've seen first-hand that if someone comes in and is not 19 they are asked to leave. If they do not leave – if they do not have ID, sorry, and look underage, they are asked to leave. They do not sell the device to anyone who doesn't understand how to use the said device. She is thanking the Opposition for its support on the subject.

I highlight it because it is just another example of government not listening. Here in this House for hours we've brought forward some sensible and practical suggestions on how to look to other jurisdictions, like Manitoba, and modify our legislation so that we could introduce a bill that would make changes to the *Tobacco*

Control Act and the Smoke-free Environment Act that we could all support.

Instead, the concerns and issues raised by the vaping community were completely ignored. That's unfortunate, but that's the theme that's emerging. For a government that's still more or less in its infancy it's rather surprising.

I only have 40 seconds left so I'll give you another one. I would like to know why people in Labrador can't get jobs in Muskrat, yet, they are bringing in janitors from the Island. Are we too stunned to even carry a mop? Come on b'y, time to rise up and shut her down.

One more thing, the gas hike; the North Coast got a break, Lab West got a break and the South Coast got a break. Then there is some foul language that I'll skip. This person is encouraging Labrador MHAs to stand up for their interest.

Mr. Chair, I see my time is up. There are many more messages to read, many more issues to talk about. A long night ahead and I wish you a good morning. We'll talk again soon.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to be back in the saddle again, so to speak, and to hopefully be prepared to punch in another 24 hours or so. Then we'll see another little nap and back again for some more.

I'm looking forward to all this debate because as I said last night before I left I have no one – speaking for myself and, I think, my colleagues, we have no intention of going anywhere until we see some movement on this budget. That's really where we're at.

Someone said we'll be here a while and that's fine. If I have to be here from now until Christmas, if that's what it takes I'm prepared to do it.

Anyway, I just want to say, first of all, I listened to the Minister of Education here earlier. He was

going on a bit of a rant. I understand what he is saying because for a period of time when I was over here in the Opposition, with my former colleagues and so on, I said a lot of those things. I recognize that; there is no doubt.

I think that the Members here would acknowledge the fact that there was no doubt that there was a period of time with the former government where it was a revolving door of ministers. I've said that myself many times. We know that there were challenges around the whole premiership and all that stuff. There is no doubt in my mind that a lot of the negative things that have happened were as a result of that.

There is no doubt that the debt got to an unsustainable level. I'm sure some of it can be attributed there. It can be attributed to other factors as well. But, at the end of the day, what we are here to talk about is this budget. That's what we are here to talk about. We are not here to go blaming each other, who did this, who did that, who's at fault, who's not at fault. We're here to talk about this budget.

What I am continuing to hear from people is that people understand we're in a tough financial position. Regardless of who put us here, regardless if it was the former administration and they had their hand in it and the administration before that, perhaps, they had their hand into it and commodity prices, and there are a whole bunch of factors that played into why we're here, how we got here. At the end of the day, they're concerned about this particular budget and what we're going to do now to deal with our financial circumstance that we have as a province, but, at the same time, be cognizant of the fact that the people within this province only have an ability to pay so much. There has to be a balanced approach to dealing with the deficit, to dealing with the finances, so that we can move forward as a province, but, at the same token, being cognizant of the fact that people have to be able to survive. People have to be able to take care of their families.

I've said it many a time and I'm going to continue to say it. It makes no sense to try to save our province from financial ruin – and that's what we are being told, and I question it to some degree. I understand we're in a tough spot,

but I question, to some degree, if maybe it is not being exaggerated a little bit and are we really that bad off. Trying to save our province from financial ruin at the same time we are going to put our citizens in financial ruin. That doesn't seem to be a difficult concept to grasp. It is not a difficult concept for me to grasp. We have to realize that everybody is on a sunshine list. Not everybody is able to absorb all of these taxes and fees and everything else that you are trying to impose on people. It is just gone too far, and everyone knows that we have to do something. People are willing to pay their fair share.

I'm not going to stand here and say that we do nothing. That's the thing that gets frustrating sometimes. Sometimes you'll hear someone stand up on the other side and they'll say, oh, if we were to do nothing, our debt would double. We'd be at \$25 billion in debt. Nobody is saying that we do nothing. I'm not saying that we do nothing.

I haven't heard the NDP or the PC Party say we do nothing. I haven't heard that. Now, if you heard it, maybe I missed it somehow because after a bit of sleep deprivation and so on, sometimes you hear things or you don't hear things. But, in fairness, trying to be fair to everybody, I don't recall anybody say don't do anything. I have not heard it.

We must do something. But when we are doing something, we have to bear in mind what is the goal we're trying to accomplish as a province and what can we reasonably expect the people to endure. Recognizing that people are in different situations, people have different situations economically. Some people can absorb these higher taxes and fees and some people can't absorb all these taxes and fees.

You have to recognize there are a lot of people that are living paycheque to paycheque. Some of the messages I've read and people I've talked to, when we talk about the concept of living paycheque to paycheque, that doesn't necessarily mean just low-income people. Sometimes we have this perceived notion in our head that the only people living paycheque to paycheque are people that are on minimum wage or seniors on a fixed income, or persons that are receiving social assistance or EI or something

that they are the only people living paycheque to paycheque.

Reality check: That's not how it works. I know some people might say, well, people should be better financial managers. They should manage their money, their affairs, in a more prudent manner. Do you know what? I'm not saying that there is no truth in that. But you have to deal with reality. The reality of it is that just because someone makes a decent living in terms of their income, does not mean they have all this extra money, because they have expenses.

I'm not picking on one area versus another, but certainly in the urban centre here, anyone who's not aware, just go look in the ads to see how much it costs to rent an apartment or to rent a home, or to buy a home. Just look at what kind of municipal taxes that you're paying for a house here in St. John's or Mount Pearl or whatever. People are paying \$3,000 a year or whatever just in municipal taxes. That's just municipal taxes. They then got the mortgages, or if people are renting, the rents are very, very high. People need to have a car to get back and forth to work, and if they got children and stuff, there are expenses around all those things.

So you might look at it and say, oh, this person here is working at the Health Care Corporation or they're working for the government, or this person's a police officer or this person's a teacher, they got lots of money. No, they don't. They don't have lots of money. They have enough money to live where they're living and take care of their families. They don't have all this extra money. They just don't have it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Will I continue, Mr. Chair, or do you want me to wait?

So, Mr. Chair, that's the reality that I'm hearing from people. These are everyday, hard-working people we're talking about here. Depending on income levels and so on, yeah, are there some people that could absorb all this? Sure, there are some people who can absorb it. There are some people that it's really going to cut into their expendable income, big time, but there are

actually people – and I've received messages, and I know Members here have received messages. There are people that are saying, listen, I am just barely making it now. I am just barely making those ends meet now. This is enough to put me over the edge.

I heard the Member for Torngat last night before I left talking about I'm saying, oh, everybody's going to be driven over the edge. I didn't say that. I said some people are going to be driven over the edge. That's what they're telling me. That's what their telling us. And I believe them because I have friends and family members that are in that boat.

Mr. Chair, unfortunately I'm out of time. I could talk about this forever. Actually, I'm going to, over time.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's indeed an honour to stand again and debate the tax changes that we're facing here and the impact they're going to have. I went through some of the bills and I was explaining that while we're having these debates, we have been putting some legislation through, important legislation that has an impact on how we function as a government and as a society.

I was going to go down that road for a period of time, but I got an email from somebody who thanked me for outlining the education struggles that have been happening since the budget came down. They asked me and basically begged me to continue to outline some of the struggles that are here, and the lack of communication and the lack of listening when it comes to the needs for education enhancements and supports, versus the major cuts that are here. Even status quo would have been much better, but even that isn't where we need to go when we're talking about our vulnerable students, when we're talking about our education and when we're talking about how we move our society forward and having them better prepared for the next generation.

I started to go through some of my documentation. I heard the Minister of Education get up and talk about all the great things that are going on and what they were doing and what we wouldn't do. He talked about the process they were using. I see no evidence that the process that was used by this administration, particularly around education – I'll centre around education right now for the next number of hours that I'll get to speak.

I have so much material there from agencies, organizations, educators, former educators, national organizations, particularly parents and students, around this. It hasn't been thought out. It hasn't been engaging. While the information may have been shared at some point over the last six or seven months that this administration's been in and the minister's been minister, there might have been dialogue. Obviously, it went in one ear and out the other because none of it has been reflective in this budget, particularly around education.

One of the things I picked up was a memorandum sent to all teachers from the NLTA. I'll start to read some of this because this will set the crux for what I'm going to talk about over the next number of hours around where we've let down our education system in this budget and where we've done damage to it. We have to have a responsibility to rectify those things. Somewhere along the way the Minister of Education needs to get back to dealing with the people who have the expertise to address exactly what's needed.

This is an update on the status of the report and recommendations from the Inclusive Education Committee: "The joint NLTA/Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Inclusive Education Committee established under Clause 30.02 of the Provincial Collective Agreement to review the resourcing of the Inclusive Schools Initiative was supposed to bring a report and recommendations by February 29, 2016. This memo is to advise teachers that the Committee has not been able to reach agreement on a report and recommendation despite timeline extensions until March 31, 2016. Regrettably, the NLTA has reached the conclusion that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is unwilling to include meaningful recommendations on

allocations as part of the committee report – allocations are fundamental to resourcing inclusive schools and meeting the needs of students with special needs. As such, the NLTA does not believe that Government has been acting in good faith in compliance with the Provincial Collective Agreement obligation concerning Clause 30.02 and has filed the appropriate grievance.”

This, to me, is a big concern. When you’ve got the teachers’ union who are part and parcel of an inclusive process here – a very inclusive process. This wasn’t an overnight thing, let’s go in and hammer something out, we want something and you’re only offering this; this was an ongoing committee established by the previous administration. No doubt, probably issues there that needed to be addressed that were carried over in this administration, but getting to its final stages because its time frames were starting to come to fruition.

All of a sudden they get to a point where the frustration – these are our top educators. These are the people who, on a day-to-day basis, deal with our children, deal with the next generation of the leaders in this province and deal with those young people who have some challenges also. These are the administrators who started off maybe 20, 30 years ago in the education system and learned from their experiences, and who are now guiding exactly what goes on in the school system. They’re coming back, they’re frustrated and saying, we’ve gotten to a point where we’ve made recommendations. We’ve opened it up for dialog. We’ve even asked for extensions to the committee’s mandate so that we can get to a point where we would find something that’s workable.

I’ve met with and spoke to the president of the NLTA and numerous executive members there. They’re saying while everybody goes in with a wish list here, they’re reasonable. They understand what the necessities are to address the particular emergency needs or the particular priorities, and they’re open to that.

So this is an alarming thing and I’ll read more and more as we go through it. But I want to talk about this, because it reflects exactly what I’ve heard over the last seven months as the critic for the Department of Education and Early

Childhood Development. There’s no inclusion here; there’s no dialogue.

The dialogue that happens, the minister will get up and boast, oh no, I’ve read the report. We’ve had a meeting three months after they requested it, when things have gone on, and there’s another challenge and these types of things. I understand what they’re doing. They don’t understand where we need to go when it comes to the education process. He forgets the process here. The big process is that the Department of Education are supposed to be the policy-related stewards.

The delivery, the curriculum development and the inherent ability to enhance our education system comes from the school districts, the school boards, particularly the school administrators, those teachers and the school councils. That’s the collaborative approach here that moves our education system forward. That’s the difference here. It’s a difference that the minister here seems to feel that he’s going to be the be-all and end-all when it comes to our education system, that he has all the answers. His answers would be fine if they’re all based on his collaborative approach and taking the recommendations.

My knowledge of that part of the education system was very minimal and very limited, but I went out in the last number of months to ensure I had a better understanding. If somebody gave me an argument, why they wanted something, was it just one-sided? Tell me the benefits for the masses, particularly those in the education system. Tell me how more than a 50 per cent populous would benefit from this.

And I’ve got it; I sat with the NLTA. I understand from a union perspective their objective is to protect their members. But then when I look into who their membership are – these are dedicated professionals who went for exclusive training in a vocation in life. And that was to educate our young people, to give a start in life and foster their ability to move on to the next stages in life. It’s hard to argue when you understand why people are in it and they’ve been trained in a certain field. Some have carved out which part of that field they want to be specialists in and done an extremely great job.

On per capita we are recognized on a national basis, our educators, more than any other province. It was only noted the other day, the Minister got up and talked about some educators who have been acknowledged as the top five administrators, or the top five teachers, or the top five promoters of different levels of education. That's a testament to those who go into our education system and what they commit to.

They also commit to saying I've got experience. I've learned some of the challenges that are being faced in our respective communities. They could be rural communities. They could be isolated communities. They could be suburban communities. They could be in the heart of our larger urban centres.

As a result, that information is what should be the main pillar for us to develop and enhance our education system. But it doesn't seem to be that way with this administration. Everybody who comes forward – if it's the school councils, if it's the NLTA – with a particular issue, it seems to be dismissed, not important, not a priority right now, not we're where going. Here's what we're implementing. Here are our priorities, not based on anybody else's, but based solely on what we feel.

Maybe they're getting some advice from some senior civil servants, I don't know. I was there for a period of years in government and I do realize we have great civil servants – beyond great. Sometimes, though, I always have to challenge when we get to the senior executive level. Because they've worked so hard and diligently over their lifetime they've lost touch, they haven't been on the grassroots anymore. Sometimes they need a refresher to jump back.

When I was a minister, I used to tell my senior executive, get out in the field. In Transportation and Works, go out to the depots. Get to see the operators of the plows; get to see the guys putting up signs and that. Get them to look at that to see what it is that they need, what are the realities here. Because policy is one thing, but actually operational things are another thing. So that became a very important thing.

Maybe the minister has a better understanding. Maybe his understanding, because he comes

from a certain level of an education background – not grassroots, from my understanding, but fair enough; that's part and parcel of that – that he's not including organizations that represent tens of thousands of the key people who every day influence and have the best stake and the best objective in life is to improve development and learning for our young people, but not to take into account what they've said.

So I've just outlined – this is just one paragraph and I've got numerous to go through all night. My intent here is to show you can't work in isolation; you can't dismiss the people you have. Smart administration is using the resources that are out there, particularly when they give you advice based on their experience, and their experience is grassroots. It's front line and reflects exactly what our challenges are.

So, Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to speak to this again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is great to get up again, of course, as always. My colleague made some good points just then in his conversation about our education system. I'm going to touch on some education stuff as well. The bill we're debating, Bill 14, the levy, as we know, there have been improvements made; but the levy, in itself, just became a life of its own. I guess it's a lightning rod. As I've stated before, and I think the numbers now definitely show, the insurance tax is going to have probably a more devastating impact on people when it comes to extra costs.

But, in saying that, the levy, even with its adjustments – I look at this chart, and there is an improvement in it. I guess the best way of describing the levy, and what most people – and we all hear it every day. It's the concept of a levy. People feel like they're insulted by the levy. When you pay your income tax and you pay tax on everything you buy, you pay fees on everything you get, whether you're renewing your driver's licence, birth certificates – I mean, well, all that's gone up, of course. But anything

we do, it's a fee. And you buy your gas, and we all know the increase with the tax on gas.

Every person, every consumer, in the province pay taxes on a daily basis, and they feed the economy and they feed government to be able to look after us, basically, whether it be health care, education, our roads, our social programs. It's everything.

So people feel like – and you hear the word said so many times – they pay enough. When I say pay enough, with this rash of taxes, it's obviously more on people. Most people feel, when you look at the levy – if you're putting a tax on insurance, I guess one way of avoiding that tax is cancelling your insurance, which is not a realistic option. But if people were really jammed up, you could actually say okay – you are going to need house insurance, hopefully, if you have your own home. There are things they can do to lessen that burden, but this levy was insulting in the fact that you make this much income – no one is quitting their job obviously – this is the tax you pay.

There's an email here which caught my attention. It basically states a family has two incomes, each which is \$45,000 and they don't pay a levy. A family has one income of \$55,000; they pay a levy. That's the way, unless I'm wrong in interpreting it. I read this sheet; it's individual incomes. It states – it's lower than the original \$600. It's down to, what, \$100, which is a big improvement from \$600. But the concept of the levy, and we say it and I'll say it again – and actually the Premier said recently in a scrum. I don't know if the Minister of Finance was with him, but anyway they both acknowledged it could have been handled differently.

It's a fairness thing. I say it's insulting, and I say this in all sincerity. It insults the electorate in the sense that I don't think this levy was well thought out. I know you go back, and I'm sure the government – it will happen in time. I was close to the former government. I wasn't a member, as I always said, but I knew the inner workings. There were decisions that they made that I know for a fact they said, in hindsight, we should have handled this differently or that. That's fair game. That comes with the challenges of being in power and having to

make tough decisions. Sometimes you'll second-guess some of your decisions. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

With this levy, it's just the way it's incorporated, the way it's been done; it's not a well-thought-out tax. Now, I think people would have been outraged at all the other tax increases as well, but the levy was the real sounding board as we all know. We've heard the levy has been mentioned a gazillion times, so to speak. And we're still mentioning it because it is the bill we're debating now, but it's important, again as we stated so many times as well.

I was watching the news this evening. We're here as Members of our respective districts in the House and we're on the Opposition side and we're filibustering, but we're still trying to be the voice for the people. My colleague, our leader, said – I heard a clip on the news tonight – people don't feel like their voices are being heard. I know we say it here in the House, but I was listening to that tonight when I got home and I was watching the news for the first time in a few days. When he said it, it resonated with me. I started thinking that's probably the root cause, among other things, that really anger people.

My colleague for Mount Pearl North mentioned this lady, Charlene, which I, too, don't know who she is, but I know she's been very passionate about the budget. She's been emailing each and every one of us. I commend her for her resolve. There are numerous emails every day and I sit back and say you can't dispute – she's very upset, she's very concerned and she's spoken loud and clear. But that's the root cause, I believe, of most people's anger. It's not any one thing; I think it's a snowball effect.

I have probably said it before as well. I know when we were getting our briefing on budget day and you're looking at the documents and you're saying, boy, the gas is not going to go over well, and we've got insurance tax. I remember I had the sheets when they were doing them. I had one backwards; it was on the other side. I was looking and said yeah, and they said wait now and turned it over. When I turned it over, I saw the block with the levy. I remember that moment. I looked at whoever was next to

me and I said this is going to be a major, major, major issue.

Was it more of an issue than I thought? I'm not sure. I knew there would be a huge public outcry. It's just the context. Then when you look at how this levy has been incorporated – and obviously, the government recognized that there was a problem with the levy because they made adjustments to it. I commend them for doing that. I know when you're in government sometimes you've got to find an out on certain things. So the federal government relaxed the recollection of that \$270 million overpayment, which gave them breathing room and gave them a way of adjusting the levy, which is fair game. There are people in the lower income bracket – which we really railed against – are excluded. That's a good thing; I won't be critical or cynical of that. I think that was a good move. I never did believe in someone in the \$20,000 income range should be paying anything extra. Outside of a levy, you're still paying the other taxes.

When you're in that lower income bracket, if you have any children or if you have any other demands – if you're just living by yourself in those ranges, you're having a difficult struggle to survive. I'm glad those adjustments were made, but we still have a significant imbalance.

As I just stated, two people making \$45,000 a year pay no levy. One person making \$55,000 – their family income is \$55,000 – they're paying a levy. Obviously, government is adamant that they're not going to budge on the levy, or up until 1:45 in the morning. I still believe there's work.

This is still not a well-thought-out constructed scheme of tax regime. When I read that, and I thought about all the angles about this, I looked at this chart. You can tell I wrote it to pieces. That was a very good point. I missed it, actually, earlier, but that's a very good point.

Right now based on that, families making \$90,000 pay no levy. A family with \$55,000 is paying a levy. I don't think any Member in this House can look at me and say that's fair. It's just not. I know that no Member would say that because I think we all agree on that.

This comes from a voter or a person out in the community. How many others are like that? Again, it comes into the fairness factor. What else can be said to that, other than the fact that we feel this whole exercise is about – we have these two bills, 14 and 19. It's more about reading those concerns into the record, speaking up for the people and expressing their issues. That was one that kind of eluded me when you're looking at it. That really hits home when you see that breakdown.

Like I said, the levy is there. There needs to be more thought gone into it. There wasn't enough thought. Much of the budget was that way actually, Mr. Chair. Again, I'll speak shortly in another bit.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Good morning once again, Mr. Chair.

It's great to be back on my feet. The emails, the Facebook posts and the tweets keep rolling in. It's very early in the morning, it's 1:47 a.m. We're still getting a great response from people and lots of encouragement and support from people all over the province. I have to say my colleagues and I have been amazed by how many people are following this broadcast, how many people are tuned in online and watching the TV broadcast and following through social media.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Can you fellows keep it down a little bit?

AN HON. MEMBER: Okay. Say hello.

MR. KENT: Hello. The night shift is fully engaged at this point, Mr. Chair. We're pleased to have great backup and support from the Independent MHA as well who's been here with us. I know certain MHAs have claimed that they've been here for 24 hours. I think that the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands could almost legitimately make that claim. It's tough to hear it from others though.

Anyway, back to the matters at hand. As I was saying, we've gotten lots of correspondence for the people that are reaching out to me and are specifically asking for their messages to be read. I'm receiving a lot of Twitter direct messages and Facebook posts.

Because I'm in the House of Assembly, it's a little difficult to keep track of all of that. I'd really encourage people to email us because then it's very easy for us to keep track of what's been read, we can print them off a little easier. It's just a way of better ensuring that the message gets here to the House of Assembly.

If you're interested in getting your message presented in the House, please email me or one of my colleagues and we'd be happy to bring your messages to the House. If there are messages that you've sent your own MHAs and they haven't been acknowledged in the House or you haven't gotten a response, you can forward those to us as well. We have some of those that we'll be getting to a little later on this evening. There's a stack of them there and happy to talk to those as well.

People are presenting all kinds of creative and innovative ideas as well. As I've said before, I don't necessarily support them all. I haven't had time necessarily to even consider them all, but I do think that different perspectives need to be brought to the floor of the House of Assembly.

Here's something from Mary Anne that was sent to multiple MHAs, all Opposition from what I can tell from this email. It came in less than 24 hours ago: Our province of Newfoundland and Labrador has been in a deficit crisis for a great part of our history. Our net debt-to-GDP ratio at the present time is 30.8, RBC, Canadian federal and provincial fiscal tables as presented in the House yesterday during the filibuster.

Since 1991, the ratios were over 60, 11 times. I am not an economist so I don't know exactly what all this means, but it seems to me that we were a lot worse off economically so many times in the past than we are right now. The ratios were a lot greater. It's just that the dollar has inflated so much that we're talking billions instead of millions, so it sounds a lot worse.

Our Liberal government seems more concerned with pleasing the banks than it is with promoting the welfare of its people. The people didn't cause the debt, yet we're the ones who are paying for it. Wouldn't it be better to make minimum payments on the interest until we weather the storm, and in the meantime use stimulus measures to create a healthier economy so we'll be in a better place to pay down the debt?

As I said, I'm not an economist, and all this may seem too simple. I just love my province and I do not want to see our people, especially the most vulnerable, suffer the impact of such a severe austerity budget. Please take the time to view the following YouTube video of an interview with Mark Blythe; he's a Scottish political scientist and professor of international political economy at Brown University. He wrote a book entitled *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*.

So thank you Mary Anne for that different perspective on Newfoundland and Labrador's fiscal situation. I know Members across the House seem to find it funny and they're mocking the email and they're mocking me for standing and reading it, but I think it's important for everybody's perspectives to be heard. I agree that there could be a lot more done to grow a healthy economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Just last summer when the Liberals were still in their multi-month campaign mode, several of their candidates – some of the ones that were successful and some of the ones that weren't – declared themselves captains of industry – was that the term?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. KENT: Captains of industry. In the spring, they had a big announcement and revealed their LEAP tour. They were going to do one of their many listening tours, ironically, and their captains of industry were going to travel the province and come back in September of 2015 with a detailed economic action plan, the Liberal economic action plan – LEAP.

And September came, October came, early in November the writ was dropped in the general

election campaign, and the red book came out with a week or so to go in the general election campaign – the red book of broken promises – but still no LEAP. So then we thought, okay, they didn't get it finished, maybe they'll continue to work on it as they settle in to their new offices and maybe when the budget comes out, we'll see what their economic plan consists of.

Well, LEAP was a flop. There is still no plan, still no new initiatives to diversify and stimulate and grow the economy, despite months of promising it and despite assembling a team of leaders, captains of industry who were going to come up with a plan. I think that's another reason why people are so upset with this budget that's all about borrowing and spending and doesn't solve anything; it doesn't do anything to solve the spending problem that we have as a province. It's one that we acknowledge.

The rate of spending has grown significantly. We've taken steps in recent years to curb spending – we have, but there's still more work that needs to be done. There are lots of aspects of government, for a population our size, that aren't sustainable. Part of the solution is not just on the expenditure side, it's on the revenue side. We need to grow the economy. We need to create jobs. We need to stimulate economic activity.

I think Mary Anne has raised some interesting points. I don't necessarily agree with everything that's written in some of these emails, but hearing these perspectives from people around Newfoundland and Labrador certainly proves the point that there are alternatives, that there are other ways to tackle these challenges. Economic growth has to be part of that.

I hope in the minister's travels – the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development has been busy; he's been criss-crossing the country. I hope that he will be able to stand in this House during this debate and maybe present some ideas and maybe tell us about some of the work he's been doing to fulfill that Liberal promise of economic diversification.

Politicians have talked about it for decades. In our case, though, we were able to diversify the economy in a multitude of ways. We were able

to grow and develop some new sectors in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: The heckling and the nastiness continues. At this hour in the morning, I don't think it's necessarily appropriate, but if that's how they want to conduct themselves, then that's just fine.

I acknowledge there are some Members across the House that are listening rather intently and listening respectfully and I appreciate that, Mr. Chair. The foolishness is a little unfortunate when we're talking about some pretty serious issues.

We will support any initiatives to help diversify the economy, but the only thing that we saw in this budget was a continuation of initiatives that were created on our watch. There are some good things happening within government when it comes to economic development. They've been going on for a while.

There are some initiatives within our Forestry and Agrifoods Agency and within the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development and within our Research & Development Corporation that may lead to really good things for our economy, particularly in rural parts of the province.

So that's something we support and it can transcend politics. I think there's an opportunity for us to work together to grow certain sectors within our economy, but this budget is not about any of that. This budget is about taxing; this budget is about borrowing. It's not about solutions that are going to make life better for people in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a result of this budget, our lives have all gotten a lot worse.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand, once again, in this House and speak to the budget, or I guess the bills that are associated to the budget.

Mr. Chair, as the Member for Mount Pearl North has said, the emails, Facebook messages and tweets keep rolling in. I'm really glad to see it, because as I've said a number of times – and the Member for Mount Pearl North and other Members have said – I have never seen the level of engagement that's after occurring here over the last few days.

I encourage all Members opposite, if you don't follow some of this stuff – I know some of you do, but if you don't, I really encourage you to just take a look at social media and see what's happening. These emails are real, they're legit. The Facebook messages, the tweets; I mean there are people up here now. It's almost 2 in the morning and I'm still getting tweets of people that are commenting on what's being said, that are asking questions and raising concerns. It's amazing – it's absolutely amazing.

If nothing else comes out of this – and I hope there's more that comes out of this, but if nothing comes out of this – I think that we've really engaged a lot of people, unfortunately, in a more negative way because of the negativity around some of the things in the budget. I acknowledge there are some good things, absolutely I do. People are engaged, and it's really good to see. They want their voices to be heard and as long as I have the opportunity and others have the opportunity, their voices will be heard.

So with that said, some people are sending messages and asking questions about other things that are not necessarily around this bill or the budget, per se, but it is important. If they're going to bring it forward and they want it said, then I, as one Member, will certainly bring it forward.

I just have one tweet here from a person, Morgan. What Morgan just said was: Working full time, a MUN student, no kids, no car. You're hitting the nail on the head, payday to payday. So basically Morgan is confirming the whole concept of living payday to payday. There are an awful lot of people like Morgan that are living payday to payday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: We have a big round of applause here as the Minister of Justice arrives. It's good to see you looking nice and sharp. I'm glad to see. It looks like you're really ready to get involved in the debate. We're looking forward to hearing from you, so that's good.

The next issue I want to raise: there was a gentleman who sent me a tweet as well. He said WHSCC, and the CPP clawback associated with that, that's my levy. What about that? Now, that's an issue that's not associated to these bills, it is not associated to the budget. But seeing as how we can talk about anything, and we have lots of time to talk about a whole bunch of things, I will raise that issue on his behalf.

His issue, of course, is around the workers' compensation system; an issue which is near and dear to my heart, an issue which I have raised in this House of Assembly when I was with the now government – but at the time when we were Opposition – and I was the critic for Service NL.

That is a legitimate issue people have around the workers' compensation system, around the levels, around the caps, around some of the clawbacks and so on. There are an awful lot of people I have come in contact with that there is no doubt they are having their issues and their concerns with the workers' compensation system. Some of them, I believe, have not received the justice they should.

I know there was a workers' compensation review because that's supposed to be done every five years. I know it was done approximately five – 10 years ago now, there was one done and it died on the shelf. So we went through this whole review of the workers' comp system. There would have been a panel, if you will, of someone from the union, someone from labour, someone from the business community and then a chair, sort of an independent person.

There was a review done. They went around the province taking submissions. They did a whole report and recommendations. To my knowledge there was little to nothing done with it. It was just shelved, basically, for the most part.

Then, fast forward five years later, we had another workers' comp review done because it was time to do it again. That was done a couple of years ago and that's been shelved. That's just sitting there on the shelf. I raised that with the former administration and nothing got done. There were a whole bunch of recommendations but no movement, no legislation coming forward to make any amendments to the workers' compensation act.

Of course now we have a new administration and a new Minister of Service NL who is responsible. We can no longer blame it on the former administration, now we're talking to the new administration. You have this report in your possession that was done based on consultations around the province, representation from labour, representation from the business community. The chair of the workers' comp board, Mr. Tucker, I believe, was the third person. There was some question as to whether or not that was a conflict and he should have been there or not, based on the fact that he was the chair of the workers' comp board or director or whatever, CEO or whatever the term was, but he was nonetheless.

They did do a report. There were a whole bunch of recommendations to reform the workers' comp system, including presumptive cancer by the way, that was in the last report and is in this report – presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters which this administration, during the election campaign, committed to do to make those changes. That was a commitment. I was there at the announcement. I actually was the emcee, if you will, at the Central Fire Station during the election campaign about the presumptive cancer legislation that we were going to do.

I know we're only five or six months into the mandate, but I say to the government on behalf of the firefighters for that particular recommendation, but also for all the recommendations that are contained within that report, the second legislative review done in 10 years – let's get some legislation on the floor of the House of Assembly to reform the workers' compensation act so that we can take care of the injured workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I say to the gentleman who did send me that tweet, thank you for that. Thank you for reminding me of that. I've now put it out there. I've put it out there in the past to the former government; I'm now putting it out to the new government that the workers' compensation act needs to be amended. There are a whole bunch of recommendations in a report that was done, gone through the process, a legislative process, and consultations done throughout the province. You have your recommendations, you have your report. Can't blame it on the old administration anymore, get 'er done. I'm just putting it out there.

I only have a minute left so I'm going to read one email. I have several but I'll read just one. This one is around the budget. I received this yesterday: Since tonight is on Bill 19 regarding the 15 per cent insurance increase, wouldn't that also apply to ambulance and fire departments? Therefore, the cost of an ambulance would cost \$150 instead of \$120. Income Support pays the cost for recipients, which is more of taxpayers' dollars, or Income Support pays for taxi bills for people getting to medical appointments.

A 15 per cent increase in insurance would see a 25 per cent increase in charges for companies to recover the costs. Mainly private ambulance services, volunteer fire departments and the cost to the seven departments of the St. John's Regional Fire Department would feel the major increase of these impacts.

Unfortunately I'm out of time, but I'm going to come back to this email because I want to speak to it.

Thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I'm happy to be back here in the House of Assembly.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Well, I wouldn't say fresh. I know it's unparliamentary for someone else to say this, but I can recognize it myself, that I just did arrive.

I managed to go to Ottawa today. I'm going to report back on some progress we made today. I don't think there's been much progress made here in this House, apparently, but we'll get to that throughout the next number of hours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. A. PARSONS: I see Statler and Waldorf are still doing great over there.

Mr. Chair, I have been following along as best I can and watching this and keeping tabs of it, but it is good to be back in here where we belong. I'm happy to be here.

Today, I actually was in Ottawa. I got to meet with the hon. Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety. He is absolutely a great legislator, a great person. Someone with his electoral track record, it goes to show that not only is he very electable, but that comes back down to his two main traits, which are intelligence and the fact that he is so personable.

Normally, I would never have left, but when you book these meetings – obviously they're done in advance – you can't anticipate what is going to happen. When you get these opportunities to have meetings with ministers, you have to take them.

I can't say what the previous relationship was like when it comes to the federal government, but I can say right now that the relationship we have with our federal government is absolutely stellar. The fact that I can call the ministers, call them personally, and say we'd like to come up and discuss these issues which are important to the province, and they say come up and make that happen, that's a great sign.

Today, I met with Minister Goodale. Where he is the lead minister responsible for public safety in this country, I talked to him about things that fall under my portfolio which include corrections, which include policing. We had a great chat.

One of the things we actually did talk about obviously was our penitentiary, which is something that is top of mind for everybody. It is universally known that the facility needs to be replaced. But the challenge obviously, when we talk about our fiscal situation, is that it's a hard one to do given the huge capital cost that comes with a facility of that size.

I had an opportunity to talk to Minister Goodale about the pressures we are facing in this province when it comes to corrections. We have significant pressures. Our numbers are going up amongst both men and women. We have serious issues when it comes to remand. We have issues when it comes to bail supervision. That is something that was cut back in 2013. It was the budget of 2013. That was a PC decision. That leads to issues where we have people in custody when the fact is that perhaps sentences can be better served out in the community.

Earlier this year we had issues with our female population in Clarendville, not being able to maintain that and having to go to Her Majesty's Penitentiary. Now, the positive side of that was that due to the great work done by the women and men at Her Majesty's in the Department of Justice, they took – that was something that was a huge concern for us, very troublesome, very worrying. It turned into something where I actually went down because there were some complaints. There were complaints from the Members of the NDP. But, unlike the NDP, I actually took the time to go down and visit. I went down and talked to the inmates who came from Clarendville, had been brought in. They were universal in that they – again, nobody wants to be incarcerated. Well, I can't say that. There are rare cases where there are people that are institutionalized; I get that. Generally speaking – obviously, very generally speaking, people don't want to be incarcerated.

These individuals, who I talked to, were happy to be in St. John's as opposed to Clarendville. They like the programming; they had a good rapport with their guards. That's necessary when it comes to corrections are those guards, those correctional officers, those men and women. It's a tough job; it's a 24-7 job. The rapport they had made that stay that much better. That's safer for all the individuals involved. They were quite clear that while you don't want to be

incarcerated, they were quite happy with where they were. I got that first-hand, directly. That's what you need to do. You need to get out and talk first-hand, directly to these people.

One of the things I discussed with the hon. minister today is the fact that we all know that coming up with the funding necessary – I'm going to throw a number out there; about 20 per cent of our inmates are federal inmates. The federal government has an ESA, it's a Services Agreement with us, it expires in 2018, where they provide us funding for housing federal inmates. They realized the role that they have to play here as well and they realize the capacity issues that we have amongst our various facilities across the province.

One of the issues I brought up was that one of the immediate things you can do, and one of the things we hear – and this is a sad story, and we've all heard this in the news. People are going into court now pleading guilty or getting sentenced after going through a trial, and saying I want increased time so I can get to a federal institution so I can get the better programming.

The good news today was that I relayed this concern to the minister and his staff. They said: Do you know what? We're going to work with you. We are going to work with you on that because we realize that programming is an issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: There's always that belief when it comes to sentencing there are the fundamental principles of sentencing: deterrence, rehabilitation and denunciation comes with it. There is a mentality out there that we should put people away, lock them up and throw away the key. It's hard not to see that side, especially if you're the family member of someone that's been wronged.

That's not necessarily the best thing for people. Rehabilitation is key. That's not just for the people involved. If you want to get down to dollars and cents, rehabilitation is key because it's actually a cost savings. So it's good on so many different levels. Obviously there has to be an analysis done, and that's why you always look at everybody to see if they can fit back into society and the issues that they have.

One of the big issues driving our prison population is drugs and addiction, mental health issues. We realize that, and that we need to do more. I've talked to the staff down there that work on that, and they say that's an issue. That's a pressing concern for us. We went up today and we talked to the federal government, and they listened. They're going to work with us on that to help deal with this situation.

That's just something we discussed, literally, less than 12 hours ago. So I look forward to those continuing discussions and, hopefully, seeing something – and I'm not talking about in the future; I'm talking about very soon I'd like to see the actual specifics and details. So again, I have no doubt that Minister Goodale's not listening to this cast right now. I think they've got bigger issues, but I would say a very big thank you to that minister, to his staff, the fact that they took us in and listened to us.

That's indicative of the relationship right now that we have with the federal government. It's a relationship that didn't exist previously. Now again, I'm not going to put all that blame on previous Members. We all know the former federal administration, there were issues there. We get that. But what I can talk about is the relationship we have now. That's evidenced by the fact that the federal minister of finance is coming down, I think, next week. He's coming here next week to sit with us to meet with our minister.

The Minister of Transportation and Works has had a number of meetings with his federal counterpart. We've got money coming down here, funding coming down here that's much needed, much deserved, and we've (inaudible). I know actually our Minister for Municipal Affairs has had meetings with Minister Goodale as part of the emergency preparedness for the fire and emergency services, as well as with his counterparts. That's why, again, \$570 million, I think, was the number – I might get that wrong, but significant amounts of money.

So that brings it back to the thing I'm talking about right now and we've been talking about here, overall, which is the budget. The fact is I've heard the word austerity tossed around, and I think that's actually completely false by the literal term of austerity, which is the fact that

because of a number of factors which you discussed, there's been an increase in spending, but when you talk about – and again, some of those increases were things that were decided by previous administrations that we have to live with. The thing is that there is a significant amount of capital spending going on in this budget. It's going on in our towns and our communities. We're seeing roads. I know that there's stuff in a number of districts here. Stuff for communities when it comes to wastewater, everything. These are things that we need.

So I look forward to that continued relationship with the federal government to make sure things happen for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and I look forward to having another opportunity again soon to speak in this debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Again, it's an absolute pleasure to get up at 2:18 in the morning and represent the district that I represent, the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. I want to just start off by – it was nice to see the minister and I'm glad, Minister, that you had the meetings and you talked about an issue that really strikes home with me.

I had a parent that called me about her son. He just mentioned there that time how people today are looking to get that extra couple of days on their sentences so that their children can get rehabilitated. We can throw people in prison all the time and it seems like if you look at the court system, there are so many people coming out and getting back in again. The proper guidance, the proper rehabilitation, is not there. When you see people asking to get a federal sentence so that they can go away to get what they need, is sad.

The minister brought up a point. He said about the relationship with Ottawa. On this side of the House, as Opposition, we are happy that there is a good relationship. I'm sure if we were in government today, that our relationship, no matter if there was a Liberal government in

Ottawa and PC government in Newfoundland, we'd be in a whole lot better place than we were with the former administration that was up there – I think they just acknowledged that.

Listen; no matter what side of the fence you're on in politics, you should be at it for the right reasons. I applaud the federal government. I really do hope that they come through for Newfoundland and Labrador because it's all about our people. It's all about who we represent and anything that can come good from the federal government, whether it's money for the justice system or it's money for municipal affairs or it's money for transportation – we're not here to criticize and be critics of that stuff. Listen, if we are going to be able to get more money to help with boil orders in Newfoundland and Labrador so we don't have as many, great. That's what we are here for, and I'm glad that's the way it is.

I am going to go back to the budget a little bit now and just talk about – funny, on the way home this evening, I stopped into the store that I always stop in to, got a little bit of gas, a bag of Hawkins Cheezies and went on home. I went into the store – and in my community of Flatrock, everyone knows me by a different name than what you people here know me. My nickname is hype.

One of my buddies was there and he was going out to his garage and he asked me to drop out for a Pepsi. I said: No, b'y. He looked at me and he said: Keep 'er going; you're doing a good job in there. I was looking at him and I didn't know that he was following what's happening here in the House of Assembly.

He said: You're doing a good job, at least someone's up talking for the concerns of the people. I looked at him and he said: No, no, we're watching it. I was watching a bit of it this evening. It's good to see what ye fellows are doing in there. It's nice to see that you're standing up for the people. I was like, wow. It's unbelievable the number of people that are engaged in what's happening in the House of Assembly today. I know years ago before I got in, you never followed any of this. Today people are following it.

I think the idea of the filibuster, what we're doing; it's a really engaging thing for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. People are really engaged in what's happening here. It's good because the more we get people engaged and get them talking about what's happening and get them coming up with their ideas and solutions, the better we are as legislators, the better we are as people that will be in here to make decisions for them.

When we started the process – and we used to go around one time, I remember you'd go all over. The Minister of Finance would go and he'd consult in Lab City and make sure there were a couple in Labrador, the West Coast and the Northern Peninsula, go around the province and you'd hear from all the different groups that come in and make their presentations. We all know everybody would make the presentation; everybody would have their own little niche, reason why they do it.

This administration did something a little different. They went out and they had public consultations. A lot of the public showed up. A lot of people went online and gave their suggestions and made phone calls and told everybody – like I said earlier, and the Minister of Education misconstrued what I was saying. He wasn't even close. I was talking about how a lady talked to him – I didn't say it; she was telling me about the lights on at Confederation Building. The Minister of Education got up and put his whole spiel on that, but that's what he does anyway.

We all had suggestions; we all had ideas. What happened in this budget is people put time and effort into their suggestions. They put the time and effort into going to these meetings. They put the time and effort into writing emails. They put the time and effort into contacting their MHA to let them know. Then this budget came down and it was completely, completely different than what they anticipated. They all had ideas, perhaps we can do this.

Nobody wanted what this is going to do to the economy. Nobody wanted to attack every person in this province. This budget affects everybody and that's why people are so engaged. If this was a budget that affected public servants, you wouldn't see as many people upset. And

probably if the taxes went on the middle class, you wouldn't see so many people upset. If the taxes were on seniors and people on low incomes and fixed incomes, but the whole range of – and that's what the problem is here. People are generally concerned because every time you reach into their pockets, you're affecting every person, every man, woman and child in this province with this budget.

Now, no matter what you do – and you'll say, well, if we don't do anything it's going to be affecting every man, woman and child in the province. Listen, we understand the fiscal situation we're in and we're not saying don't do anything. I hear every time someone across the way gets up and they'll say, if we didn't do anything, like the Opposition – we're not saying that. We're definitely not saying that. Listen, we came in last year with our own budget where times were not as bad as what they are now because of the price of oil, but when we came in last year in our budget, we increased the HST. We increased fees. There were two different levels of taxation that were added on, and increased taxation. We did that.

The funny thing about that is, in political terms – and doing the right thing is what I'm glad we did, but politically in an election year to increase taxes is definitely a no-no. To tell people you're going to go knock on their door and you're going to increase their taxes and expect to get their vote? I don't think so. But it was the right thing to do and I'm glad our leader did that, and we did that as a party. We paid the consequences, but did the right thing.

So we're not saying just don't do anything. If we didn't do anything, we'd be paying \$50,000 for every – but that's not the point. We're not saying that. What people in Newfoundland and Labrador are saying, you're trying to do it all at once. You're hitting everybody in society. You're going to make it difficult for people to live. You're going to make it difficult – we talked today about taxes on insurance. I had a friend of mine send me an email today and he told me he works two jobs. His wife works a job, he's two children, and he talked about insurance. His insurance payment a month is \$450.

We all know that. That's with kids and insurance, but an extra 15 per cent on that is going to make it difficult. He said he is doing okay, but he wants to make sure that his family are doing well. He said: The effects of that on me are going to mean that I'm not going to go out – him and his wife, they go out probably once a month and they'll have a nice dinner somewhere. He said that's gone. What you done there, that's gone.

We look at the effect of the 15 per cent on insurance and the effect on what it did to this one family. By not going out to supper – and I don't say he goes too fancy or anything at all, but maybe it's nice that him and the wife gets out on a Saturday night or a Friday night. People like doing that.

Just imagine what's going to happen to small businesses in the area, the restaurant owner. Right now, when people have that extra few dollars in their pocket, they are not going to go to the restaurant anymore. What happens to that restaurant owner? It's a job to stay in business. So what happens there, he can't stay in business. What happens with the 10 employees that he employs?

We have to look at the overall effect of what is happening with the budget. I think that we haven't looked at it and that's the problem.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour to stand here this evening. I just got back a couple of hours ago. It is 2:28 in the evening. I get 10 minutes to speak, and I'm sure I'm going to speak again later this evening. For the folks watching back home in the historic District of Bonavista –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: – which runs from George's Brook-Milton on up to Smith Sound, Burgoyne's Cove. It goes from Bunyan's Cove up to Bonavista and around several other beautiful communities in the district.

Before I get to the meat of my speech here tonight, I just want to let everyone know we are debating Bill 14, which is on the Deficit Reduction Levy. Also, we have Bill 19 in the pipelines as well, which is taxes on insurance.

Before I move on again to the speech, I just want to – a money bill allows you to have some freedom to say a few words. I want to talk about some good things that have been going on in my district the last couple weeks. I don't know if I'm going to get a chance to do another Member's statement, so this is why I am going to do this right now. I want to send out congratulations to the C.L.B. of Port Rexton-Trinity East who put on a wonderful inspection. My friend here for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville is very familiar with that organization.

I also wanted to congratulate the cadets and officers and staff of RCSCC Clode Sound who had their annual ceremonial review this past Thursday. It's their 25th anniversary this year, so I want to send out congratulations to them.

This past Saturday I had the honour to be inspecting officer for RCSCC 84 Golden Hind, my former corps. They did a wonderful job. This is their 63rd year, so this is a big thing.

I also want to send out condolences to the Johnson family in Little Catalina. Johnny Johnson, who I'm very, very familiar with, he's the president of our Legion in Catalina. He passed away yesterday in a tragic car accident, so I just wanted to send condolences along to his family as well.

Yesterday, I think one of the Members for the Third Party mentioned that this is the job we applied for. That's true. When I left the navy in October 2014, this was the job that I applied for. I was thankfully successful because I wanted to do some good things for the people in the District of Bonavista.

I think I've been very, very outspoken. Sometimes I get myself in trouble with some comments I make. I'm going to try not to do that here tonight.

MR. K. PARSONS: It's something about that seat.

MR. KING: I have the Member for Cape St. Francis there heckling me. That's fine; he's a good fellow.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's Keith Russell's old seat.

MR. KING: Oh okay, Keith Russell's old seat. That's the former minister of mumbo-jumbo.

In all seriousness, this is a job we applied for and this is the job that I got. I'm not going to play the blame game. We were left with a mess, a \$2.7 billion mess. How do we get rid of that deficit? We got it down to \$1.8 billion this year and over a period of seven years we're going to be back into surplus.

The Member for Cape St. Francis said you can't be afraid to go out into your districts. I'm out in my district every weekend. I go out to the charter nights. I go out to the firemen's balls. I go out to the cadet inspections. I go out to all the coffee shops and the grocery stores and whatever else because you have to get out and face the people.

Shortly after the budget, I held two public consultations just to gauge the feeling in the district. People weren't happy about the temporary deficit levy. That's expressly what – this is our biggest concern is the fact that you're taxing people on the low-income side of things.

I went back and I said, you know what – I had 50 people at one meeting, 80 people at the meeting and I said, whatever you say here today I'm going to go back to caucus and express what I'm hearing. I'm going to bring it back to the Minister of Finance, which I did.

That was a concern for me because you have that low-income area, the most vulnerable. Now I'm going to talk a little bit about things we have in place and I spoke a little bit on this yesterday when we brought forward the income supplements bill. I said this is tough for a lot of people to swallow. Do you know what? I've always said, and we, as a government, always said that this is a temporary measure. When we have the means to get rid of it or change it, then we're going to do that.

I believe it was two weeks ago or three weeks ago that our federal counterparts came down from Ottawa. The Minister of Finance and the Premier have been working on a deal for quite a long time to defer payments of the equalization repayment. That's deferred until 2022. That gives us enough time to get us back to balance and we're able to reduce it. So now only 26 per cent of taxpayers here in Newfoundland and Labrador actually pay the levy. I would suggest in the District of Bonavista – the 74 per cent of people who don't pay it – that would be significantly higher.

Yesterday, I talked about how my district has a lot of seasonal workers, a lot of people who work in the tourism industry, a lot of minimum-wage workers. There are a lot of good jobs there as well. When you get \$627,000 in JCP in round one, that's good for the organizations, but it tells you a lot about your district as well, that you have people who need top ups and they had extra money to get you over the top.

I have to thank the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills for getting me those funds. That's going to help a lot of people in my district. It's going to help a lot of non-profit organizations do the good work that they continue to do. All eight of those organizations are non-profits. They provide great, great revenue-driving initiatives for the District of Bonavista, most of them in the tourism sector.

We talked about the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. So when we changed it, we changed it. I look forward to the day that levy is not even in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: Do you know what? We know it's a tough budget, but it's not all bad. The Member for Cape St. Francis, my good friend over there, he says it's not all bad either. It's nice see support from the opposite side.

People have asked me: What have you been doing since you've been an MHA? We've had some cuts in the area. When we have the AES office close in Bonavista, I didn't like that. The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills got an earful every day. I did my best to try to

change that, work with the community. Unfortunately, it couldn't be done.

The Bonavista hospital, which lost its X-ray services from 4 p.m. until 8 a.m. and lost it on the weekends – I'm working with the Minister of Health and Community Services on a daily basis. I met with him right away. I said, Minister, this doesn't make sense. You're not going to save \$90,000 by doing this. I met with him several times. He met with the Town of Bonavista, he met with the chamber of commerce and we had a great meeting. So he went back to the drawing board and sent all this information that we presented him back to Eastern Health. They're currently conducting a review.

Now, there's a protest in Bonavista tomorrow and I encourage protests about these cuts. One fellow could have been seriously injured in a motorcycle accident and he had to go to Clarendville after hours. This is what I've been fighting for. Thank God the Minister of Health and Community Services is open to hearing our concerns and open to change. I feel cautiously optimistic that we can get that service back after hours because I am not happy with the way that Eastern Health – and I'm not saying anything bad about Eastern Health. I want to have a good relationship with them, but I wasn't happy about the way those decisions have been made.

The Minister of Health and Community Services is not – I can't put words in his mouth. He looked at the stats that we had and the issues that we brought forward. We're a growing region, a growth centre. So you can't take a service away from a growth centre, such as X-ray services, after hours.

I look forward to the coming days when the minister gets all his numbers back from Eastern Health, and then hopefully I can have a positive announcement. I can go out and tell the people who are protesting tomorrow, b'ys, here's what I did for you. I worked with the minister; I worked with the local community to try to effect some positive change.

My time is running short. I hope to have several other opportunities to speak tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, it is a pleasure to get back up again and talk. It's very interesting.

I'm glad I listened to the conversation and the speech just from the hon. Member. I don't understand a few things on it so if that changes – I spoke to a person in Bonavista, too, and they had concerns. It wasn't a former Member, as you'll probably allude to. I do speak to him every now and then, too, because he's a friend of mine.

I spoke to a person from Bonavista also. The reason this person was so upset was that his Member was voting for the budget, yet all the concerns that he just named off that time were in the budget. So he couldn't understand why his Member would be voting for a budget when there was such hardship caused to his district. The hon. Member just said that the announcement of the X-rays is going to going to stay in Bonavista –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) district.

MR. K. PARSONS: Well, you're more than optimistic because the people who elected you are very upset over that. They want you to make sure that doesn't happen. What the person told me is – just think about it. You break a leg or you break an arm and the pain of it all, the pain of having a broken leg. Let me tell you, I broke a few bones in my day and was very fortunate to be able to get to the hospital as fast as I could.

AN HON. MEMBER: You broke (inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: I broke a scattered one myself too, now, mind you. I'm not saying anything there.

What the person explained to me was that just think about having to drive from Bonavista to Clarendville. On a rush, you do it in about an hour probably. You'd have to be flying up the highway. Now that's what she told me. If it's an emergency situation you –

AN HON. MEMBER: Weather dependent.

MR. K. PARSONS: Right, weather dependent. That would be you're kind of breaking the law to get there as fast as you can. The road is not the best in some places. It's not bad, but it's not the best. Then to have a broken bone and to be driving along that – and it was a service that people used.

The same thing to what the Member said; it's a growing region, so they couldn't understand why a service as important as an X-ray, as getting something diagnosed, a broken bone – listen, we understand. Everyone will talk about Newfoundland and we look at the geography of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's probably one of our problems, but it's probably the reason why we all live here. We have the Bonavista Peninsula where you have to go down the Trans-Canada Highway and you have the Burin Peninsula opposite that and you go down the Trans-Canada, and that's where we live to.

People in Burin and people in Bonavista, people in Twillingate, people in Burgeo, people right across the Island, we don't have a connection that goes around the coastline; our connection is up and down the Trans-Canada Highway. That's the way it is. It is a huge problem because of the cost of giving services that people really deserve, like getting an X-ray or getting proper medical care, like having an AES office for people to go.

I said to the Member earlier that I saw where the lady pulled a bus or the mobile home right across in front and she was so upset about the office getting closed. That's the whole problem with the budget. I know Members across the way are frustrated and I know that you're upset, yet you never had the guts to vote against the budget. You never had the guts to stand up and speak for your people.

In the area of Bonavista – I watched one night on TV and I saw it is the oldest library outside of St. John's. According to the people that were on that night, a very well used library is going to be closed down. Now, you're talking the library, you're talking health care, you're talking where people go to AES and get their income support and everything else that they need, closed down.

I don't know if the Member understands why there are protests, why people are upset. Another thing there was jobs lost at the health care there also. The lady was telling me for laundry services and stuff like this, I think there were four jobs altogether lost there.

In a part of rural Newfoundland, the things I just named up that time from your district alone, it's amazing that you can stand up on the day of the budget and vote for it. Because what you done, you voted against the people who elected you.

Listen, I stand here every day, when I get up in the House of Assembly I always do it – it might drive them nuts, but I always get up and tell who got me here, where I'm from. Do you know why? Because that's why I'm here. First and foremost, I'm here to represent the people who elected me.

Now, I'm here also to represent overall Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to do the best we can for our population, and that's everybody. People say to me all the time – there was a gentleman one time and he was known to be a good Liberal, we'll say, and there's not many of them down my way, by the way. There are not a lot of them. I live in a pretty good Tory district.

Anyway, he had a problem and I helped him out a good bit. We're good friends. Today, I don't know, he wouldn't tell me – he did not have a sign on his lawn, we'll say, the last time, so I do not know if I had him or not. I'm elected to represent him just like I am to represent the people that come out and knock on doors with me and put signs down, and so are you.

You're elected to represent the people in Bonavista. I'm not saying you're afraid to go home. That's too foolish to be talking about. I wouldn't say that you're afraid to go home. I don't know you enough to say whether you're afraid or not. I wouldn't be able to say that. What I did say is make sure you stand up for the people and go to everything and don't get away from anything.

I understand protesting. I saw an article that you had in the paper where people threatened your family and stuff like that. You have to understand as a Member from rural

Newfoundland when you named off all the things that happened to your district tonight, why people in your district are upset. They're upset because they feel they're not being represented well. They feel that you as, a representative, are letting them down. They feel too much too fast – it's what I said here before.

When you're talking people's health, when you're talking about an X-ray machine that someone is now going to have to now drive an hour and 10, an hour and 15 minutes to get an X-ray on the weekends and in the nighttime – people don't have a choice when a bone gets broken. It could be a child, it could be a senior, it could be anybody at all. The people in the Bonavista area always had that service and now they're going to lose that service.

You're talking about a library that's the oldest library in the province, outside of St. John's, that's going to be shut down. You talk about the AES office in Bonavista going to be closed. You're talking about jobs being lost. You can put up your hands like this all you want.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: I'm just telling you that I had a call from a constituent of yours. That person told me about all – that's how I know what's happening in Bonavista. Actually, I got an email in my office that I'll bring down and show you, if you want me to.

Those are the things that people are upset about all over Newfoundland and Labrador. Along with all those cuts – and what we've said here the last number of days, this budget is all about cut, cut, cut, tax, tax, tax. I just named off cuts in your district. I never even spoke about the tax increases. I never even spoke about what people are really upset about.

So can you understand why people didn't want you to vote for the budget, why people in your district wanted you to represent them? People elect us, Mr. Chair, to stand up for our people, to advocate on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, to stand up for people that need X-rays, to stand up for people

who use the library, to stand up for people that use income support.

I applaud the hon. Member tonight for getting up. I'm glad you got up and spoke tonight. I hope all Members do get up and speak. Justify to the people in your district why you voted for the budget – justify to them why you voted for this budget.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Mr. Doom and Gloom from Cape St. Francis. But the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have lost their bounce. Look at him, he's loving it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Don't get caught (inaudible).

MR. KING: No, no. What he wants to talk about is all the bad that's going on. Why did I vote for the budget when all this stuff is going on? He's talking about reeling me in. You're not going to reel me in; I'm not going to say anything off the cuff or anything like that. I'm going to talk about the good things that are in the budget for the District of Bonavista.

We talked about some of the challenges I have. I'm a very proactive person; I'm a very proactive MHA. I like to be on top of things, but if I need to react to something, then I will. This is the stance I've taken. He talked about a number of different things. If you don't go out past the overpass I suppose you don't know what's on the go in rural Newfoundland.

We had someone on the other side talk about – maybe it was the Member for Mount Pearl North – diversification. He couldn't have read page 14 in the Budget Speech. It talks about our investments, what are we doing for diversification.

The fishery on the Bonavista Peninsula, in my district, has always been huge. I talked about the closure of the fish plants years ago and how devastating it was. You saw my hometown of Catalina go from 1,200 people down to 700 people in a span of about 10 years. That's the

devastation it caused, one of the hardest hit areas.

We were heavily reliant on the groundfish. My friend, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture has – “We are investing \$2 million in new Seafood and Aquaculture Innovation and Transition Program supporting technology and innovation in harvesting, processing, aquaculture and marketing with a focus on transitioning to ground fish” – transition to groundfish. “As well, government is allocating \$100,000 to establish a Fisheries Advisory Council to provide industry stakeholders with the opportunity to offer advice on present or emerging issues in the fishing industry. The Council will play a key role in the creation of a strategic action plan on cod revitalization.”

When I talk about my area and how hard hit it was by the collapse of the cod fishery in 1992, I’m looking forward to July 1 and that weekend to get out and do my fishing. When you go out there, I can go out and get my five fish and be back in less than hour. Most of that time is transit to the grounds. I look forward to seeing the groundfish come back.

My hometown of Catalina sees crab boats from all over the province come into our port. The Town of Bonavista has a very, very active crab plant. They hire over 300 seasonal workers. The largest employer in the district – that’s seasonal.

With the revitalization of the groundfish and the cod fishery, I look forward to the opportunities that are presented here. Look at my hometown of Catalina in the municipality of Trinity Bay North. The municipality of Trinity Bay North, for two years, tried to get a meeting with the minister of Municipal Affairs and they couldn’t get one. I got them a meeting within two months – two months.

The Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development met with the town council on economic opportunities that are there. We’re looking at the OCI plant – and I hope there’s a deal close being done on that, that’s going to bring a new investor to the area, a multi-million dollar investor that’s going to come in and do some very good things. I don’t want to get too up on that – give too much detail on that.

The Member for Cape St. Francis talked about the Catalina library. I met with the town council on that. That’s not slated to close until 2017. I’m dedicated to working with the town council, working with the community to keep that library open. So he can talk about all the doom and gloom and why I shouldn’t have voted for the budget, but I’m talking about the good things here.

One of the reasons is this \$2 million; another \$100,000 in fisheries funding talking about the culinary cod project for the municipality of Trinity Bay North which they are looking at doing. That’s related to the fishery.

Forestry and agriculture is another big industry up at the other end of my district in the Lethbridge, Musgravetown area. When the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development visited the district in April, we met with the farmers. We are allowing more Crown land to be allocated to those farmers so they can get the land they need to grow their farms to provide products to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on a local basis.

We met with Sexton Lumber – talk about forestry – to get them more access to lumber to grow their operation that will create more jobs. Sexton Lumber is the largest full-time employer in my district at 125 jobs. That’s full-time jobs. We’re going to help them get access to land that’s close by so it reduces their costs and they’re able to expand and grow their business to hire more people.

That’s another reason why I voted for the budget. Fisheries funding, forestry and agriculture – we’re going to let farmers have more land and we’re going to let our forestry industry grow to create more jobs. Those are two good reasons.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, before he left, got up and spoke eloquently of all the municipal funding that is going into the districts. For years now the LSD of George’s Brook – Milton has had water problems. They have had poor access to water and they’ve been connected to Clarendville since 2013-14.

We have municipal funding that’s gone up to Ottawa for approval that will allow the LSD of

George's Brook – Milton to transition off Lily Pond to get away from getting water from Clarendville – which they were just recently cut off and we're still working to get that. But Lily Pond is dropping by one inch a day for their water supply.

So with this municipal funding going up to the Building Canada Fund in Ottawa we're hoping – and it's looking good – that we can get that water access to the people of George's Brook – Milton. They have a population of 800 people. That would be the third-largest community in my district. For years, that got put on the back burner. We are taking some leadership to do that funding.

Another thing in the George's Brook – Milton area, out to the Bonavista highway, is the multi-million dollar contract to get the 4.3 kilometre stretch out by the airport –they call it the neck – done. For 25 years that road hasn't been fit to drive on. We had one MHA fighting against another MHA saying, I don't own that stretch of road.

Do you know what? We've got that done. That's going to allow tourists to come up the Bonavista Peninsula. People at the other end of the district go into Clarendville to get a lot of the services they require, so that's a positive thing. That's another reason why I voted for the budget.

We go on to tourism, and this gets back to the diversification that they said we didn't have: "Recognizing the importance of tourism and culture and heritage to economic development, our government is investing \$13 million for tourism marketing as well as \$18.5 million to support culture and heritage initiatives." I challenge the Member for Cape St. Francis to get up after I speak and tell me why this is not good. He won't do it. I bet you he won't get up and speak after I do.

The tourism industry in the Bonavista Peninsula is vital to our area – vital to our area.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Cape St. Francis.

MR. KING: Yeah, he's not going to get up and speak next. I know he won't because he knows what I'm saying is right. He won't do it. He

doesn't have the guts to stand up, exactly right after me, and say why I voted for the budget.

Now, these are all good things that are in my district, things that are creating jobs. You look at all the municipal infrastructure that is going in the district, the roads that are getting done, the tourism investment. That creates jobs for the people in the District of Bonavista.

Oh, I think he may come back. I think he is actually going to speak on it.

Those are just a few reasons why I voted for the budget. There are negatives, but to me there are a lot more positives, some good things that are going on in the district. That's why I voted for the budget. I will continue to fight and work for the people in the District of Bonavista.

Now you can have your say again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I'm not going to take up too much time here, but I –

AN HON. MEMBER: Do it (inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: If I can, yes. No problem at all.

Whenever I get challenged or anything at all, I always accept the challenge. People that have known me over the years will say that's one thing about him, he does accept a challenge every now and then. Maybe sometimes it's not right what he did, but he does accept the challenge.

I was being nice to the hon. Member. I was being very nice to him the last time I got up and spoke. Now he is over getting some advice from the captains of industry, I suppose, and the head of the – anyway, the hon. Member across the way, it was interesting.

I said that I had an email and I spoke to a person in the district about the hon. Member. But the one thing I didn't bring up the last time – and I will bring up this time seeing that he challenged

me, back up on my feet again. Today a lot of people, when they want to contact you, they contact you through social media. They use social media to contact us.

My home phone I don't need anymore because of the Blackberry. People say the easiest way to get a hold of him is Facebook him or his cellphone or whatever. I hope the hon. Member stays and listens to what I have to say because he challenged me. I hope he has the courtesy to accept the challenge because I accepted it.

The hon. Member, what I was told now – and he can get up after and dispute it or whatever – there are a lot of people in his district that are very upset. They're very upset with him. We all have to be able to take criticism. We all have to be able to take when someone calls us or someone puts something on Facebook on us and says something. Now, I don't want people to be nasty, I really don't. Anybody that threatens or does anything like that, no way, just get rid of them. They shouldn't be doing it. Do it in a proper way.

I was told by a certain person that if you say anything negative or anything on Facebook about the hon. Member, he deletes them. These are his constituents. Apparently now, in his district that's a huge problem. Actually, he said people are talking about it. People are actually talking about it in the district, how the hon. Member had all kinds of people on his Facebook page, and anyone that ends up saying anything negative to him whatsoever – or questions this, or questions the library, or questions why we are doing AES, why this is getting cut, why this is getting cut in his district – he deletes that person.

As elected officials, our skin has to be thick sometimes. We have to have it, there's no doubt about it. It's not an easy job. I tell you right now being a politician – people may think that it's an easy job. Before I got into this job I had a real good idea of what it was all about. I grew up in a family where my father was a politician. I can remember the phones ringing in my father's house. He'd be on the phone and he'd argue, but he'd always listen to that person. Not that he needed to get the last word or whatever, he always made a point that he spoke back to that person or made the call back, no matter what it was.

As a politician I do the same thing. You can call me and argue over anything and I'll give you the time of day. Don't be nasty with me. Don't use foul language on me or don't threaten me in any way at all, I'm not going to put up with that. But if you argue and you have your case, I won't delete you on Facebook. I'll let the people know in Cape St. Francis, I won't delete you.

That's who we are as politicians. The Member for Bonavista has to realize that people in his district are upset. People in his district are going to call you. People are going to come out to a protest. You're not going to be the main person there at that protest, I guarantee you, because they're protesting what your government is doing. If people get mad with you, you just can't press the button, delete.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes you can.

MR. K. PARSONS: You can, I suppose. Yes, the Minister of Justice, you can. I don't think you'd do it. You won't press it. But if someone is being very nasty to you or threatening you in any way, yes. No doubt about it; you don't need to put up with that stuff.

The person who called me – and I wasn't going to bring that up. That was not part of what I wanted to do. When you spoke tonight about your district, I just said, okay, I wanted to understand how you could vote for a budget when so many negative things were happening to the people in your district. When people in your district are overwhelming out protesting and against this budget, how you could vote against the people that elected you.

That's all that I was saying. I was trying to be nice to you and everything else. There are a lot of things happening in your district: people are losing jobs, libraries are getting closed, AES offices getting closed, laundry services are being moved out of your district, X-ray is only done on the weekdays out of your district.

I can understand why the people of Bonavista are upset; so should you. When your constituents and the people in Bonavista and the Bonavista area are concerned, you have to be able to take it. You have to be able to listen to what they have to say. And I'm not saying that you're afraid to go back to your district or

anything at all. I'm not saying that you're afraid to go back there; I'm glad you go back to Bonavista every weekend. I'm glad you do.

As politicians – as anybody, it is easy to push delete, but you just can't delete people. The one big thing we look at, all what we saw on the Liberal election – and I noticed one of the ads and the Premier of the province turned and he said: People matter. I tell the hon. Member for Bonavista: People matter. The people that elected you matter, and that's what I was trying to get to before you got upset with me. That's what I was trying to get at before we even had this discussion. I was happy that you got up tonight and talked about your district, but it is important that everything about your district is told too.

When people in your district are talking about if you say anything against the Member, he'll just delete you – I wasn't the one that was going to bring that up; I was trying to be nice to you. We have to understand, as politicians, that there are going to be times that people are going to be with you and there are going to be times that people are going to be against you.

I've been around for eight years –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) you delete people too.

MR. K. PARSONS: Who do? No, Sir.

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. K. PARSONS: No, I haven't deleted anybody.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Don't get upset now. I'm just stating a fact; that's all. I have never deleted anybody. I would not delete anybody. I don't mean to get you so upset there.

The whole emphasis that I'm making is that people matter – people in the province matter. People that have elected you to be their representative, they're your boss. They're the ones that elect you. They're the people that you've got to talk to. They're the people that are going to be out and if they got a problem,

they're hoping that they come to their elected Member and that elected Member will represent them.

That's what we do as politicians. Sometimes there'll be things they don't want to hear. Sometimes a person will call you – I'm just giving you a little bit of advice – and you can't do anything for them. But the best thing to do and what I always try to do myself – and people in Cape St. Francis will say, b'y, he was honest with me.

That's what people want; they want you to be honest. They really want you to be honest with them. If you're not honest with the people that elect you, then you're in the wrong business. You're really in the wrong business, what you signed up for. What I signed up for was to represent the people who elected me.

I hope that every Member in the House of Assembly that's the reason you put your name on that, to say that I want to go to the House of Assembly to advocate on behalf of the people that represent me. Like the hon. Member, I hope that he signed to represent the people of Bonavista. But once you say delete, then you're not representing that person. That's all I heard the person just told me – I understand why people are upset in Bonavista. I understand why people are upset in Newfoundland and Labrador. There's too much, too fast, and this is having an effect on so many people.

What we're doing here and what I'm trying to do is to represent the people that elect me, and I'm trying to speak on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. And that's the reason why I got elected. That's the reason why I can honestly say that people elected me and I had a great majority – because people know that I stand up for them. That's the reason why I'm the MHA for Cape St. Francis. That's the reason why I had the success I had.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (D. Bennett): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

Certainly the late hour, it's important to continue the debate here in this House. I think this would be multiple times that I have spoken now not only to the budget, but certainly to the money bills that were driven from the budget. Mr. Chair, I just want to stand for a short moment and speak very specifically to the comments made by the Member for Cape St. Francis.

During the last series of debates, we've heard the Member for Cape St. Francis suggest that deleting somebody from your Facebook following is akin to not representing the people of the province. Now, Mr. Chair, I have to say that I know that many Members of this hon. House – including the Member for Cape St. Francis, who's in the process of chatting while I'm speaking here – there are many Members in this House who chose to put their name on a ballot and offer themselves for public office for very important reasons, to represent the people in their neighbourhoods and in their communities.

There is no doubt in this time that we need to be continuing to listen and hear and respond to the needs of our constituents. Mr. Chair, for the Member opposite to suggest that anyone who would be deleting a Facebook follower is somehow connected to that Member's ability to represent their constituents, quite frankly, I think is disingenuous and erroneous.

I respect the Member opposite for his opinion. I think he does a good job of representing the people of his district, but I take strong exception to his comments that insinuate – and maybe that wasn't his intention. Maybe that's not what he planned to do. But his comments that somehow a Member, any Member in this House of Assembly, who chooses to delete a person from a Facebook following is somehow not listening to their constituents. I would remind the Member opposite that there are Members in this House of Assembly – and actually, I won't speak for any other Member; I will speak for myself.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. C. BENNETT: Again, the Members opposite who continues to chat while I'm making these comments, Mr. Chair – maybe they're not interested in hearing this.

There are Members of this House of Assembly who, through this period of time since the budget was announced, have received threatening messages on social media. There have been messages that have been abusive and there have been messages that have been life threatening. Mr. Chair, I will stand here every single day and I will represent the constituents that elected me – all of the constituents that voted for me and didn't vote for me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. C. BENNETT: I will make sure the voices of my constituents are heard and I will provide leadership in this hon. House. But, Mr. Chair, for the Member opposite to insinuate that the Member for Bonavista was not representing his constituents because he deleted somebody from Facebook – I think we've got to get a bit of perspective on this. It is not acceptable in our society at all for anybody to be bullied on social media. We wouldn't let it happen in the corridors of our schools.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: We wouldn't let it happen in our neighbourhoods, yet for some reason, as this technology progresses, it appears that's it's okay to do it on social media. Quite frankly, I don't believe – I know the Member opposite is a man of integrity. I know that he would not tolerate bullying in any place where his family is, where his friends are and where his neighbours are.

I would say his values on that are exactly the same as the Member for Bonavista. So to insinuate that a Member of this House, who chose not to put themselves in a situation where they were potentially being bullied on social media, is somehow not representing their constituents, I don't believe that was your intention.

I apologize, Mr. Chair. I'll speak to the Chair.

I don't believe that was the hon. Member's intention. But I think we need to get some perspective on the fact that we have Members of this House who have been doing their work and

have undergone a scrutiny on social media that, quite frankly, has been difficult on our families – difficult. I won't speak for any other Member, but I can tell you that it's been difficult for, in my case, my mother, my children, my husband and my friends.

To say that by deleting a friend – as he referred to the Member for Bonavista having done – is somehow impeding our ability to represent our constituents is wrong.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand in this hon. House once again to discuss the budget. I want to get back to the budget, but I will just say that based on some of the discussion that has gone on, I certainly would agree with the fact – and I know the Member for Cape St. Francis agrees as well. We all agree that nobody in this House is saying it's acceptable for anybody to be bullied on Facebook or Twitter or anywhere else.

I've been the victim of that myself in the past. People have to be cognizant of the fact that we all do have families. I appreciate that they're all getting a hard time over the budget and everything. I understand people are mad and they're frustrated, but I would say to people that we need to focus on the issue and we need to keep our criticism constructive and to the issues. I totally agree with that. I certainly believe that every Member in this House wants to do what they feel is the right thing.

I'm not going to speak for the Member for Cape St. Francis, but I think what he was trying to get at – and I'm glad to see the Member for Bonavista get up and defend, to talk about his district and the reasons why he did vote for the budget. I respect that. I'd like to see everybody stand up and say why they support the budget or why they don't support the budget. I think the important point here is that we have to own the decisions that we have made, whether we make them now or we made them in the past.

I stood up in this House of Assembly, I don't know if it was last year, whenever it was, when the former government, former administration brought in the bill – I think it was called Bill 1 at the time – anyway, the reversal of Bill 29. I stood in this House of Assembly and I owned-up to the fact that I –

AN HON. MEMBER: Bill 1.

MR. LANE: It was Bill 1. I stood up and I owned-up to the fact that, yeah, at the time I voted for Bill 29 like everybody else. I acknowledged it was a mistake and I moved on. I owned that decision. It's important that we own these decisions.

So in the same token, if we vote for the budget, then own the decision. If you vote against the budget, own the decision; if you vote for the budget, own the decision. I think what the Member for Cape St. Francis is saying is that you can't have it both ways.

You can't on the one hand say, I disagree with this, I disagree with that, I disagree with something else. I don't like the levy, I don't like the taxes. I don't like that this was shut down, I don't like that that was shut down. I disagree with this, I disagree with that, but I voted for it anyway. That's the point I think he was trying to make.

If you didn't agree with it and you felt that strongly, then vote against it. But if you vote for it, you have to own the fact that you voted for it. I think that's all he was saying. Anyway, I'm going to move on.

The last time I spoke I read an email. I'm going to go back to it because I never got a chance to speak to the email. I just read it, so I'm going to have to go back to the email again now because it's been a while. This was an email I received from an individual. It said: Since tonight is on Bill 19 regarding the 15 per cent insurance increase, wouldn't that also apply to ambulance and fire departments? Therefore, the cost of an ambulance would cost \$150 instead of \$120.

Income Support pays for the cost for recipients, which is more of taxpayer's dollars, or Income Support that pays for taxi bills for people to get to medical appointments. A 15 per cent in

insurance would see a 25 per cent increase in charges for companies to recover the cost. Mainly private ambulance services, volunteer fire departments, the cost to seven departments of St. John's Regional Fire Department would feel the major impacts of these increases.

This was an email that I received and a point an individual made. It ties into what I've spoken about now a number of times and that is the trickle-down effect of the taxation. That's what this is really speaking to, the trickle-down effect of the taxation.

What this individual is saying, basically – so just look at the fire departments in terms of a municipality. We know that fire trucks take fuel. They have to operate so they take fuel. We know that fire departments buy supplies for the firemen and for their station, whether it be cleaning supplies or equipment that they have to purchase.

We know that the City of St. John's, or whatever municipality it is, have to pay insurance for these fire stations and all this equipment. They have to pay liability insurance and everything else. The same would go if it was a private ambulance service. They have to pay for fuel. They have to pay for insurance on their vehicles. They have to get them registered, their ambulances all that kind of stuff.

The point that's being made here, which is a valid one in terms of the trickle-down effect, is that if they incur these extra costs, then those costs have to be passed on. In the case of the City of St. John's, I'll just use as an example on the fire trucks, I heard Mayor O'Keefe or it might have been Councillor Galgay – it was one of them anyway – there a couple of weeks ago talking about the fact that *Budget 2016* would mean an additional \$4 million cost to the City of St. John's.

Now, I'm not sure what the number is on the City of Mount Pearl; it is obviously much less. I thought I heard Mayor Simms say it was around a million or maybe – I don't think it was a million he said, but it was getting up there. It was so many hundred thousand dollars, for sure, whatever it was.

The point of the matter is that is an additional cost. Now, how do you think the City of St. John's, the City of Mount Pearl, the City of Corner Brook, the Town of Gander, the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, whoever that town or city might be, where do you think they are getting that additional revenue that they need to pay those taxes to the provincial government? Where do you think they are getting it to?

They don't have magical money trees. They don't have them. So guess who? There is one taxpayer in this province. It is always the same taxpayer. So what's going to end up happening if the City of St. John's, for example, now has a \$4 million shortfall, guess what? They are going back to the taxpayers of the City of St. John's and they are going to up their taxes to recoup that cost – who, by the way, is the same person who is paying the levy, who's paying their own insurance, who's paying their own HST and everything else.

The same thing if it's a private ambulance service, they have to recover their costs. So when they go to negotiate with the provincial government, the Department of Health, Eastern Health or whoever it is they negotiate with – I guess it's the Department of Health – they're going to have to say my costs are gone up so I need more money from you. Now if somebody needs to use that service and they have to pay a fee, guess what? Those fees are going up.

Whether we are talking about private ambulances or fire departments, like is in this email, that example, or whether we are talking about taxis because they talk about taxis – I've talked about taxis here before. If you're a taxi driver and the price of gas goes up and the price of insurance goes up – and we know the repairs that taxis are always getting with brakes and stuff like that, windshield wipers and headlights and all those. Now they have to pay another 2 per cent at the garage and 2 per cent at the auto parts store, and the fuel and the insurance and registration and licences – what do you think they are going to do? Sure, they can't absorb that.

These people are just struggling as it is. The meters are going up. That means, as this person says, if you got someone who's on Income Support who needs taxis to go to medical

appointments, they're going to up the bill to Eastern Health or to the Department of AES. You're not making any money off that because whatever you put on this end, they are just going to charge it back to you on the other end.

What it is going to do, though, is that for the senior citizen, up at Masonic Park I'll use as an example – a place near and dear to my heart. Unfortunately, that's being shut down. Anyway, you have a lot of seniors up at Masonic Park and a lot of those people use taxis to go down to Coleman's to get their groceries or to go down to the bank, go get their hair done or wherever they are going, they're using taxis. They are calling Valley Cabs. Our good friend Mr. Grant –

AN HON. MEMBER: Or Pearl City Cabs.

MR. LANE: Or Pearl City Cabs.

AN HON. MEMBER: Be fair.

MR. LANE: I have to be fair.

They are going to get hit now at the meter. When they get in that taxi, the meter is going to be higher. It is going to cost them more. So there is a trickle-down effect and we have to be cognizant of that hidden tax.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's indeed an honour to stand again at this hour to talk about the impacts that this budget is going to have on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but particularly I'm emphasizing, for the rest of the night, around the education struggles that are here in what has been announced in this budget. Particularly some of the agencies and lead professionals when it comes to how education should be implemented and promoted, I have some concerns about this.

I had mentioned about the whole inclusion piece around education and particularly engaging

those who have been giving advice and are outlining exactly their concerns and outlined how investments in education could be better done to enhance the results and move our education system forward. So I've been noting my dialogue with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Union and a memo that they had sent out to all teachers regarding inclusion and some of the challenges within the school system, particularly around allotments.

The first part of the memo I touched on was some of the challenges around wanting to get the message out there that we needed a better approach to inclusion and there had been a group struck to discuss it. The emphasis on the first paragraph as it ended – and I discussed that in my last opportunity to get up and speak, and then I'll go into the second part. Then, at the conclusion, I'll talk on a bigger scale about the impact that their recommendations not being adhered to, their dialogue not being included in their approach and, as a result, we're going back in our ability to offer quality education.

So in paragraph one it concludes: "As such, the NLTA does not believe that Government has been acting in good faith in compliance with the Provincial Collective Agreement" So what they are saying there is that there were agreements made over the past number of years in which cap sizes, particularly around the number of instructors and teachers that would be in, when we deal with inclusiveness around special needs students.

Then they went on they talked a little bit about the background. They are giving their teachers a bit more understanding of what goes on, but I won't take people through that. Then I'll go on to the next paragraph: "While these concerns with teacher allocations were not addressed in the last Collective Agreement, there was agreement to form a joint NLTA/Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Inclusive Education Committee to review the resourcing of the Inclusive Schools Initiative with a mandate to bring forth a report and recommendations by no later than February 29, 2016. The Committee determined that its required report would include recommendations under three themes: Service Delivery, Allocations, and Deployment.

“The NLTA was particularly interested in recommendations on allocations for Instructional Resource Teachers, Guidance Counsellors and Educational Psychologists. Government argued, after seven years of piloting inclusive education, that insufficient data was available to support recommendations on allocations for Instructional Resource Teachers, Guidance Counsellors and Educational Psychologists. The NLTA proposed a mechanism to extend the Committee’s mandate, thereby allowing their work to be completed. However, this suggestion was rejected by Government. After 16 meetings and many conversations, the NLTA has reached the conclusion that the government is unprepared to include meaningful recommendations on allocations as part of the committee’s report.”

Mr. Chair, after talking to the NLTA and going through exactly what this meant when they sent it out to their membership – when a parent agency, an umbrella agency, sends out something to their membership in a mass mail out, outlining their concerns, then obviously you know they have exhausted everything at their disposal to make things happen. Because normally negotiations and program development and all that done by an umbrella organization or a parent organization of a large membership, a professional membership, is normally done in the back rooms. It’s done in committee stages. It is done over periods of time.

There may be internal fighting, but it is not done in the public domain. It is not known to the general population. The membership is a concept of when we are ready to be able to share information to the membership, because we’ve already had their input, then we can announce exactly where we are.

When an organization like that goes public to its membership, you can sense its frustration. You can sense that all the plans they had, all the inclusion concepts, all the input that they’ve had from their own membership and all of the promises that were made have gone nowhere. They have gone on deaf ears.

There is no doubt there is some frustration with the previous administration and the Department of Education, and they note that, but they do note there were glimmers of hope there and

there was an agreement that we would move it forward. We had a process in place.

In my opinion, as a former civil servant, it’s a bit extreme to be looking for seven years of data in a process that’s already been ongoing. Nonetheless, it was delayed for that period of time. To get to a point now and use that as the excuse that we only have seven years of data to determine whether or not this is a viable process or this is the most appropriate way to move forward, when the professionals who do it on a daily basis are telling you this is the way that we suggest to you, but we also take into account the expertise that you have in the Department of Education.

I would suspect most of the staff there comes from an education background and would be able to relate their experiences and their understanding of the day-to-day operations in the field around how we promote education and make sure the services are available. If there are abilities for people to fall through the cracks, we fill those cracks. We ensure the services are there for them.

When I see memos like this and when I have discussions, and when you get to the point where this is what you put out, then obviously you’re fearful that you’ve exhausted everything, that we are making no headway. Normally, when you make no headway it means somebody in that part of that negotiation process has become stubborn and have dug their feet in and said we’re not going to be flexible. We’re not going to be open. We’re not going to be transparent. We’re not going to be inclusive. We’re not going to negotiate in good faith.

This is what is being told to me in this memo. It’s what has been told to me in my conversations with them. It becomes alarming, again, because if somebody who’s the critic for Education and Early Childhood Development and has received tens of thousands of emails, phone calls, petitions, all kinds of information relevant to what some of the challenges are – and I know we can’t meet everybody’s needs and I know it’s never going to be a Utopia. I know we’re not going to be able to actually have resources for everything, but we do need to have resources for the key things. One of the key

things here is going to be the inclusive-education process.

I know the minister will get up and tomorrow he'll talk about the whole issue around, oh, we've put more money into inclusive programs, we've added some extra teacher assistant time and we've offered some other things. But to take into account all the other things that have been taken out of our mainstream school system – the loss of instruction time, the loss of instructors, the doubling up on classrooms, the cap sizes – that then is a detriment to the inclusive programs.

So any other small resources that you added to it are null and void. As a matter of fact, it's still regressive, still puts us back. Those are not my words, I'm only now getting an understanding of how we assess what inclusive learning is all about, what kind of resources you need and the different levels of supports that different students need in an inclusive process.

I happened to meet with one of the key leaders of the school counsellors' association who was a great educator, but was a former young man who worked in another environment that I think put him on the right path – when you work in a Boys and Girls Club setting – for him to be an educator and really know around counselling processes and taking that lead. He is the chair of the school counsellors' association.

When I asked questions there that I wasn't aware of – or was I getting a slanted side? Was there just one side of what's being said around how we approach education, knowing this person was going to be extremely upfront and honest with me and tell me where we've made strides forward, where there are some challenges and where maybe there are things that really are not the priority? While they may be the priority for a certain group or some people, these would not be the priority for us to offer quality education to our students, particularly those who have some challenges.

As I read this, now we're into two paragraphs of a memo that was sent to all teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador from their umbrella organization, the group that represents them and negotiates in good faith. Not only about the collective agreement, not only about, as people

would say, dollars and cents, but about how they would be resourced to be able to offer the services to people.

As I talked about, there are a number of professions in our society that are the old cliché, vocation oriented. There's a specialized type of individual who moves into these types of services and wants to make that as their career for the rest of their lives. They take it on based on a principle that they're going to have an impact; they're going to do something that will be significant in changing people's lives. Education is one of those.

Other sectors, obviously, can speak for their own., but from what I've seen in education and having a number of family members in it – and having the privilege of working in the Department of Education for a period of time – I do see the benefits and I do see and understand people's vocation. It's not just give me something now, it's what I'm asking for now, what I'm proposing now, what we need to negotiate will be long term, lasting, and a long-term benefit for ensuring the kids that we educate go from kindergarten to grade 12.

Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to speak to this again. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we're heading towards 4 a.m., it's hard to believe, isn't it? It's a beautiful night outside. We don't know what the weather is. I think it's quite wet.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's raining.

MR. PETTEN: Yeah, it is.

AN HON. MEMBER: Spring like.

MR. PETTEN: Spring like.

MR. K. PARSONS: Any night you're in Newfoundland and Labrador it's a nice night.

MR. PETTEN: True statement.

Mr. Chair, every time I get up to speak in my place here in the House during this debate and actually during any other time in the House – as the Minister of Municipal Affairs said earlier, it's true. He reminded me that we are all – sometimes we forget because you get caught up in the bluster of back and forth debate – very fortunate to have this opportunity to rise in this House and represent our respective districts. It's a great honour to have bestowed.

I'm very proud every time to stand and speak on behalf the residents of Conception Bay South, the place that I've called home all my life. Nothing is going to change that. It's a place I'm very proud of.

I think sometimes we get caught up. We're in the middle of a filibuster and we do a lot of debating back and forth. I think that is something that's probably missed sometimes too. We all have our opinions and we all have our views. That's why we're all sitting in this House, because we have our views and the people in our districts like what they see. As the saying goes, they like the cut of your jib. They duly elected us so we are all here for a reason. We're all here to represent our respective districts. That's really our main purpose.

During this debate – like I said, it's gone on. Members on this side have had a lot of opportunities to stand up and speak. We've read a lot of emails and messages. People have asked us, actually, to put it on record. I think that's very important. If anything else, I guess, to my original point, in this turn to speak I just wanted to emphasize how important – I feel like if we speak with our constituents and they want us to bring it to the House, that is our role and it's kind of unique. Looking a while back when we were saying that – I guess the public were saying publicly that we would probably filibuster some of these budget implementation bills.

I stop sometimes and say if you are going filibustering what will you talk about every time to try to make it relevant. Reading people's emails and telling their personal stories, in my opinion, was golden in the sense of that's exactly why we are all here. We're all here to speak on behalf of our residents in our

respective districts and, really, people in the province I guess. You don't land upon your theme when you start out, but you arrive there, like a lot of things.

I have some emails there, some messages, but there are a couple of things I'd like to touch on. Last evening when I left and went home – I said earlier I was watching the news and I watched a few interviews. The hon. Minister of AES spoke, a couple of my colleagues spoke too, but I guess it was started – the Minister of AES, in all due respect, he put it out there about the cost.

I appreciate where he is coming from. I see the staff and we should all thank them, the staff in the House of Assembly. They've punched a lot of long hours keeping this place going, and our Broadcast Centre too. We all appreciate and understand that and we all have other staff within all parties here.

What stuck to me tonight when I watched the news – like I said, I was sat down and I was looking at it and I started thinking: What is the price for democracy? What is the price for people's freedom of speech? Because that is what this has turned into, and I don't think it's a bad thing. It's tiring. We all have our moments. But ultimately, outside of arguing, and we say we are arguing against these bills, but it is truly what we are really here for – we look at our purpose when we all got elected to represent the districts; it was to represent the people in the district.

They are sending their messages in and they want us to read them. They want it to be recognized. We have all gotten messages back from strangers: Thank you for reading my email. I don't know who these people are. A lot of them are funnelling it in through our social media. I respect the fact that – it feels like you've accomplished something because their views, again, as a couple of encounters, are not being heard, or they feel it is not being heard. In fairness, I am sure there are a lot of Members opposite – actually, I know a lot of Members opposite or most Members opposite deal with the concerns of their residents. I totally understand that.

Being heard, it's to get their voice heard in the sense of they have a problem and it's hard when

you're the person that's been given the problem to actually bring the voice to the floor. It's just the way our political system is set up. So we've been given that opportunity and we've taken that challenge on. I think that if nothing else comes out of this, we've engaged the public.

About the engagement and representing your people, it's a very important point – I've spoken about it before, but I'd like to mention it again. We all say, during elections – I guess during any time – engaging our youth, trying to get youth involved in politics, trying to get youth involved in decision making, trying to get youth involved in a lot of things that is pertinent to, I suppose, what we feel is important, but it's hard sometimes to get that engagement. You say that most of our electorate, most people, are engaged in politics or in that sort of thing are 40 or 50-plus group.

Getting youth involved is very challenging. This whole exercise through the filibustering, through the budget conversation to these silent protests, it's after engaging the public. They know what we do in here now. They are paying attention. They actually understand the process of the House.

As much as we keep saying negative things, there are positives that are coming out of all of this exercise we do here. At the end of the day, whatever happens, happens, but I think that it's probably a win in the sense of – if you want to call it a win. Something has been accomplished that I don't think I've seen happen in the province in a long time. People are paying attention. I do hope that turns into more engagement. With social media now and with engagement, I really believe that's the future and that's how we are going to get our youth involved.

By having a channel to get their views and their concerns brought to the House of Assembly, which is the highest government in this province, outside of the federal government, but in the province to get your voice on record in the House of Assembly and your concerns – someone getting up, like we all get up here and we try to speak passionately on their behalf. There is no effort to it because you read these emails and you read these concerns, they are

very passionate concerns and a lot of them are very heartfelt.

I know yesterday or whenever – every day is mixed into the one day now, unfortunately. There was an email that I had and I brought it up two or three times and I finally found it yesterday and it was one that stuck with me out of the hundreds of emails that I got. It was the lady that expressed she was crying as she wrote the email. It really resonated with me and I was glad to have the opportunity yesterday to read it into the record. I have more there, obviously, that I will, in other times, get up on.

I think, as my time is winding down, that's something that's very important that we all need to – we should never put a price on people's right to freedom of expression and freedom of views. We should never put a price on democracy because, as we all know, that's what makes us who we were. That's why we live in such a great province and a great country.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I'll take my seat.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

At 3:45 in the morning it's always an exciting time to engage in a debate and a discussion, and to have to feel the amount of reciprocation that's going on. There's a whole lot of feedback occurring right now.

I do want to provide a little bit of feedback to some of the comments that were made by the hon. Member just a moment ago. He talked a little bit about the feedback mechanism and how important that it is, and how important it is to view that to actually to put that forward on the floor of the House of Assembly. In reality, that seems a little shallow in the sense that when feedback, when points of view are offered, which the hon. Member doesn't necessarily agree with, then of course it's very quickly rebutted and suggested that it's not a valid opinion.

I had raised on the floor of this House yesterday morning – well, at some point in time – the

viewpoints of a very particular constituent of Newfoundland and Labrador, who's now living abroad who raised a very specific point on social media. They weren't my views, but they were important views and I raised them for the House to discuss. After raising them, they were met with a certain amount of negativity and it was transferred as if they were my own views.

The truth is I do share some of those views. Not totally, not completely, but I do share some of those views. The views were of a former Progressive Conservative minister of Finance who said on social media just weeks ago – which made provincial-wide headlines. The Progressive Conservative minister of Finance, whom I would think my colleagues opposite would take her opinion to be of some merit, said on social media from her new home that there are issues surrounding nighttime sittings that need to be addressed. Charlene Johnson's views were this: one, nighttime sittings cost money; but two, nighttime sittings are no longer viewed as the acceptable norm for legislatures in this country.

Her point of view was this: Rules written for men by men were no longer really consistent with the values of attracting women to politics. These were her views. As she stated and as has been stated in other forums in other parts of the country and other legislatures, one of the biggest disincentives, one of the biggest barriers to entry for women in politics, is the adversarial nature of politics; but, as well, the stylization of politics around a culture and a system and a set of rules that really does not value family values.

That's what Charlene Johnson was making a clear point – and I thought there'd be an excellent opportunity on the floor of this House, given the fact we're discussing an awful lot of things here, everything from Blue Jays baseball scores to matters of importance in our own local constituencies, what an excellent opportunity to piggyback on the comments of a former Progressive Conservative minister of Finance. A woman who entered politics, was successful at politics, and now is offering a unique perspective.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. BYRNE: Now, the hon. Member opposite just said: Don't buy into that, Gerry. Don't buy into that. Well, Mr. Chair, when are we going to buy into that this is 2016? When are we going to buy into the fact that the rules of the past not necessarily always should be the rules of the future?

So let's be very clear about something. Are these my views, exclusively? No, they're not. Do I feel that democracy comes at a price?

Absolutely, I do. We appreciate the Table Officers that have been here with us for the last 60 hours. We appreciate the Pages that have put in the last 60 hours with us, the Broadcast team down in the Broadcast booth, which has put in 60 hours with us, the security officials that have put in 60 additional hours with us.

We appreciate the RNC officers that are still on duty sharing their time with us. We appreciate the Hansard officers which are working hard to make sure that these proceedings are transcribed properly and accordingly. We appreciate the finance officers for their hard work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: So there is definitely an expense. The same is true when –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) and the Commissionaires.

MR. BYRNE: The security officials and the Commissionaires, absolutely.

There is an expense to democracy and we acknowledge that. I wonder if that question ever passed the lips of the hon. Members opposite when they put forward a proposal to cut the number of MHAs by 10 and the cut the number of districts. Democracy comes at a price.

Is it an absolute? Does it always have to be? Is there no consideration of this whatsoever? They found it fit to cut the number of MHAs and districts, the voice of the people, by 10. Do you know what? They established the principle that not everything is an absolute.

With that said, I am delighted to participate in these proceedings. I appreciate all the extra work by the staff. I appreciate the fact that it does

come at a value. My point was this – and let no one misconstrue my words to say that I don't think these proceedings are worth the price. Let no one misconstrue my words to that effect, but let it be said that Charlene Johnson, the former Progressive Conservative minister of Finance said exactly that, that nighttime sittings, Mr. Chair, are an expensive and inefficient use of the public resources. Now, they didn't have confidence in Ms. Johnson; that's pretty clear. They rejected that opinion.

With that said, what Ms. Johnson said that I cannot argue with is that if there are barriers to involvement of women in politics, if we do not take that seriously and try to remove those barriers, we are not doing justice to democracy. Mr. Chair, 50 per cent of the people who live in Newfoundland and Labrador are women, yet 50 per cent of the people who inhabit this House are not women. We are underrepresented. This is a very, very important point, Mr. Chair, and should not be given short shrift.

Now the point comes that, is Charlene Johnson alone in this point of view? No. The Queen's Park in Ontario has already moved to actually limit House sitting hours so that it can be more family friendly. Manitoba is moving toward the exact same direction. The Canadian Parliament – the House of Commons – is moving exactly in this same direction, to be able to encourage more women in politics.

Now, if the hon. Members opposite from the New Democratic Party wants to stand up here tonight and participate in this debate, they'd be more than welcome. I would encourage them to stand up tonight and participate in this debate and really take on the cause that has to be spoken of, and encourage and do whatever is required to get more women in politics. So we'll hear from them, I'm sure, in a few minutes.

But the point being is that if there is an opportunity to advance the goalpost and remove barriers to entry for women in politics, isn't that a productive use of the House's time right now at this moment, and why did both Opposition parties reject that opportunity for that debate and leave that debate behind? Do you know what, Mr. Chair? It is the debate of the 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That was quite a passionate speech by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, and I want to compliment him on his engagement of Opposition Members since he's been minister. I can say, on a serious note in the discussion this evening –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: I am having a hard time hearing myself, though, Mr. Chair.

I can say that on several occasions since that Member has been the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, he's reached out to Opposition Members to seek our input on matters related to our districts. I just want to commend him on being open and accessible in his role as minister. I say that sincerely. It's been good to be able to speak with him on a couple of occasions about matters specific to my district, and that's been good for my constituents and it shows a sense of fairness. So I appreciate that.

I don't agree with everything he just said during his presentation. I believe we're now in our 63rd hour of debate in the House of Assembly, and there's been lots of things said that I don't agree with. But that's okay; I'm glad that the minister is engaging in the debate.

I want to say a few quick hellos to some folks that have reached out to me recently through Facebook, Twitter and other means. There's a gentleman named Harry who lives in Edmonton who is following the filibuster tonight online. I just want to say a quick hello to Harry and thank him for his interest in the process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Harry, you just got a round of applause in the House of Assembly. How's that?

There is a gentleman named Jay in Ontario who has been following the filibuster at several times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I don't call him Jay, I call him JAPADOG. If you google JAPADOG you may discover it's a very successful business in downtown Vancouver. I fondly refer to my friend Jay as JAPADOG; that's a whole story in itself. Probably we'll save that for another day – maybe not in this hon. House – or next week perhaps.

AN HON. MEMBER: Next speech.

MR. KENT: Oh, next speech. I thought you were foreshadowing.

I'd also like to say hello to my friend Linda, who is following the filibuster this morning from Malaysia. She's tuned into the filibuster watching from Malaysia. She's a friend I met through Scouting, through volunteer activities. I just want to say a special hello to Linda, who is following us in the House of Assembly on the other side of the planet in Malaysia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you.

Linda, there you go. You just got a round of applause in the House of Assembly as well.

I'd like to also shout out to Sandy Collins who has failed to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Sandy, you're not getting any applause.

For several hours our night shift crew has been looking for pizza. Sandy promised pizza and did not deliver.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Last night, the hon. Member for Humber – Bay of Islands was kind enough to share his pizza with me as a show of good faith as acting House Leader. That happened. So I

challenge the Minister of Natural Resources and I challenge the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to live up to the high standard set by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: Okay, great. We'll talk shortly. Thank you.

While I'm having a few moments of silliness, I'll also note to the hon. Members that I had to sit down with one of our young researchers this evening – well, this morning – and explain to her what *WKRP* was. Are there any young hon. Members in the House who also need an explanation of *WKRP*? Are you familiar?

MR. BYRNE: I swear to my God I thought turkeys could fly.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Yes. The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills has just provided the famous Mr. Carlson quote, so I thank him for that.

Anyway, thank you for bearing with me for a few minutes of lighter conversation there, Mr. Chair. I'd like to get back to serious debate at this point. I'll have many times to speak this morning and I have many more pieces of correspondence to bring to the House of Assembly on behalf of people of the province.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands a little while ago mentioned Masonic Park. July is quickly approaching. I'm sad to say that plans to shut down the Masonic Park Nursing Home are continuing. Many residents have been moved to other locations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Many residents have been moved to other locations. A long-term care facility that is in my district that has been well maintained – in fact, a new roof was put on the building just last year. Inside the building is in great shape. Most of the

systems in the building have been retrofitted over the years. It's a small facility, but it's a quality facility that has been home to 40 residents for many, many years. That facility will close down next month as a result of this budget.

The challenge I have with that, Mr. Chair, is that today in Newfoundland and Labrador we have over 200 people waiting to get into long-term care facilities. Now, I'll acknowledge that there's considerable demand in other regions of the province besides the Eastern Region. I haven't gotten the latest numbers from the Minister of Health, but I would venture to guess that today there are over 60 people in the Eastern Region waiting to get into long-term care beds.

How you can justify shutting down 50 beds when if you look at the projections you know there's a need for hundreds of more beds in the next five years, hundreds of more beds in the next 10 years. This is probably a problem for the next 20 years or so based on our population demographics. There's a need for hundreds of new beds and in this budget we're removing 50 long-term care beds from the system. I think that's a tragedy.

On top of that, we had a plan that I was very confident in. I know it would have saved taxpayers over the length of the contracts hundreds of millions of dollars. We had a plan to create 360 long-term care beds in Newfoundland and Labrador over the next two years – in addition to the hundreds of beds that we created over the last decade – recognizing that the demand is increasing and it's been virtually impossible for government to keep up with it.

How we can possibly justify shutting down long-term care beds when there is such demand. We know there's going to be increasing demand for the next decade or two. That raises a whole bunch of questions. You can't help but think there are some politics involved when you talk about shutting down a long-term care facility in the Eastern Region, in the capital region, in what's now an Opposition district. It's troubling. It means that more people are going to wait longer.

What does that mean for the health care system, Mr. Chair? It means that more seniors won't get

the care they need. It means seniors will be in various places not getting the care they need. They may be receiving a certain amount of home support that is no longer sufficient to meet their needs. They may be in personal care homes, maybe even receiving enhanced care in personal care homes, but in need of a greater level of care in long-term care.

It means there are lots of patients who are destined for long-term care homes who can't be discharged from hospital. They may be medically discharged, but they're not able to leave the hospital because there's no bed available to them. What that means is that you're going to have more patients who are lying on stretchers in hallways because beds aren't available.

It means that surgeries in our hospitals are going to be cancelled because there aren't beds available. It means that people will wait longer in emergency rooms because there aren't beds available. So there's a real ripple effect that happens. That's one of the reasons why this long-term care bed issue is so important.

Like the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said, it's very personal for us because we've spent the last couple of decades of our lives working in Masonic Park, volunteering in Masonic Park and contributing to the Masonic Park community. Now, the home, which is a critical part of the infrastructure there, is closing.

Mr. Chair, I'll talk about it a little later on this morning. I see my time is up. I thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the senior citizen in the group – which I proudly represent all senior citizens in the province – I'm still on my feet and I'm still moving, so it's a good sign.

AN HON. MEMBER: You're the only senior citizen in the House.

MR. HAWKINS: That's what I just said. As the only senior citizen – true senior citizen – in

the House, it's my real pleasure to be able to speak at 4:06 in the morning with energy plus and ready to go and start –

AN HON. MEMBER: Vigour.

MR. HAWKINS: Vigour.

Mr. Chair, I just want to say a big thank you to the Opposition for the filibuster. This is really giving us an opportunity to get our message out. I just want to read an email, because I think it's important – and I know the other day – and we've all admitted – we've had some communication challenges. And I won't get into the reasons why we probably had some communications challenges on this side, but the more opportunity that we've had to talk and the more opportunity that we've had to stand, we're getting the message out.

I want to read this email I just received. Of course, I respond to my emails. If the email is sent to me directly, I try – I can't say I've responded to every single one of them, because when you ever put that out there – we're always told not to say all because you may have somehow missed one. So, for the most part, I respond to my emails. Contrary to what some of the Opposition Members kind of think that we never ever respond to emails. I do.

This is another response I got. This is from a gentleman, he said: Thank you for responding to my email. I don't consider myself any sort of expert in politics; however, I do consider myself a reasonably intelligent person. As I watched the House of Assembly until 3 this morning, and again all day today – which was yesterday – and at the present time, I am fascinated by how all this works.

I have to admit, until I began watching this House session, I totally disagreed with your government's budget. One thing you are not doing was explaining why you felt this type of budget was your only option. Just saying that we are in a financial mess is not enough. Then your government Members were silent. We take that certainly as criticism and we accept that. Your government Members were silent – we probably were too silent. It is only now that I am actually hearing from some of your government Members.

And that's why I I wanted to thank the Members opposite for giving us an opportunity to get up here day after day after day continually to speak. It's absolutely beautiful given this opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: Yes, absolutely. Thank you so much.

Finally, some of my questions were answered and I thank the House for this; however, like many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, your government is going too far with your cuts. We accept criticism too; that's not an issue. But we have to get the truth out there.

The government travelled throughout the province and spoke to the people about some tough times ahead and we did agree with some increased taxes, but we did not agree for you to tax us in the way you have – too much at one time. I think we've heard that too much, too quick, before.

I don't mind including good parts in the emails, as well the bad parts. This gave me another opportunity this morning to go back to this gentleman and say I understand fully. I have said it many, many times, probably every time I've stood here: I understand. We understand. We have never, ever, ever in the history of this province been faced with what we are faced with. We've never had this before. We've never had to deal with this before.

Mr. Chair, I fully understand and I really appreciate those emails. I really do appreciate these emails. Sometimes we are probably portrayed as being callous and unconcerned and not having any compassion. That's absolutely not true. I better not say it like that because the next thing I'm going to be sounding like the Minister of Municipal Affairs. But it is absolutely not true. It's not true, Mr. Chair. It's absolutely not true.

We understand, but one of the differences that we have to make is we have to understand – we just cannot put blinders on and pretend that this does not happen. We can't walk away from that, Mr. Chair. We can't walk away from that. We can't walk away from our responsibilities.

As a father, as a grandfather, I've had to make tough decisions in my life. There have been situations in my life I've had to make tough decisions and I've had to deal with the tough decisions. We are in a position now where we have to make tough decisions. Decisions that are going to hurt people, decisions that are going to have an impact on people. We understand that, but doing nothing is going to have an impact on our children and our grandchildren.

So what right do we have as politicians or as individuals to enjoy services and enjoy programs and enjoy everything that we have and say, well, it's okay for us to enjoy it as long as somebody else coming after us pays for it. That's irresponsible.

We have to realize that we need to chart a course for a future that's not burdening our children or grandchildren. We have to understand that. Mr. Chair, it's important for us to really come to grips with what we're challenged with, and that's part of what we're doing.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand once again. I just want to say to the Minister of Transportation and Works I appreciated his passionate speech. I'm glad that he's engaging with people on social media.

I'm glad that he thanked us for giving him the opportunity and giving everyone the opportunity to be able to speak. As a matter of fact, I think he said thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. I'll say to him you're welcome, you're welcome, you're welcome,

I also make this commitment to the Minister of Transportation and Works and all the other Members, we're going to give you lots of opportunity to come to stand on your feet and do exactly what you did – all kinds of opportunity. As I said before, until we see some movement or until you invoke closure, I'm not going anywhere and we're going to keep her going.

Anyway, I'm off tangent a little bit for where I was going to go because I do want to respond once again to the minister. I don't know how

many times we have to keep going back and forth with the same point. We all understand we're in a tough situation.

The minister, every time he gets up he goes back to the same talking points: we're in a tough situation; if we do nothing, we're going to leave this burden on our children and our grandchildren. We're not saying that. We're saying the same thing of what you're saying.

We're saying that we understand we're in a tough situation. We're saying we understand we have to do something. To say we do nothing – we'll be at \$25 billion in debt in five years' time. Who said do nothing? Nobody said do nothing. We don't want to be at \$25 billion in debt either in five years' time, whatever it is. Although I would imagine that the \$25 billion debt, doing nothing – I'm not sure of the exact projections they're using, in terms of oil, because I know this budget is based on \$40 oil.

Oil is at \$51 now, not at \$40. So we're already that much better off than is projected in the budget, and assuming that oil at least stays where it's too now – hopefully it increases – we're going to be much better off. That's a good thing. I hope oil goes back to \$130 a barrel. I don't think that's going to happen; that's not realistic. I think if we see \$60-\$70 oil, that's about where she's going to go. That's what I'm hearing and surmising, but who knows. She could go back to \$20 – that's possible; anything is possible.

It seems like she's going up; that's where it's trending. So we're not going to be as bad off as what's being projected this year, and we're not going to be as bad off in the next five years as they're projecting. We're not saying we're doing nothing, and we're not saying the government should do nothing.

Again, it comes down to the choices. I don't understand why the Members stand up on that side and they keep going back to the same old talking points. The education issue is not costing money. Don't do it. I don't know how much clearer to put it: Do not implement full-day kindergarten at this time. It's not going to cost you anything.

As a matter of fact, according to the Minister of Education, it'll save us \$13 million. It'll save us \$13 million if we don't do it, but we're going to do it anyway at the expense of the kids that are already in school – not that full-day kindergarten is not a good thing but it's going to have a negative impact. That's not even a budgetary decision. You could make that decision right now tonight and that resolves a big issue for a lot of people and it's not costing you a cent. It's not costing you a dime. You're probably going to be in money.

Now, the \$13 million that he's talking about, in fairness, though, we would have to look and see do we have the class cap size and multigrading and all that stuff – we wouldn't want that to happen – the busing issues. So probably it would be the same, because maybe that \$13 million is needed to have everything done properly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. LANE: But the bottom line is that it's not going to cost you money, so that could be done tomorrow. All you've got to say, listen, status quo, in that regard.

That has nothing to do with the financial future of the province or our children or grandchildren in that regard – nothing; it doesn't. We got a \$30 million contingency fund. You got it budgeted anyway. The budget is not going to change. It's still going to be a \$1.8 billion deficit, according to your numbers. It's not going to be that much because oil has gone up, but the point is you have that contingency fund. That could save the libraries.

You have this \$750,000 that you're putting into a Labrador link study. Even if the study came back tomorrow and said it's a great idea, where are you getting the money to build it? You don't have the money.

AN HON. MEMBER: Where is it to on the priority list?

MR. LANE: Where is it to on the priority list?

Am I to understand – and it would be interesting to know; I'd love for the Minister of Finance or Transportation and Works to stand up and tell us where the Labrador link would be on their priority list. Are you going to tell us that that's ahead of the Waterford Hospital? That's going to jump the cue on the Waterford Hospital?

Is that going to jump the cue on the new Corner Brook hospital? I'm sure the Minister of Municipal Affairs would be really interested to know that, if the Lab link is going to jump the cue on the Corner Brook hospital. I don't think so.

To spend money on that at this time, given the fact we don't have any money to do anything about it after the study is done, makes no sense. Until we're in a financial position to actually act on it, then it makes no sense to go doing a study so we can take it and put it on the shelf for the next five, 10 or 15 years, whatever it is. That's money that could almost save all of the libraries that you cut.

To say that we're saying do nothing, nobody is saying do nothing. What we're saying that some of the decisions that are being made, you could have made some different decisions. You could have made some different decisions that would have still achieved your goals of trying to grapple the deficit, which we all agree needs to happen but, at the same time, it could have been more palatable for people. It could have been more palatable for the people; that's all we're saying.

I hate to sound like a broken record, but it seems like no matter how many times – the Member is saying yes, you're sounding like a broken record. I am, but it seems like it doesn't matter because if I say it now and I sit down, two or three speakers away, someone is going to stand up and say the same thing that the minister just said. We're in a tough financial situation and we had to make tough choices. It's all we can do. But it's not all you can do. That's the point; it's not all you can do.

Go back to the drawing board, make a few changes that everyone can live with, that your own Members can live with. That's all we're saying. That's what the people are saying that are calling us. That's what the people are saying

who are emailing us and emailing you. That's what they're saying.

Everyone knows we're in tough times. Everybody knows that, but everybody knows that there are other options. That's what people are telling you; that's what they're telling us. You need to listen to what people are saying. Not just hearing them, listen to what they're saying.

Obviously, there's no acknowledgement. I haven't heard anybody stand up yet and acknowledge or refute what we're saying – I haven't heard it. I don't know if the Member for Cape St. Francis has heard it. I haven't heard anyone refute what we've been saying on some of these things when we raised – look, what about this alternative and what about that alternative. No one has said.

When I stood up and said why don't you go to Nalcor, go to Stan Marshall and say, Stan, we mandated all the departments to come up with 30 per cent savings over the next three years. Stan, we're giving you that same mandate. We want you to find 30 per cent savings at Nalcor, Stan. That's what we want you to do, the same way as we're telling all the departments to do.

That's a suggestion. Why isn't the Minister of Finance or whoever standing on their feet and saying, yes, we acknowledge that? It's a great idea. We're going to do that or we've done that and Stan is going to find us some money. You're not saying anything. We're getting no response other than we're in tough times and we have to make tough decisions. The same old line, the same old talking points or key messages. That's what we're hearing. That's why we're frustrated. That's why people are frustrated, because you're hearing but you're not listening, you're not responding.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, I'm going to take my seat. I'll have a lot more to say.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

Again, it's an absolutely pleasure to get up here tonight and represent my district and represent the people who elected me in the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

It's interesting – and I listened to the Minister of Transportation and his speech and to read out the email he read out. He said he's listening. We've accomplished one thing since we've started this and I don't know how many hours we've been in. From the time that the budget was brought down on April 14, all we heard from the other side was you don't understand, the media doesn't understand and the general public doesn't understand.

Well, to the Minister of Transportation tonight: Thank you, Sir. The Minister of Transportation said we understand. I'm glad because that's a change. Maybe now if we stay here another 70 hours or something we can make even more progress. We're after making progress. That's huge progress that we're after making.

Finally, the Liberal Party opposite is saying that they understand. That's good. They understand the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – understand that people do have concerns. That's great. I'm really, really pleased. But now we need to take it to another step.

Now that you understand, can we make a few changes so that people in the province can feel like they've been listened to? You understand where they are coming from; you understand what they're saying. Now, let's go and move it another little bit and let's say: Okay, now that we understand and now that we're listening to the people, we're going to make the changes that people are looking for.

I say to the hon. Member: I enjoy his speeches anyway. When he gets up, he speaks from his heart. He's a passionate guy. I really do enjoy his speeches. Now that you understand and now that you're listening to people, can you heed what they are saying to you? Can you understand what they're saying to you?

What they are saying is that there are some difficult times and we all realize it. People in Newfoundland and Labrador are willing to do their part. They're willing to pitch in; they're willing to do what they can to help. But as the

email you read out – and the person you listened to, he applauded you in the first of it. He wants you to understand what everybody is saying. He wants you to listen to what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are saying.

The last part of his email is what we've been saying on this side of the House since we started this filibuster. I said it lots of times – all the Members have said it and the general public are saying it – it's too much, too fast. Don't try to fix everything overnight.

The first part of the message before the budget was announced was that this happened over a lot of years so it can't be fixed overnight. People in Newfoundland and Labrador understand. They understand that oil prices dropped. They understand that the infrastructure level in the province in the '90s and the '80s was so low where we had schools that were closing because of mould. We had roads and infrastructure all over this province. We do still have a lot of infrastructure needs in the province. We haven't got it all fixed yet, I'm not saying that, but we did huge investments.

Over the last number of years, in infrastructure alone, \$6 billion has been spent in the province. I talked the other night about investments in my district in schools, in roads, in recreation facilities. Those are things the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve.

Is everything in my district perfect when it comes to things that I need? I have a community – the Town of Pouch Cove in my district that has a huge water issue. It's going to cost millions of dollars to fix it. I'm losing a library in my district and there's roadwork that needs to be done in my district. Municipalities have roadwork that they want done in their district. The Town of Torbay is looking for a waste water facility that they need in theirs.

We'll never stop all the needs, but people understand. Give them credit for what they're saying to you. What they're saying is it's too much too fast. Let's try to do things. We know that we're in a financial situation that's not common, but we're looking at – the hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said earlier that it seems like the price of oil is going up.

I had a good conversation with the Minister of Finance the other day. I asked her some questions and she explained to me about the Canadian dollar, the oil and how it all works. I appreciated that. She enlightened me a little bit on how the finances work when it comes to the dollar versus a barrel of oil.

People in Newfoundland and Labrador are not saying don't do anything – they're not saying that. People in Newfoundland and Labrador are saying what people are saying on petitions. I've been here for eight years and it's the first time in eight years that I've seen Members of the opposite side present petitions. It's a good thing; it's a real good thing. I really, really think it's a good thing. I tell you in the last eight years if my constituents came to me with a petition I would have presented it, I guarantee you that, because that's it, I would stand by my word.

Here's a petition. I have so many that I'm going to read out a few now. I know we're in the House; I'm not doing it as it is petition time. I'm going to read what the constituents – but on this petition alone, I tell you, it's from Mary Queen of Peace school, K to six. There are 700 students in the school and I have over 500 names on a petition. That's huge. One Member the other day got up and he had 1,050 names, from your side. People want to be heard and that's what we're doing here.

I'll just give you the gist of what this is about. They're talking about the cuts in education: WHEREAS a high quality of education is vital to a strong and successful society and should be the priority of government; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has announced funding reductions in the Department of Education which resulted in the increased class size caps for students from four to level three; and

WHEREAS the funding reductions will result in a reduction of teacher allocations at Mary Queen of Peace school and combined classes, and reduction of the provision of Intensive Core instruction at our children's school; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has decided to proceed with costly implementation of full-day kindergarten – This is what the

parents – 500 put their names on this. Here is what they are asking. They are asking for government to instruct the school boards to delay the implementation of full-day kindergarten until such time as the provincial financial circumstances improve and restore programs and teacher allocation and cap sizes to 2014.

That was a petition that I was given – and I will show you now. I have a full book that they presented with over 500 names on that petition. Did you hear what they said? They understand – we understand the financial situation that the province is in, but they are asking you to make a choice. This is a school council. It is a K to 6 school, with children coming next year, and they are saying delay full-day kindergarten. That's what they are asking.

The Minister of Education, he's not listening to this at all. It is just blinders on and don't want to listen to this one at all. That's over 500 names of people. I went to Mary Queen of Peace, I got a call – I used to represent a lot of them in my district but when it changed, I lost the Stavanger Drive area. So they called me up and said, listen, we have a silent protest down at the school tomorrow morning, would you be interested in coming down? I said, yes, I guarantee it; I'll be there. I represented you before and I have no problem. Any time you want to call me, I'll be there.

We stood up with the children and maybe 100 or so people stood up that morning and we talked and we spoke. Every one of the people there understood where we are financially. Every one of the people at that protest – and they are good, honest people that are not going to go out and do anything – they understood where we are financially in the province. All they are asking you, and that's what I'm asking – we came a long way. I'm asking you to look at this budget, make some changes so that people don't feel the stress, seniors don't feel the stress, people with children in school don't feel the stress.

Our busing situation right now that we are going to do in some areas where they are changing busing – in Torbay, where there are 12,000 cars a day that travel along Torbay Road, for 56 days a year we're going to put children on the road in

the dark to go to school. That's completely wrong and it's not a big expense.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Take away the full-day kindergarten and we won't need to do it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's indeed an honour to stand and talk to this budget, and particularly keep the theme of where I was going around education and the partnership with the NLTA and its frustration and what it's expressed to its membership.

I want to thank my colleague, the Member for Cape St. Francis, for outlining and keeping in theme to where I'm going tonight around cuts to education and the impact they have on the residents of his district. It's not just isolated to those who have children in the school system; it's a community-based concern. He's outlined that.

When you get to a point where small communities are getting 500 people to sign petitions – and I've got 60 or 70 petitions there from different communities. We're talking tens of thousands of people who have concerns about the cuts to our education system.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to continue on the theme that I've been going. For those who may be viewing right now or listening to us, what I've been doing is outlining the concerns around education cuts, but particularly as it relates to a memorandum sent out to all Members of the NLTA. If the parent organization is sending out a memo to nearly 10,000 teachers, then obviously they've exhausted all their concerns, and they want to then outline to their membership that here are the frustrations, here are the realities we've had to deal with.

I've been taking it note by note in various paragraphs. I'll just summarize exactly the

frustration in each of them or the key points. Then when I get to the end of it over the next few times that I'll get to speak, I'll be able to summarize exactly what this memorandum of – declaration to its membership and what impact it has.

One of the key points that I went through in the first paragraph and it concludes: "As such, the NLTA does not believe that Government has been acting in good faith in compliance with the Provincial Collective Agreement obligation" What they're saying there is that an agreement was put in place that they've had, existed for many years as they negotiated, but the government right now for some reason are not acting in good faith and are not following the outlined rules there. So that's obviously a frustration, particularly when they're talking about improving our education system.

Then I went through the other issues that they had around the whole process of trying to find inclusive programs and services to enhance education, particularly around those students who may have some special challenges or some special needs, and the way of developing their programs and services to provide those.

Then they go on to say: "While these concerns with teacher allocations were not addressed in the last Collective Agreement, there was agreement to form a joint NLTA/Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Inclusive Education Committee." What they were saying is that while there was some movement made in the previous administration, it hadn't gotten to where they wanted it to go. The previous administration had agreed we would set up a joint committee.

What better way to come up with solutions to issues than to having the key stakeholders sit at a table and outline exactly their concerns, outline particularly their suggestions on how you can move it forward and then come up with a solution that works for everybody. So those were two key things we can sense the frustration on where this was going to.

The NLTA proposed a mechanism to extend the committee's mandate – now, keeping in mind because they had gone beyond the time frame and yet nothing had been achieved, they said

we'll suggest something. While we're in a hurry to improve this, we realize there's a process here, there's a bit of time. This may not be the immediate priority for the government so let's suggest a process where we can extend it and continue our work, continue our dialogue.

"The NLTA proposed a mechanism to extend the Committee's mandate, thereby allowing their work to be completed. However, this suggestion was rejected by Government. After 16 meetings and many conversations, the NLTA has reached the conclusion that the government is unprepared to include meaningful recommendations on allocations as part of the Committee report."

They weren't even being demanding. They're saying let's extend the committee; let's continue the work. We've made some recommendations, are you interested in looking at some of those? Some of them should be included in some way, shape, or form on your education process, particularly your funding allotments in this budget.

That wasn't accepted; it wasn't adhered to. It wasn't even part and parcel of – would at least humour us by at least having some part of a dialogue continuing. Again, it's very frustrating for the agency and the umbrella organization that represents all of our educators in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in our secondary and primary school system.

So then they went on. The next stage, then, was around research. As part of the committee's work the committee said, let's conduct some research. If we're going to do this, let's get the data. Particularly, this administration is talking about needs based, data based, and research based, which is fair enough. I actually like that approach. I think it makes sense. I think we're at a point now where collection of data and use of technology could actually put together a framework that would be more useable and more efficient when we determine what are the priorities and what are the immediate needs, and have a scale of evaluation that makes that moved forward. This is what they were proposing

"Over 1,900 NL teachers responded to a survey seeking their professional opinion on matters of inclusion and to gain insight into the realities of

our children's classrooms." What an opportunity for the Minister of Education, for the department, for us as citizens to get key educators in all various parts of the province – who come from different backgrounds and also have different responsibilities in our education system – to tell us what some of their challenges are, some of the resources they have, some of the ways things should be enhanced, some of the things that are missing or some of the new ways that we should redesign our approach to education.

There was no gain in this from a financial point of view for these teachers; this was about them sharing their experiences, be it positive or negative, in the sense of frustrations about what they need. It was then about outlining here's where we think the education system can go, and if we had the following resources we could move it there.

They went through that. They had a number of different categories: "Strengths of the Inclusive School Initiative: Allows all students to interact, learn and play with their peers/greater sense of belonging/attempts to address the needs of all students/feel part of the classroom and school community." What a great approach. Everybody in the school system is treated equally and is included. That's what we want, a safe, caring learning environment. What parent, what person in society, what agency wouldn't want that?

"Challenges with Inclusive Schools Initiative: Not enough funding/human resources/support over all this initiative." So all the teachers support the initiative of inclusive education, but we need the supports to do it. "Without adequate supports, students with behavioural issues are disruptive to overall teaching and learning environment." Understandable, teachers have to be trained. There have to be resources to do this.

The most prevalent reasons inhibiting effective implementation of Individual Education Plans – the IEP, for people who don't know, is a plan that's developed part and parcel with the community itself, but the key stakeholders. It could be counsellors, psychologists, administrators, people from various agencies who can offer supports, the parents themselves and the direct teachers to address and identify a particular Individual Education Plan who may

have some special challenges so that all the resources that are available – and it could be everything from speech pathologists to psychologists that may be necessary. That individual would have access to a mainstream school system and not only be inclusive, but also would be less disruptive to the rest of the school system.

Also, they talked about: "Most prevalent reasons inhibiting ability to provide academic intervention for struggling students in my classroom: Too many students with diverse needs in class to always help those struggling academically/class sizes is too large/I do my best but not possible to address all needs; Lack of time/too much paperwork/overworked now/too many other issues and demands; Have to meet the needs of the IEP students first so rarely have time/some students consume more time/some struggling students are falling through the cracks."

An IEP is very important, but it's very intensive because there are a number of professionals involved. If you have a group of professionals who are giving their advice, and then you have one instructor, one teacher who's responsible in a classroom to be able to implement that and ensure that student is getting all the attention they need, the resources, the supports they need. Obviously, that's going to take away from the rest of the class. Then if you have other students who have different levels of particular needs to be inclusive, then you've got a bigger challenge.

So now you haven't done justice – or maybe you've done justice to one who has a whole specialized group who are supporting them. While you've done that, you've done it at the risk of those who may be on the edge and who fall through the cracks. Then what you've done is to the other kids, the mainstream kids who can't succeed, they're not being challenged. There's some frustration there. What impact does that have? Now you've got a teacher who themselves feel that they're letting down the class in a bigger picture.

There are some real struggles around how that process would work. The most prevalent reasons inhibiting implementation of individual plans: "Too little supports/human resources/classes too large overall to effectively implement IEPs; Too

many demands/not enough time to help everyone (especially for one-on-ones).”

In our education system, particularly with those students who have some challenges, one on one is very important. It’s important to be able to assess exactly what are some of the challenges with that student, why are they being disruptive in a particular day, are there some ways that can be implemented. Also under this heading are not enough student assistants or IRAs to fully cover these needs.

I know the minister announced a few extra hours in. I’ll get a chance, Mr. Chair, to speak to this again on my next time.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: What’s in that glass?

MR. PETTEN: According to Twitter world, there could be anything in that. One fellow had me drinking Mike’s Hard Lemonade earlier, so I guess anything is possible in the glass. My guess is water.

Mr. Chair, we’re nearing 5 a.m. I’m not sure if there’s anyone watching now. I’m sure there’s probably –

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, there is.

MR. PETTEN: There are people still watching. Yes, that’s right. I’m sure there is; that’s right.

As the debate continues, right now it appears to be more the Opposition carrying this filibuster. That’s fine. I guess this hour of the morning, that’s to be expected.

To get back to some of the commentary and whatnot we’re all making – and my colleagues have made it there too. I guess it will be close to home – and I’ve talked about it yesterday. Actually, I presented a petition Monday, I believe, on the cuts within our education system.

I know the petition that I presented was a combined petition that was to do with the multigrade – it says set up full-day kindergarten, delaying that for a year; Intensive Core French, the cuts in teaching positions, schools not being ready in my district. I’ve had a lot of feedback from a lot of parents and educators actually that have reached out to me and expressed their concerns.

I said earlier when I was up, myself and the Minister of Education actually was at one of those schools during Literacy Week doing some readings. We had kind of a sidebar at the time and we were discussing the capacity at the school. Was the school up to capacity to handle full-day kindergarten? As I’ve said, and I’ll say again, those classrooms are designed for what we call the half-day kindergarten groups, which is a lot smaller than a class that now could have 28 students in it is actually designed for.

In saying that, that’s a huge concern among residents in my district. Full-day kindergarten, in its entirety, is talked about – the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands discussed it earlier and he made an effective argument. We are not against full-day kindergarten. I stress that. Right now, with our economic times, the fiscal situation, why don’t we delay this for a year? Right now, of course, with people’s child care, their personal decisions are made based on full-day kindergarten proceeding. That is something that it’s too late to reverse that now obviously. But in the planning process, it is after putting some stress and concern on a lot of these families with children that are entering kindergarten this year.

Intensive Core French – I was looking at an email actually there earlier, but I know – many have seen it – it was a picture of a young girl crying that she never got chosen to do Intensive Core French. There has to be a better system. I know that this was the year in the face of the budget – I don’t know, again maybe it wasn’t a thought-out plan as much as it should have been. There has to be a better system if you are limiting the number of kids that can do Intensive Core French. There has to be a better system than throwing a name in a hat.

I don’t know if you would do it based on the curriculum, based on their grades, have a

threshold – but again, I wonder with this Intensive Core French, how much savings these budget decisions are actually meaning as opposed to when you balance against what stress and concern that it's bringing on these families and these young people. Again, is this money well spent? Are these savings well founded when you're putting that burden on those young – our future, actually? Young people are our future.

Mr. Chair, I wasn't going to mention, but I probably should just qualify – the hon. Minister of AES got up after the last time I spoke. He made a passionate plea on his argument to the cost of having this filibuster. I'm not going to go down that road on his points. He made his points and I respect that.

The Premier this evening on the news had no concerns with the price. He felt that it was democracy in action. When asked about it, he kind of quietly – which, actually, I suppose his response. I feel the same way. When I spoke of it, it backs up my argument that he shares my views, that you don't put a price on democracy.

I know the minister opposite made his point and I respect his point. It's not necessarily we agree with his decision – the cameras can't see, but most Members opposite have stood up. Anyway I can't digress; I have to move on.

Mr. Chair, I have a couple of emails actually. This email comes from a young person in my district. He wrote me. He's a young student. He went into it and explained a bit about himself. He's only, I believe, 18 years old. I was kind of impressed, but I felt it was important to read – all of them are important, certainly, but I saw this one here and I felt I should read it.

Outside his introduction he said: Although I'm a Liberal sympathizer – so he supported the party – I strongly disagree with recent actions of the Premier and the Minister of Finance. This budget concerns me. Actually, he's only graduating high school from a low-income family.

In September, I'll be moving to Winnipeg to attend university. Under the Liberal government's budget, I will no longer be eligible for provincial student grants. This will be a

heavy burden on myself and my family, as I will be forced to take on more debt than I had previously expected.

The budget would increase class-size caps for grades four to 12. This worries me. My sister, who starts grade seven in the fall, is already in a class of 28. What can she expect throughout junior high? This budget will eliminate the Home Heating Rebate program, something my family has relied on in years past. We already struggled to make ends meet.

This budget will eliminate the government funding to the Jumpstart program, something that our families relied on to put my sister through the Girl Guides of Canada program, something she is so passionate about and something we simply cannot afford. This budget will raise the HST to 15 per cent, something we opposed when the PC government announced it and another reason we voted for the Liberals. This will put added financial strain on our already financially strained family. This budget will raise the tax on gas to 16.5 cents per litre, something my family will sure feel first-hand.

This budget will eliminate the baby bonus, something my family heavily relied on to put food on the table or buy clothes or buy essential everyday items. These are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to our family. I dread to think about our family's future. Luckily, for me, I have a way out. Unfortunately, my mother and sister do not. They must be subjected to life under this Liberal government.

We were delighted when the federal budget came out and found that Prime Minister Trudeau showed us he cares about families, that he cares about the lower class and he cares about students and youth. We had hoped that the provincial budget would be much of the same; however, we were gravely disappointed. I trust you will follow your conscience as a dad, as a Newfoundlander and as an advocate for the people of Conception Bay South and vote against this.

The importance of this email I just read out – and I'm glad I did, it's important. This came from a 17-year-old. This person is not graduated high school so they're not even of voting age

yet. I admire the email. The contents are his words; anyone is welcome to read it.

This is coming from a 17-year-old in a low-income family. I guess that pretty well says it all. He hit all the points. There's nothing I can add to that to make it any more or less meaningful. It's his words. It's right from his heart. It's how he feels.

Basically, I think it's the way every Member on this side of the House has been speaking for the last three days. It's from the heart. We believe in what we're saying and we'll continue on doing so.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning once again. I'm glad to be able to continue the debate this evening on Bill 14 which is the bill related to the Liberal levy.

Government has made a few improvements. Nonetheless, it's still a very unfair measure that's going to affect a lot of families in our province for sure.

The Minister of Natural Resources was true to her word. She offered us a few slices of pizza which was greatly appreciated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you to the Deputy Government House Leader for the snack.

The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills earlier was talking about some recent Facebook posts by former Finance Minister Charlene Johnson. I want to acknowledge his comments.

I thank Charlene, our friend and former colleague, for contributing to the debate and discussion. Some of the ideas that have been posted I certainly agree with. I think it's great that more people have gotten engaged in the discussion as a result.

Some of the suggestions are things that we would certainly support. I didn't see any that will solve the province's overall financial situation, but every little bit helps. I think some of the ideas are fine ideas that should be considered and should be acted upon by government. So I think that's a good thing.

When referencing the timing of House sittings, though, I don't know if this was the minister's intention, but the implications were that maybe we are somehow doing something wrong by still being here. Well, we've been forced to be here during these hours, Mr. Chair. It's government that decides when the House sits and we did it when were in government. It's government that lays down motions to keep the House sitting past 5:30 p.m. and past 10 p.m. So that's up to government.

We could have very easily not done that and concluded the sitting day at 10 p.m. each evening and come back the next day. We can do that for weeks and weeks if required. That would be quite acceptable, but that's not the approach government has chosen. They want to get out of here. I would, too, if I were in their situation. So for that reason they've chosen this approach.

If they want to try and blame the Opposition for keeping the debate going, well, to some degree we're guilty as charged. We are keeping the debate going because these issues need to be discussed. But in terms of the timing of the House, it's government that lays down the motions and passes the motions to sit past 10 p.m. That is a decision of government, not a decision of Opposition.

I'll get back to some email correspondence. I'd like to go back a number of weeks. We all received a note from a renowned author, Kevin Major, who is someone that I have tremendous respect for. I read several of Kevin Major's books for the first time when I was in junior high school and I've been a fan ever since. I've got great respect for his work. I think he's made a great contribution to our province and to our country.

This is what he wrote to the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education back on April 30: This week I was humiliated by my government. These are the

most troublesome words I have written in a very long time and I have written many words in my time, most all of them about a homeland that I care for deeply. It is a homeland I wish to see grow spiritually and intellectually, one I wish to see prosper, as do you, I do not doubt. But taxing books and forcing a mass closure of libraries is absolutely not the way to go about it.

The citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador are in a financial quagmire. True enough, it is not just the present government that put us there, but it is the Members of this government who must demonstrate our priorities as a society as we struggle out of deficit and debt.

Literacy must be a priority. Safeguarding easily accessed, knowledge-based resources must be a priority. There are some belts that as citizens in a civilized, forward-thinking society we refrain from tightening. The belt that preserves and protects intellectual well-being is one of them, especially in light of the small fraction of the overall budget represented by this tax and these cuts.

I urge you all to reassess and re-evaluate the choices being made. We, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, need the conscientious, enlightened judgment of you, the women and men elected to serve us. In outrage and in hope, Kevin Major, author of 18 books.

Such eloquence and such passion, and Mr. Major makes some legitimate points that I wish government would consider. We are now going to be the only province in Canada that has a tax on books. It's shameful. We have other jurisdictions in Canada that are actually expanding libraries and investing in libraries, and this government is shutting down libraries. Let me present some other thoughts from other citizens in the time we have left. I'll be up again shortly.

This came in yesterday in real time, earlier today in House of Assembly time: I would like to know if the Finance Minister intends on being accountable for her department missing the deadlines with two public service unions; two very costly mistakes which to me is unacceptable, given our economy. It is concerning, Mr. Chair.

Now, mistakes happen; we've all made them. There's no doubt during our time in government there were things we would have done differently and I'm sure there were times when officials in our administration made mistakes as well. Some of the mistakes that this Liberal government have made in the first six months in office will cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Some of the mistakes they're making in this budget will cost families thousands of dollars a year and those are big mistakes, they're costly mistakes.

We've heard the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: What is the name of the district for the Minister of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for calling order. I can't hear myself with all the noise across the House. I thank you for asking for Members' co-operation.

The Minister of Transportation and Works, Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans, we've heard him several times talk about how ashamed he is. While he's given some passionate performances in this House and talked about how ashamed he is of the situation the province is in and the debt, when he was mayor of Grand Falls-Windsor he was singing somewhat of a different tune.

I don't think he was so ashamed when, during his time as mayor, our government provided, just to give you a few examples, \$11.5 million in 2014 for infrastructure; \$6 million in 2015 towards the hospital; \$4.2 million in 2011 towards the hospital; \$1.1 million for bridge construction in 2015; a brand new youth treatment centre that opened in 2015, I believe, and the list goes on and on. I quickly did a search of government news releases just from 2014 and 2015 and there were record investments in Grand Falls-Windsor.

It's one thing to say how ashamed you are, but I would suggest that the minister was singing a very different tune when those infrastructure investments were happening in the last 24 months. We don't even have to go back a decade. We don't even have to go back five years. It's just interesting to see the perspectives of Members and how they change, and how they've changed so dramatically, even in the first six months in office.

I have many, many more messages to read from constituents and from people around the province. I see my time is just about up. I look forward to further opportunities this morning to bring these concerns forward to the House of Assembly, and to challenge some of the statements that are being made by the few Members opposite that are still actually participating in the debate.

Mr. Chair, I thank you for the opportunity. I'll be back again in a half hour or so, I suspect.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to stand once again and speak to these bills which are certainly related to the budget. Mr. Chair, as I've said a number of times here, I continue to receive tremendous feedback from constituents of mine and people from all throughout the province with emails, Facebook and Twitter, the same as the other Members are getting.

I'm going to take an opportunity to read a few of these now as well. I want to apologize for those who are out there that may be listening and watching. It's amazing, even at 3:30 this morning I got a couple of emails from people saying I'm watching, can you ask this, or what about that, or whatever the case might be. I'm still amazed at the amount of engagement that's occurring. I think it's absolutely wonderful.

I do have one little message here on Twitter I just want to share and this came from a constituent of mine. It's a little bit comical, actually. We have a map of Newfoundland. The

word "Newfoundland," which is on the map, is crossed out and they have Alcatraz written there instead. It says: Gas too expensive, airfare sky high, ferries broken. There's just no escaping the rock, b'y. So I thought that was kind of funny.

I have an email here. It says please read. It's capitalized and there are about 10 exclamation marks after it. So obviously this person is concerned. It starts off and says: Another unanswered email. That's what it says – another unanswered email. Then it says, well, sort of. Just got the BS automated response. So they did get a response, but it was one of those automated responses. Just watching live, please consider this for reading in the House. Thank you.

The letter here is addressed to the Premier. It says: Dear Premier, I sat here a dozen times and thought of a dozen ways to write this email, until I finally came to the gut-wrenching realization that no matter what I write it won't fix what's coming and it won't change the fact that we are in deep water with debt as a province. I'm a realist; I understand the constraints of which we are under and the vast amount of debt that our government has racked up under a different rule, which has been acknowledged and people are acknowledging that.

The inherent problem is us as a whole did not create the situation which we are now forced by government to dig out of. Not one citizen of this province would have chosen to go so far in the hole if they had a realistic picture of what decisions were being made. All we knew is what we were told and what we were told was filtered through a well-oiled social media machine to make us all think the decisions being made by the government we elected were going to make us prosperous people. Given our bleak, history people jumped onto the bandwagon of what we were being sold. Who wouldn't?

I'm stressing the fact that we, the citizens, the poor, the working poor and the middle class, are simply monetary vessels for the bigger ship. We were not the captains but are being forced to bail out the *Titanic* with a thimble. The problem being is the fact that we are the ones drowning, the ones you expect to shovel with the – bleep – thimble. I say bleep because it's an unparliamentary word.

We are the ones with the student loans, young children, high deductions, huge mortgage payments who will now pay dearly for the captain's mistakes. Just because we don't run the ships don't mean we don't matter – because people are supposed to matter. I think I heard that phrase somewhere before: People matter.

We are what have kept this afloat and I don't know how this province will continue to do so once those little vessels begin to leave, because they will. That, of course, is meaning the people will leave. What is deemed as necessary is probably accurate, but the blood of the poor, working poor and middle class is what you're using to fix your mistakes.

When are the pockets of those making the rules ever going to be accountable because the ones making the rules are not the poor, working poor or middle class? We will be paying a huge increase to basic necessities whilst now paying for medications out of pocket, daycare, increase in gas prices, which will increase goods and services and basics like food. That's just scratching the surface.

To even afford to have a vehicle on the road is going to cost a whole lot more. Increase in taxable items to 15 per cent such as car parts, increase in taxing to vehicle insurance to keep a car on the road, to feed a registered vehicle et cetera, you will have people deciding do I eat today or do I pay for my child's medication because now there is no low-income drug or dental programs. You may feel this is an extreme example, but it simply is not. It will be the reality of the minimum-wage working Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

The middle class, those people will feel it too. Higher pay tends to come with high deductions, daycare costs, massive and insurmountable student loan payments, mortgages, cost of commuting to work. I can go on forever because those are your high-taxation bracket ponies you're going to starve to death.

It goes on: I'm not saying the upper levels of income won't feel the pinch, but the thing is the government will as they will probably slow down buying luxury, taxable items. However, the financial certain death will happen to the lower classes and that's what's so scary and

mind boggling to the people of this province. The majority of us are not floating in it; we are barely staying afloat. The ones who are on the edge of financial defeat will simply go over the edge. I've said that a number of times in this House.

There were a large number of this province whom worked away and lost a lot from the Alberta crash. Those people were hanging on the edge. What seems like pennies to those in higher income brackets will be the nail in the coffin to the middle class who were barely hanging on from the mass exodus of oil sands jobs.

You have a province still reeling from this and you're going to take them deeper into financial ruins. Plain and simple, things need to be fixed. You won't keep sinking money into a car that kept breaking, so I get it, but to do so on the backs of the hard-working people of this province is beyond any word I could use to describe what a disgusting budget this is. The purse strings need to be tightened, but this is simply not the way. You're going to choke the people you're supposed to be helping. Revisit the budget and make another way because this is not a budget that is a good – blank – financial death sentence with implications far beyond the scope of what anyone can imagine.

When debt and stress go beyond what people can handle, you will see the very fabric of your ship fall apart. People will migrate out of this sinking ship, crime addiction rates will skyrocket. You can't say no one did not tell you to take heed to the socio-economic problems you're about to create with this death sentence.

My well-worded email may have just as well been a dear diary because the captain rules the boat. The captain – who is not on the financial edge, who will not be severely impacted by this budget – is basically sitting back saying this is it, there is no other way. A true leader would hear his or her people and look for another way, especially when it means certain death one way or another for the very people who actually run the sinking ship.

What will you do when there are not enough thimbles to help bail it out because it's coming. Through the financial debt of the working poor and the middle class, your ship will lose

thimbles to out-migration, addiction issues, crime increases, suicides and a whole lot more. Pretty hard to make a sinking ship work with no one to help bail you out. This article sums up the reality that you're creating for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and calling it a budget.

Mr. Chair, I'm glad to be able to read this because this is a real Newfoundlander and Labradorian expressing the concerns of their family, their friends, neighbours and everybody else. This is what people are saying. This is very descriptive and it's very accurate. I say to the Members opposite: Please listen to what the people are telling you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Sir. I really appreciate it. I appreciate standing up here and having the right to speak to the House of Assembly, no matter if it's 5 in the morning or 5 in the evening.

It's a great privilege to be able to do what we do here and to have the privilege to be able to speak our mind, represent our people, and to have democracy. This is democracy. People really appreciate it. The democracy that we see is the result of a lot of fine people. I'm very pleased to be able to stand here today and talk a few things.

My idea this time, I want to talk about libraries. In particular, I'm going to talk about libraries in my own district and I'm going to recognize a few people. To be honest with you, I had libraries in – none in my own community but there was a library in Pouch Cove and a library in Torbay. This year, when the library board came down in Torbay, they funded the Torbay Library and paid for the person that's there and paid for different costs of books and stuff like that.

The library itself was in the municipal building for a number of years. It was down in the corner actually. You had to go down over the stairs in Torbay. There was a little museum there and then it was the library. The usage of the library – people use it. There were a few programs there,

the Mother Goose program and stuff like that. The Town of Torbay has grown like you wouldn't believe. They owned the building and they needed the space.

There was space across the way in a building owned by a private industry. They said we can't keep you there; we need to space ourselves for different parts of our government as a municipal government. So the Town of Torbay paid for the library to move over to their new location. They even went as far as to pay up to when the library board would kick in again and look at paying the rent. So they paid for their cost and then they paid for their rent.

What happened the library board came down and said, listen, we're putting \$40,000-odd into keeping this library going; we don't have the extra funding to pay for the rent of this building. It was amazing to see what happened. Now, I'll never forget, I was driving home on the Torbay bypass road and the chairperson of the Torbay library called me. I have hands free, saw the phone number, clicked on it and started talking to the lady. She said, Kevin, we have a major problem – couldn't believe this – they're going to close down our library. I said, no, hang on now; they're not going to close down your library. Just give me what you have and I'll have a look at it tomorrow.

So I contacted a gentleman out in Stephenville, the head over the library boards. He explained to me – he said, Kevin, we are not cutting any funding to the library. What we're doing, we don't have additional money to pay for this. The local business down there, District drugs – a gentleman started a petition in the store. Mr. Chair, 1,700 names from people in Torbay signed the petition and from Flatrock and from Bauline and people all over the area. I didn't realize so many people in Flatrock used it.

Anyway, 1,700 names went on a petition to save the library. Then, the extraordinary thing happened, the person that owned it – and I'll say their names, Keith Hogan and Mr. Jack Hogan who owned District drugs, very outstanding, unbelievable people in our community. I've done two Member's statements on both of them since I've been here. They stepped forward and said, tell you what; we won't let the library close. We're not going to let the library close;

we're going to give you three free months so that you can get people together and see what we can do. Don't worry about it for the next three months; you won't have to pay rent.

It is amazing that they just stepped forward to save our library. Mr. Jack Hogan told me the lady's name at the library is called Libby Morey Library. He said he could remember Ms. Morey. She was one of his first customers when he opened his business in 1960. He had allegiance because his children used the library, so he said that's the thing he could do.

Then, we started and we approached some businesses in the area. We had businesses give us \$500, businesses give \$200. It was amazing the response was. Then the two town councils, people in the area, the Flatrock town council I didn't know that so many people – they understood that people in their town used it. Right off the bat they came up with – it would cost like \$15,000 or \$16,000 for the rental. They looked at it and said, tell you what; we'll pay two months' rent because some people in our community use it.

Then, the Town of Torbay came forward and said we'll take care of the rest of the year's rent on it too. We have some renovations doing to the Kinsmen Centre, so what we're going to do now once we get the renovations done to the Kinsmen Centre we'll make enough room in the Kinsmen Centre for the library.

That's what happened with the library. I hope that's what happens with all libraries in the province. I hope everybody gets together and says we can't lose our libraries. That's what happened in Torbay; 1,700 people got on a petition, the business community came out and helped, the municipalities helped and we are not going to lose the library.

It was amazing to me how many people actually were using the library and how people got involved. That library wasn't one of the ones that were designated to be closed. It's the one for the region. The Bell Island Library is 30 minutes away they say and the Pouch Cove Library is pretty close too.

I have another petition here now too that I know I'm not going to get a chance to present all my

other ones, but this is a petition on libraries. It says:

WHEREAS for 70 years the Pouch Cove Library has been a centre of the community; and

WHEREAS the Pouch Cove Library offers a variety of services in addition to loaning books; and

WHEREAS the services use a large portion of the residents of Pouch Cove, including many seniors and young families.

What they want government to do is immediately direct the Provincial Information and Library Resources Board to reverse the decision in closing the Pouch Cove Library.

I just told you about the Torbay Library. I'm going to tell you about the Pouch Cove Library now. The Pouch Cove Library has been on the go, like I said, for 70 years. They're very involved in the community. I spoke to one grandmother and she just looks forward to every morning. Actually, two mornings a week she takes her grandchildren over and goes to a reading time.

I spoke to seniors that use it for Internet service. They just look for different information they need. I said about that the other day. There are so many seniors now that realize how easy it is to use the Internet and get the information they need.

The Town of Pouch Cove also stepped in here. This library is in a municipal building. The library light bill is paid by the Town of Pouch Cove. There is no snow clearing expense. The person who does the municipal cleaning for the building – also, the town pays for that.

The town a couple of years ago stepped in and said there's a lot of usage in the library. I think they had maybe 20 hours a week or maybe 22 hours a week that they were using the library, but there was a demand for an after-school program. The librarian went to the town and said we've got children and kids in this community that are coming to our library wanting to do homework, wanting to do projects. They find it a whole lot easier to go to the library to do these things.

The Town of Pouch Cove stepped in and said we're going to put it in our budget next year. I think it was \$8,000 they put in their budget so there could be an after-school program for the children in the community. So the hours for the library were extended.

That's showing they made their commitment. For a library that's been there for 70 years – I have petitions. I don't know, I'm not even sure, but there are hundreds and hundreds of names on these ones of people in Pouch Cove that want to save this library. That's what the people are asking for.

Libraries are an important part of our communities. I'm going to do this later on today now; I will read out a list of where all the libraries are being closed in the province. Do you know the sad thing about it? They're in small communities, communities that don't have community centres, communities that don't have resource centres, communities that don't have a place for people to go.

It could be something at home. Maybe it's not a good place to do a bit of studying, maybe it's not a good place to do your project, but it gives people in these small communities an opportunity to do this. It's important that we save these libraries. For the cost, again, I go back – and I really believe that this government is going to listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and before we finish this filibuster, libraries will be saved in Newfoundland and Labrador because it's an easy solution.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed it's an honour to stand again and talk to this budget, particularly about the theme that I've been following for the last nearly six hours here since we've been in the House tonight around the cuts to education, and the concerns that tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of people in this province have around the impact they're going to have, particularly on our students right now, but particularly on the students in the future.

I've noted over the last number of times about cap sizes and the impact that's going to have by increasing that. I've talked about overcrowding in schools. I've talked about the cancellation of certain infrastructure projects for new advancement for new schools and renovations to schools. I've talked about the impact of Intensive Core French, the reduction on who has access to it and what impacts that's going to have on those students who wanted to be engaged in that program and particularly future abilities they'll have for job prospects and post-secondary education without having that secondary training.

Tonight I've been talking more about the inclusive education process and the inclusive education committee that was set up between the provincial government, the Department of Education and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. This whole process was about finding a better way to be inclusive for students who have some special challenges in our school system, while at the same time ensuring that it didn't take away from the mainstream school system and the burden on teachers and making sure that there was a collaborative approach here and that the inclusion process worked.

I've gone through a memo that was sent out by the NLTA to its members. When any entity sends out a general membership letter or acknowledgement or overview, then obviously it's out of frustration. They're telling the membership we've done everything we can, we've gotten to this point, but we don't seem to be getting the co-operation.

I've gone through it component by component and I'm almost down to the last component, then I'll summarize from my perspective, from the meetings I've had with the NLTA and discussion with particular groups interested and having this as one of their key philosophies in enhancing education school counsellors and that.

I'll just review one of the key points: "As such, the NLTA does not believe that Government has been acting in good faith in compliance with the Provincial Collective Agreement obligation" around inclusive education, point one. The second point; I had gone through a whole litany of things that the NLTA had as part of their

issues around being able to move this forward: “While these concerns with teacher allocations were not addressed in the last Collective Agreement, there was agreement to form a joint NLTA/Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Inclusive Education Committee”

So there were still some debates in the last collective agreement, but it was agreed that we would set up – and I say we, the previous administration, the Department of Education, the minister – a working committee between the government and the NLTA, which for the last number of years was very engaging. There was co-operation. There was a process. Things were moving forward.

Then we get into the next stage: “The NLTA proposed a mechanism to extend the Committee’s mandate, thereby allowing their work to be completed. However, this suggestion was rejected by Government. After 16 meetings and many conversations, the NLTA has reached the conclusion that the government is unprepared to include meaningful recommendations on allocations as part of a committee report.” Meaning that the committee had met over the last number of years – obviously, here it’s saying 16 meetings and numerous conversations around the work of the committee and getting to a point where they’d have a set of recommendations and move forward.

Obviously, there was either a stalemate or there was still some work left to do. The NLTA had suggested we can still move this forward. Here’s a process, a mechanism that we’d like to put in place to move it forward, extend the time frames for the working committee to reach a conclusion and to get a set of recommendations there.

Obviously, for whatever reason, the Minister of Education and his officials decided they didn’t want anything to do with it. As a result, the NLTA here are saying that government are unwilling to have any real dialogue around the recommendations that were being made.

Then the third component was the NLTA, as part of the committee process, did its own research. It sent out surveys and 1,900 teachers responded. These are people who are front

liners; they’re from an administrative point of view. They’re individual educators who have direct training in inclusive education.

They came back with a whole litany of ways that we could improve it; some of the challenges, some of the recommendations, some of the partnerships that could be developed, some of the resources that would be necessary to make this work. They weren’t saying we want all of this now. What they were saying is, here’s a great template for a starting point. Here are the things we’ve identified. We need certain things to start the process to ensure that we move this forward and ensure that the objective of meeting a better process for inclusive education – at the same time not being a hindrance to the existing school system and not taking resources away from that – would be something that they would want to move forward.

They moved things forward as part of the research. I’ll just note some of the other points. I’d gotten down to instructional resource teachers and outlined what they would need, particularly around the individual education plan, which is an education plan where the community brings in all the resources it has to identify a particular need that student would have. That could engage psychologists, psychiatrists, speech pathologists. It could engage other social counsellors from not-for-profit organizations, the counsellors within the school system, all these to identify a plan. Then that plan is enacted within the school system and all the key players are engaged, particularly the parents of these students. So that’s part of it.

Some of the other things under guidance counselling: “Too many needs/responsibilities placed on one guidance counsellor/they are spread too thin.” For years and years former administrations had worked on trying to get the ratio from students to guidance counsellor down and we had made some great strides. No doubt, there’s more work to be done. When you talk about inclusive education, a lot of that extra responsibility falls back to the guidance counsellors. They have to coordinate, in a lot of cases, the individual education plans and then they still have to work with all the other challenges that are within the immediate school system. Increasing mental health issues among

students take up additional time for the guidance counsellors.

We've matured enough and we've come to a realization that mental health is a key component of having good education and good social health. Guidance counsellors have to do a lot of mental health initiatives, so it means extra training that they need. It means they may have to spend more time with a student that is dealing with a mental health issue. While at the same time then, it takes away from some of their other standard issues that they've been dealing with, so other challenges there that they were talking about.

Educational psychologists, speech language pathologists: "Shared between too many schools/spread too thin/caseload too high/very infrequent visits/small amount of time spent with students/delays in assessments." Issues around this were that the specialized resources we have, unfortunately, are spread out between schools. Over the course of years as schools closed and we amalgamated schools, that meant even the travel time became a hindrance here. You might have been allocated to do a half day in one school and half day in another school, but the travel time between the two of those may have meant you've got an hour in one and an hour and a half in another. Not the right time to be able to actually intercede and assess and then develop a plan that would work for all the individuals that should be part of that service for that particular individual.

Also, increased need for mental health issues. I mentioned that before but this is becoming a concurrent issue for people here because mental health – and we're talking about issues around bullying, we're talking about social disorders and these types of things that we need to be able to have the resources to do it. We say and we tout we have guidance counsellors, but guidance counsellors can only take on so much work with the caseloads that they have, so it becomes a challenge there.

District level personnel: "Shared between too many schools/spread too thin/caseload too high." So we're talking about the school district also has some resources that are responsible for assessing exactly how we can address the needs of these individual students, how do we better fit

a plan that's been developed to the needs of a particular student, how does the school become engaged. There's a component here that people forget. No matter what you do for a particular student – and you bring in your resources and your psychologists, your counsellors, your administrators, your parents and all these other groups you need to be engaged – it's also very important that you find a way to engage the other students who are going to be engaged with that particular student that has an inclusive need here.

That means the classmates of various individuals. That means the teacher in that classroom has to take additional time to be able to deal with the situation and engage and educate the other students of how they should be treating or how they should be finding a way to be more inclusive with that particular student, and be empathetic to the fact that this student may have some other challenges and understand what it is this person is going through. If it's a mental health issue, if it's a learning disability issue, if it's a behavioural issue, whatever it may be, that understanding then makes it much easier for that class to be less disruptive and for that particular student to fit into the inclusive school process.

Mr. Chair, I'll have an opportunity to conclude and go through the final parts of this memorandum and then have a debate around the education system.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: That's pretty good. It's 5:34 a.m. and two of us got up at the same time to speak. That speaks to something else, never mind the confusion. I guess that says we still have a bit of energy left in us yet. As tired as I feel, we're fighting through it.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to probably follow up on a couple of emails here, I know one in particular, a colleague – and we've all tended to stick to the education theme. It's not a planned thing, but I think it's a valid argument. We've talked about many things during this filibuster. I think education is the foundation to our children's

future and, I guess, our future for that matter. They are the future. When it comes to a child, whether it be education or pretty well anything else, it's pretty sacrament to everything we do in life.

One of the most important jobs is being a parent and raising a child. It's one of the most important responsibilities as a community, and it's probably one of the most important responsibilities as a government to look out for our youth, to look out for everyone, but our most vulnerable would be our youth and our seniors. They should take priority. I would encourage any government or any community for that matter. That should be your first priority, to put everyone else's interests close behind.

Mr. Chair, look at the budget cuts in this budget. Education cuts, I should say. I know Members opposite have gotten up. The Minister of Education has gotten up many times and defended it and explained. Our role, as I've said many times, is to present the concerns of the people out in our communities that are very upset and very opposed to these cuts.

I have an email here now from a teacher, actually. As a matter of fact, I met her at the consultation – I can't remember, I should remember that now – for this budget up at Manuels River, the engagement. In any event, I met her at that. We sat together and we chatted.

She sent me this email shortly after the budget was announced: I'm writing in response to the Liberal's recent provincial budget document. To say that I am disappointed is an understatement. As a teacher of 31 years, I'm completely dismayed with the government's attack on the public education in this province. In *Budget 2016* the Liberals have chosen to raise the class size and to increase the number of multigrade classrooms. Increases in class size do not make for quality education.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. PETTEN: Madam Chair, you have to bring some order. I'm having trouble hearing myself.

CHAIR (Parsley): Order, please!

We'd like to hear the speaker.

Thank you.

MR. PETTEN: No, I'm fine. You're doing great. That's fine.

I think that some others may be listening. People will watch this on recording after, when they wake up. They'd like to know what their Members are saying, so I caution the hon. Government House Leader that there are people listening to this. It's unfortunate for them, but good for us that people are listening to what we are trying to say on their behalf.

Bigger class size means less individual attention for each child and less physical space for classroom activities. The research is clear; class size affects academic achievement. The long-term benefits of not reducing class sizes will have a negative impact on our children's futures.

As a grade four teacher in an urban area, I'm particularly upset with the decision to increase the number of multigrade classrooms. Not only are they expecting teachers to deal with an increasing number of children with diverse needs, but they have further added an additional workload component in asking teachers to juggle two curricula. We all know that the cap of 28 really can't mean having two or three additional children in your class. For several years now our union has consistently rallied the government to adequately resource inclusive education. This budget does nothing to address these concerns.

When I first heard that the full-day kindergarten was going ahead in September 2016, my initial thoughts were that the government must be providing a significant financial investment to get this initiative up and running. Little did I know that the introduction of kindergarten was going to come at the expense of teachers from grades four to level III. This is a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. There is no additional funding; it's coming off the backs of hard-working, overwhelmed teachers.

In conclusion, the teachers should no longer be expected to carry the load of an already overburdened education system. As our MHA, I call on you to rally the government to reverse

these decisions which will have a detrimental effect on the future lives of our most valuable resource: our children. Teachers need your support.

That comment echoes what I'm saying; our children are our most valuable resource and we should never ever forget that. Cuts to our education system – I know that a lot of other Members don't talk about it; I know my colleague for Topsail – Paradise mentioned it there the other day. The Canadian Tire Jumpstart program, as someone emailed earlier, it's very valuable. I know we contributed to it and, for years, we were big partners in that program.

That is an amazing program that a lot of people avail of. I know that the previous email, a young guy – his younger sister went through the Girl Guides program and paid her registration through that. That's what that program is designed for. It's designed, again, for our most valuable resource: our children. Any time you cut anything, when it comes to children – and I'll even go to seniors because we have an aging population – it should be done with a lot of caution and care.

I know rash decisions are not always made. I don't know, some of these decisions – I sit back and you have to scratch your head and wonder, at the end of the day, what was government thinking when they decided to make some of these. I've been a follower of politics all my life, I suppose really, and you see some controversy. You see some decisions you wonder what they do.

When you jeopardize and I guess when you play with your children or their education or any programs that they avail of, you're getting into – I don't use the word lightly, but I mean it probably has more meaning – kind of a sacred ground.

I have other stuff. I know I have lots more opportunity to read, but in my final couple of minutes I'd like to stick to my district and talk about the effects of the budget. The new Income Supplement that has been introduced by government, according to the numbers and what we've seen there will be more money, per se, from that program to seniors than the previous

programs. In saying that, it sounds good until you say the effects of the budget are on top of it.

Give in that hand and take back in that hand; the net is result they're still going to be worse off. You talk about your most valuable resource so you're talking about valuable and vulnerable. Both of those sectors, both of those groups probably need government more, or just as much, or maybe more than any other group in our age bracket in our province.

We are faced with a financial dilemma the government is telling us every day, which factors into a lot of our confidence. It leaves seniors in somewhat of a dilemma because they still have the car insurance. They still have to buy gas. Most of them still drive. They're still being burdened with extra income tax. They're still being burdened with the HST and all the fee increases.

They're getting an extra few dollars in the Income Supplement over what they were getting, and that's good, but that's in no way coming near what they're going to have to pay out. So in one hand they get that and then it comes out of the other hand twofold. There is no real balance to that, Mr. Chair.

I've touched on two important groups in our province, but also my district. It has brought a lot of concerns my way. As my time runs out, as I've said at the end of every one of them, I'll have more time to continue on that topic my next time around.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome back. It's good to have a chance to continue the debate.

I want to compliment the previous speaker, the Member for Conception Bay South, who always speaks passionately on behalf of people in the province. I feel I'm being overly complimentary tonight to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, but I want to once again congratulate him on literally hanging on every word that the

Member said. I'm watching him now once again and he's reflecting on my contribution to the debate as well.

He literally hasn't moved –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Okay, he just moved. He was paying close attention, Mr. Chair. Things change fast, sometimes, on the floor of the House of Assembly.

MR. HAWKINS: He was snoring.

MR. KENT: The Minister of Transportation and Works is accusing him of snoring. I thought he was reflecting and listening attentively to the Member for Conception Bay South. Once again I want to thank you, Sir, for your attentiveness while Opposition Members are contributing. While others heckle and laugh, he was following along intently and I appreciate that.

Back to the emails; I got one that just came in from a constituent of mine. He wants me to ask a simple question: Does the Liberal government think these emails are a joke, the concerns of Newfoundlanders about this budget and their lack of confidence in their leader? Why are they heckling and snickering? Do the voices of Newfoundlanders not matter to them? How dare they make fun of this process?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KENT: The laughter continues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Okay, let's carry on. I was asked moments ago to bring that to the House. I have done so and now I'll get back to the correspondence.

This one came in – well, it's still Tuesday in the House of Assembly, but it came in on real Tuesday: This is an open letter I wrote to the Finance Minister back at the end of April. I still have received no response. I thought by sending it to you that it might help keep your fire going while advocating for the people of this province. Thank you for your hard work.

To the Finance Minister, you definitely won't remember me, but you came to my door during your campaign. I also worked at one of the polling stations you visited on election day and you shook my hand. You were with your husband and son passing out goodies to your workers. I remember thinking about how refreshing it was to have a candidate show up and how thoughtful you presented yourself to be. It almost got me to switch who I was voting for. Now I'm glad I didn't; here's why.

Myself and my boyfriend have been together for seven years. During that time we have struggled every step of the way to get a little further ahead. We managed to get ourselves through school on our own, scraping by and living on the food bank of mom and dad. We wouldn't have been able to survive without their leftovers and bags of rolls from Dominion. We were able to manage moving into a cramped basement apartment and more recently to a nice upstairs apartment. We have both finally landed in good full-time jobs that pay well and thought we were going to be able to get our foundation started.

We thought we would finally be able to move forward with our lives; that was until the budget came down. That new truck we were going to buy to be able to explore our province is not going to happen. With the increase in tax, gas, registration, insurance and the levy, along with everything else, that dream is up in flames, which also means that a house we might have considered buying a little further down the line is totally out of the question. A 2 per cent tax increase on a home purchase is uncomfortable, but when every aspect of living, such as utilities, is being increased, that is scary.

We're at the age where we could start considering to have children too, but now that is a pipe dream. Why have kids when you can't afford to feed or clothe them, or even put a roof over their head. The cuts to education, social programming, health, mental health, the Prescription Drug Program and screenings for minor ailments, et cetera, have made this impossible. There is just no way, especially with the cost of child care.

Like I said before, we both work full time at jobs that pay well; however, we are living paycheque to paycheque due to the current cost of living.

This budget has the potential to crush us. If it's that bad for us, what about seniors, what about low-income families, what about families with kids, what about anyone on a fixed income? They won't be able to survive.

I understand the logic that you need to find a way to balance the budget. I get it. Here's my suggestion: Stop blaming the Conservatives for this mess, because (a) it is not at all productive, you're wasting time and effort; and, (b) both the Conservatives and Liberals have been hurting our budget's economy for years. It's cyclical. Stop whining. Spend your time trying to come up with creative answers to these issues. Anyone can cross out items on a budget list. It takes a great leader to come up with creative and proactive solutions.

This brilliant idea to hack away at services and resources and hike fees and taxes is going to backfire big time. You are alienating your constituents and the people of the province. We are going to feel ripple effects of this for years to come. You may not be able to see that right now, but in 10 years you will.

I love this province, but I'm ashamed of my government. For years I fought to stay on the island, but every time I read or hear the news these days I come closer and closer to leaving. I cannot stay in a place where the government takes every cent I earn. I cannot continue to work full time to just go home, sit quietly and give out all of what I make in fees and taxes. This is not a life and I refuse to accept that.

To the Finance Minister, I am aware that I'm going to get a generic reply to this, probably from someone on your staff that has been tasked with this duty. But if you actually do read this, please reconsider what you are doing to the Newfoundland and Labrador community. You and the Liberal government are on the road to destroying us. We'll be seeing the damage for years to come and a lot of us will not recover. Sincerely, Mary Kate Noseworthy.

That's one of the Finance Minister's constituents. She asked me on Tuesday to bring that to the House of Assembly and it's still Tuesday here.

I have a couple of minutes left, so I'll try and read a couple of more short ones while I have an opportunity. This one came in to the Opposition and to me earlier this week: I would like to personally thank you for what is happening right now. I know that this is regarding the budget, but if there weren't so many non-Newfoundlanders working on the projects here, we would have more money being spent in the province.

These guys come here and have all expenses paid and it does not cost them a penny to work here, plus they do not pay Newfoundland and Labrador taxes. We have a lot of Newfoundlanders looking for work and it will be worse in the coming months. I will be out of work myself this fall and with this new budget, my wife and I are considering moving back to Alberta. That's actually from a constituent of mine.

I understand the sentiment the gentleman is expressing because this is not about being against people coming into our province. From a population growth perspective, immigration is of huge importance. We need more people to come and choose to live and work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What's happening with some of our projects in Newfoundland and Labrador in recent months – this is something that the previous administration monitored very closely. You only have to go as far as Long Harbour to see that we have a problem now, in recent months, with Quebec companies and other companies from elsewhere in Canada – it's not just Quebec – working to bring in workforce from outside Newfoundland and Labrador, when we put agreements in place to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians had the first shot at some of these jobs. This is a legitimate issue.

It's not about saying that people can't come in here to work and live; it's about, on certain projects that are happening in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are agreements in place to ensure that the jobs stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. There's a question recently as to whether the Liberal government isn't doing enough to ensure that those agreements are respected.

I was asked to bring that concern to this debate. While it's not specific to the budget, it's an issue that does impact our economy, it does impact the finances of many families in our province and it does have an effect on – just like this Liberal budget is bad for our economy, this issue not being addressed is bad for our economy as well.

I have 20 seconds, so time for a quick one. This came in the last 24 hours: Instead of taxing us more on our personal income tax, HST, gas and books, has it been considered to tax sugar, fast food, junk. These are items that are not a necessity.

That's from Lori. I thank Lori for writing. I thank everybody who continues to send us their messages.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand and debate these issues once again. I have some emails as well now that I'm going to read out. I thank the people who keep sending us all this information, all these emails, questions and commentary through the various mediums. I encourage people to continue and keep it coming. If you keep sending them, I'll keep reading them. That's my commitment to the people.

I have one here; this is from a gentleman. This one was sent a few hours ago. It says: Mr. Lane, please relay my message to the Finance Minister that I apologize if she and her family have taken some abuse and off-colour comments on Facebook; however, it's her tough budget that has caused this. Take responsibility, Minister, for your actions. Thank you.

The other one here is referring to the situation in Bonavista. I'm trying to filter some of this. What he's basically saying is that he is quite upset: So tell him, from me, who is a retired X-ray technician – this is to the Member for Bonavista – that once that service was cut, he will not get it back. Tell him not to hold his breath when he waits for the Health Minister to give him what he wants. Thank you.

That was the issue in Bonavista. I think the Member stood earlier this morning and talked about he was fighting to save that. This person is saying, take it from me, it ain't going to happen. Best of luck to you, but he doesn't think it's going to happen. I hope he's wrong. I sincerely mean that.

I have another one from a lady who was here this morning up in the gallery at some point. She said: Hi again Paul. I sat in the gallery of the House earlier tonight. I was sorry to have missed you. Please read the following two messages; one for the Minister of Finance, who I see is present, and the other for the Minister of Education.

The first one she has Minister of Finance – well, she has the name, but the Minister of Finance: When the budget came down I was angered by the tough choices that you claimed were made. Not only because of the many higher taxes, added taxes, school program cuts, closed libraries, et cetera, I was and am angered that you hadn't cleaned your own house first.

Here are what I believe are the tough choices you should have made. You should have conducted a line-by-line analysis of inflated management positions in every department and division of government and eliminated the excess that we all know exists. Had this – and then she has in quotes – “tough choice” been made, I would have applauded you as a person who leads by example. It would have made some of this budget more palatable to me. Sometimes, Minister, what are claimed as tough choices are really the easier of the tough choices.

Then the message she has for the Minister of Education is: On June 7 I wrote asking why they are pushing through full-day kindergarten to the detriment of other students. I know this has been discussed often in the House, but to this day I have not heard a compelling reason as to why now. To me, it seems irresponsible and poorly thought out.

Earlier tonight I sat in the gallery. While there, the Minister of Education spoke. My jaw dropped when he stated that the Opposition wants us to drop full-day kindergarten. Do they want us to lay off 140 teachers? He was obviously talking about the 140 new

kindergarten teachers. Is this his reasoning, after the fact, for his choices? Is this now his compelling reason as to why now?

How things can be twisted. I am stunned. In my opinion, the Minister of Education is obviously in over his head because he has not been listening to the educational experts, and he certainly hasn't been listening to the concerns of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Paul. I don't ordinarily speak out publicly like this, but it is has come to the point where I've had it. To not speak out would be just plain wrong. I thank Carol for her email.

I still have five minutes. The next one, which just came in hot off the wires here as an email – and maybe the Minister of Education can stand up and give an explanation to this one. Before I read this one I'll make that point as well. There are a number of people through these various mediums that have been – some people have been making commentary, but other people have actually been asking questions and asking specific questions of specific ministers in some cases.

Some of the feedback I've been getting – and I can't speak for the Member for Mount Pearl North who I know is getting a lot of emails and stuff, and the other Members. Some of the commentary I'm receiving now on social media is: I'm hearing Opposition Members read emails asking questions to the government and to ministers. What I'm not hearing is anybody responding.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: The Minister of Fisheries just heckled across well, why don't you ask it in Question Period. First of all, I don't have the ability to ask it in Question Period. Those are the rules. If I had the ability, I can guarantee you I would be asking. I'd have a lot of questions.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Well, I thank you for that.

I would be asking questions, so I can't ask it in Question Period. The other reality of it is that there are so many questions – and we know how

Question Period works anyways. There's a reason why it's called Question Period. It's not called answer period because you generally don't get answers. You just ask questions and then you don't really get answers. That's not unique to this government; I've seen that happening in other administrations as well, in fairness. That's just the way the process works. We all know that silly little game.

The point is this person is saying, and the feedback I've been getting is that, questions are being asked by the public; they're being read out in the House. I think now we're getting to the point and there's an expectation starting to grow out there by the general public that they want to – they have this expectation and hope that when we're asking these questions on behalf of people, directly from people, that they have this thought that maybe there's somebody over on the government who's making a note of that and then not necessarily getting up immediately after; but maybe like an hour later or two hours later the minister stands up and says, well, over the last couple of hours I had this question, this question, and these are the answers. I think that's what people want to hear, but they're not hearing it.

It's almost like it's a futile exercise in even bothering to ask the questions because nobody is standing up on the other side and actually answering the questions. Those are not just my thoughts, although I share the thoughts, but I've been getting some messages to that point.

Anyway, so this one here is directed to the Minister of Finance. This is not a commentary; this is actually a question. She would be in a much better position to answer the question than I would, being the Minister of Finance. This has been thrown out here a number of times by people. I think it's a legitimate question that deserves a legitimate answer. I know that there is a legitimate answer. I'm pretty sure because I did have a briefing yesterday with some Finance officials, but I'm not the expert there and it's not in my budget. I'm not the minister, so I'm going to put it out there, and maybe when she stands at some point she'll actually address the question.

I would like to find out from the Premier and the Finance Minister why is it they won't drop the levy in favour of a 10-cent tax on every fast food

item sold in the province. Then there's a little allegation as to why she thinks that wouldn't happen. I'm not going to even get into that. I'm just trying to be true to what the source is of the email here. I sincerely don't want to be nasty. I would assume the sale of coffee itself would be the equivalent, over time, to what will be taken in by the levy.

I see the Minister of Finance is laughing again. I don't know if that's true or not. I have no idea if that's true.

MS. C. BENNETT: Excuse me?

MR. LANE: I apologize, the Minister of Fisheries. If I said Finance, I meant Minister of Fisheries.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I will correct that. If I did say Finance my apologies. Okay, my apologies. I meant Minister of Fisheries because that is who was laughing.

He might find it funny, but again, this is not funny. People are asking the questions. I don't know the answer. That's why I'm asking the question.

He says: I think the levy should be abolished for everyone. He wants a plausible explanation. So could the minister explain why we don't have a fast food tax when she's speaking later?

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: I'm really disappointed. I've been up that often.

CHAIR: It's been a long evening.

MR. K. PARSONS: I know. It's getting late. Okay, I'll let you do that. That's okay, I'll forgive you. I think you should say, like I say when I get up, the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. How about that one the next time?

It is an absolute privilege to be here again and to speak on behalf of the constituents of Cape St. Francis. The beautiful District of Cape St. Francis it is.

It's time now that I would imagine some people are getting ready for work and maybe they've got their TVs on. Hopefully the viewing audience may be increasing because there are a lot of people that are interested.

I would imagine a lot of people are waking up this morning wondering if they're still in the House of Assembly speaking for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are. We're still here, and we're going to stay here for a while to give the people of Newfoundland and Labrador an update.

There has been progress in the House. We have ministers that got up last night and said they do understand the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. For me, it's not a lot of progress, but there is progress being made. As long as we continue to make progress, we're going to continue to stay here.

To let the people know that are tuning in, we're on Bill 14 still. It's the levy bill. I'm going to speak a little bit about the levy bill now. I spoke about libraries tonight, I spoke about education tonight and a lot of budget stuff, but I'm going to stick to Bill 14 this time. It is the levy bill.

I think the word "levy" has become a household word for Newfoundland and Labrador in only the last couple of months. Before, a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, when they said levy, they didn't take it as something they'd have to pay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Thought we were in Louisiana.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yeah, thought it was the levee down in Louisiana when they had big storms down there, and they busted and the areas flooded in New Orleans.

I want to talk a little bit about the levy. I'd like to ask some questions too. I'd like to know how the levy first came up.

I went up to Roncalli to the consultations. We had a big room of people there. After you finish, what happened was each table got up and they talked about what happened at their table. It was very interesting because we had about 20 tables. In most cases, there were a lot of different topics.

Out of the 20 tables that were there, when I was there, I never heard one person come up with the word "levy." I never heard either suggestion that we do a levy. I know colleagues here were at a good few of them, too. I don't know if they heard the word "levy" at any of theirs.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. K. PARSONS: No? Okay. So I don't know, maybe it was something that was just at one that I was not to.

We're after hearing a few things about this budget, and the one word that came out in the first of it was that it was a lazy budget. It was just take every line in the budget and cut, cut, cut, cut, and then add taxes to every other line and that was it.

So I really believe that when they first came up with the idea of a levy, it wasn't very well thought out. People were just up in arms; people were so upset. I'd say out of all the bad things that are in this – and I've got to admit, the Minister of Finance gave us fair warning. She told us there was nothing good in this budget – absolutely nothing good in this budget.

The day that the budget came down and when she said levy – and people saw the levy and saw what was happening with the levy – people were so outraged it was unbelievable. They were really upset over this. I really believe it was something that wasn't very well thought out. It wasn't very well researched

The communications on it was really, really poor. People were so upset over it. It took about a week to explain to most of the people in the province how it was going to affect them because of the communication. I don't know if

they just thought people were going to say, yeah, I'll take \$300 out of my pocket, or I'll take \$600, not a problem. People were really, really upset.

The reason why they were so upset was because it was so unfair. They looked at people in the low tax bracket of \$20,000 and they had to pay \$300. Then, they looked at someone making \$250,000 and they had to pay \$900. Now, that's changed a bit. I will admit to government, I like the changes you made. The second time you did it you thought about it before you did it, you gave a little bit of consideration.

I'll just show you in the bill right now – I have the bill right here, Bill 14. This is the point I'm going to make now shortly. I'll just show you that a person that is making \$65,000 is going to pay \$200. Now, let's go to another area, we'll say a person that's making \$70,000 –

AN HON. MEMBER: Taxable.

MR. K. PARSONS: Taxable, yes. I agree, yes, it's taxable.

I do like this part of the levy. I don't like the levy at all – I really don't like it – but I like what you did the second time because it's a bit fairer.

I'm going to just explain a little bit why I think it's not fair in a second now, in another instance, but we can fix that. Somebody at \$70,000, taxable, will pay \$400. Let's go to a person making \$100,000.

AN HON. MEMBER: Taxable.

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, taxable. They will pay \$700.

I had an email from a single parent who's a school teacher. A parent who's a school teacher is making – he didn't tell me his salary. But his point was that he is going to end up paying about \$400 or \$500 on the levy. His income is not up to \$100,000, but the individual family that has two members in their family and their income is almost \$100,000, they'll pay nothing. He said it's not fair to me because my household income is around – well, if he said around \$400, probably \$70,000, he just mentioned it there.

So he's going to pay \$400 while a house next door to him, a higher income is coming in that house and they're not going to pay anything. So I can understand why that gentleman is saying that it's unfair. I really believe that maybe it's something that wasn't looked at.

I don't agree with the levy at all; let me say that right up front. I don't think we should have a levy. If you're going to introduce a levy and you're going to have a levy – and what happened with the levy in the first case that everybody realized how unfair it is, I think that you have to look at making sure it's fair for everybody. That's what people are talking about. That's a major concern.

I heard someone else yesterday basically give the same point, but they talked about a person making \$100,000 and they had to pay \$700. I like the more income you have and even I think on this one here it goes up to – the sliding range, it shows somebody making taxable, \$600,000 and they pay a \$1,700 levy. That's a whole lot better than what it was before when a person was making \$600,000 –

MR. CROCKER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: You improved it, I say to the Minister of Fisheries who's heckling me.

MR. CROCKER: (Inaudible) don't mind paying the \$1,700.

MR. K. PARSONS: No, you have no worries about me paying \$1,700.

What I'm saying is when we do things, people get upset, and there's a good reason they did get upset. I think had the communication part on everything been a whole lot better, maybe people wouldn't be as upset as they are.

People were really upset with the levy. You've made some improvements on the levy and I congratulate you for doing it. I really do. We're here and we're talking about the budget. Again, it's amazing how fast the time goes because I have two or three other things I want to say about the levy and I'll do that the next time I get up.

My point that I'm making here tonight is there are changes that can be made that can help people along the way. Like the Minister of Transportation read out an email tonight – and it was a good email; it was very positive. It is what people are talking about. The levy, the tax on insurance on your vehicle, the increase in gas, the increase in personal income tax, the increase in the HST, the 300 increases in fees, the new 50 fees that were introduced in our budget is just too, much too fast.

Please consider what you're doing to people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what they're asking for. They're asking to have a look at this and make it easier on people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's why we're here doing the filibuster.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

Hi, Madam Chair, how are you today?

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Welcome back. Good morning again, at the helm of the table. I have an opportunity to speak again to outline exactly where I am when it comes to the education cuts. For the viewers who are just listening in now or just watching what we are doing, what I've been doing for the last period of time is going through a memorandum that had been sent out by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association union to all of its members. It outlines a number of their concerns, but particularly their frustration around inclusive education processes and the committee to come up with a better process to put in place resources, to identify how we better utilize the existing resources we have, how we engage all the key stakeholders to ensure inclusive education is something that is accessible by all who need it and that it's conducive to the process and also enhances the existing school system.

What I've gone through is a couple of the key points that there was some frustration around. I'll just reiterate those and then I'll get into my conclusion and then a general concept around the impact of not following through with the concept here that the NLTA had put forward and had been previously set up by the previous administration. I'll also outline how it will have a detrimental effect on our present education system.

Some of the things that were noted by the NLTA from the review that they sent out to their members itself: "As such, the NLTA does not believe the Government has been acting in good faith in compliance with the Provincial Collective Agreement obligation" around inclusive education and the supports that have been acknowledged that should be put in place.

"While these concerns with teacher allocations were not addressed in the last Collective Agreement, there was an agreement to form a joint NLTA/Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Inclusive Education Committee" Which, in principle, meant that while they didn't come to an agreement in the previous collective agreement and dealt with other important issues – and this is a very important one – there was an agreement they would set up a working group to get to a point where they would have the information, the research would be done, then they could determine what are the best steps forward and what resources would be necessary.

So they were things that were planned to be put in place. Obviously, as the NLTA outlined, they weren't put in place. "The NLTA proposed a mechanism to extend the Committee's mandate, thereby allowing their work to be completed. However, this suggestion was rejected by the Government. After 16 meetings and many conversations, the NLTA has reached the conclusion that the Government is unprepared to include meaningful recommendations on allocations as part of a Committee report."

What they are outlining here is that they realize all the work hadn't been completed, so they went back to the government and said, fair enough, we know our time frames were probably a bit ambitious, but let's continue what we are doing. Let's keep the engagement

process going forward and then we'll come to a point where we have a group of recommendations that should be implemented or we can have a discussion on which ones are the priority. Obviously, that wasn't done.

Then the committee itself, particularly with the lead of the NLTA, went on did major research, put out a survey to 1,900 teachers, particularly qualified individuals who deal with inclusive education, but obviously deal with the general conception of how we better provide our education system in the existing process that we use.

They went through that. They gathered all the information, all the research. They looked at exactly what the consensus was around what were the challenges, what were some of their stumbling blocks, what are some of the positive things we have. The plan here would be to take that information and then move it into a collective debate around how we resource and meet the needs that have been identified. It may be over periods of time that you implement certain stages or certain assets that would be a benefit to inclusive education, particularly around some of the individual assessment plans that are necessary for inclusion.

They went through that process. Then, their conclusion of the whole process or the whole engagement tool that was at their disposal was somewhat negative in the point that it was very frustrating for them.

This is what they shared with their membership. In conclusion, "Teachers are very concerned with their ability to meet their professional and ethical responsibilities to students and parents in an under-resourced inclusive school environment. Under the current 'needs-based' approach, when emerging needs are identified, the needs of all students in a school are reassessed and existing supports are redeployed to the students with the greatest needs. This can result in reduction or removal of existing supports for students with previously identified needs. In addition to students with identified needs not getting the required supports, there is a growing backlog of students waiting for the assessments required to determine their eligibility for supports.

“The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was unable to provide the Committee with an accurate number of students who are waiting to be assessed.

Teachers take seriously their professional responsibility to advocate for supports necessary for students to be successful in school. Teachers feel it is their ethical duty to inform parents when supports in place for their children are reduced or removed and when there is little likelihood that required assessments will be carried out in a timely fashion. It was the NLTA’s hope that the joint NLTA/Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Inclusive Education Committee established under Clause 30.02 of the Provincial Collective Agreement would bring a report and recommendations that would assist teachers in addressing these issues and meeting the needs of students in inclusive classrooms and schools. This does not appear to be the case at this time, so the NLTA will seek resolution through the grievance dispute resolution process under the collective agreement.

“The Association will keep teachers informed on the progress of the grievance ...” So here’s what we’ve done with our largest union that’s responsible for the overall education process, including that we would have a proper process so that students would have access to education at the most appropriate level possible.

We’ve got the union, who have gone through a process, who were open for engagement with the department, who have asked for a collaborative approach, who even asked – let’s extend the dialogue we’re having. This is not about just asking. This is not nickel-and-dime money here. We’re not just asking to give us money on stuff or give us raises.

This was about resourcing it and finding a better way to use the existing resources also. Take the data and the research that has been done by the professionals who are front line and deliver mechanisms of this service that are needed, that all parents and everybody in our society realize is a very important component.

I know the Minister of Education will get up and talk – well, we’ve put more money into this budget, small amounts of money into looking at inclusive education. We’ve topped up teacher

assistants’ hours, which come to a small amount when you equate it over how many teacher assistants you have in the system.

These are the educators saying this. This is not me as the critic. I’m going on the information they’ve given me and dialogue I’ve had. It makes sense now that I’ve seen the research. What they’re telling me – and they’re telling everybody in this province, and they’re telling the parents and particularly, the students also – is here are the challenges we have.

You can deploy resources that will be better set to take care of an inclusion process, particularly if it’s the individual inclusion process that’s going to have to be used. But to do that, because you haven’t resourced it properly, you haven’t done proper training, you haven’t found a way to engage the other resources that are needed in the particular communities or that you have at your disposal – as a result, that’s going to take away from the existing supports that are needed for the mainstream school system.

Let’s add into all the things that this budget throws at our education system. When I say it throws, it throws negative inputs into it, which takes away from the quality of education. It’s upped our cap sizes, which means more students, with no extra resources for the teacher in classrooms. Most of our classrooms themselves, the physical sizes, are built on the inclusion of a cap size that was set a number of years ago that would only fit that many classes.

So we’re going to cram more students in a classroom. Teachers now have to be able to find time to spend with those individuals. Keep in mind we’re going to make it more inclusive, so we’re going to bring in some other students that have some other challenges, without any additional resources.

Add into that we’ve taken away Intensive Core French. Now all of a sudden – they were used to the other programs – those same students are going to be in another classroom. They don’t have access to Intensive Core French because we had a lottery to determine which ones can go on to a career path that may be involving bilingualism, or open up those opportunities. So we’ve taken that away from them. That’s part of it.

We've changed our whole busing system. So now we don't even have a process where students can be engaged in after-school programs or lunchtime programs, or students are coming too early in the morning or leaving too late. This is what we've done, another thing that we've added to our education system.

We've also cancelled some of our infrastructure projects. Now we have overcrowded schools with no ability to use gymnasiums or cafeterias. This is all still on the backs of trying to engage an inclusive program so that all students have access to it, which is a very important thing.

This is why the educators, the students' union are saying we need, we support, we wholeheartedly want to be able to work with the department to find a better way to do inclusive education for all students who may have some special challenges when it comes to being able to fulfill their education needs. But we can't do it without it being resourced, or without the dialogue being open so that we can find out how we better use the existing assets and what other ones do we need, being cognizant of the financial challenges and that. The NLTA were saying let's have a dialogue, let's move this forward.

Madam Chair, I'll have a chance to speak to this again.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's good to get up again. Tonight has gone on. We've had lots of opportunities to get up and speak to the levy, but, I guess, speak to people's concerns as well, Madam Chair.

When you get up each time, you sit back and reflect, and wonder which angle you want to go and there are a lot of angles. This budget gives lots of different narratives you can go with.

Economic diversification is one that is worthy of some discussion.

I know last year, in early 2015 in the year leading up to the election, there was a lot of discussion about the upcoming election and what was the plan of the Liberal Party at the time. They were the Opposition Party then. What is your plan? What is the fiscal plan? What is your economic plan? I know a lot of people were calling for it. A lot of the media and the public were wondering where you stood with the economy.

Then there was an announcement across the province, LEAP, the Liberal economic action plan.

AN HON. MEMBER: The captains of industry.

MR. PETTEN: The captains of industry. Yeah, that's right.

We have a plan – I think the Opposition leader of the day, our current Premier – and you're going to like it. Who's to question that? I don't question it; I take everyone at their word, I really do. He made that public and why not.

Like a lot of the electorate, you wanted to see the plan before the election was over. Now we're in the seventh month since the election and if this is the Liberal economic action plan, if this is what the captains of industry came up with, I guess there was no rush. We could have waited years more to see the results of that plan. I don't think that's actually the case. You can make a play on that and you could ridicule that, but the sad reality is I really don't think the government opposite had a plan.

I know colleagues of mine here, we all went and knocked on the doors. We knew what we were facing. I knew what I was facing as someone that was seeking my first term as being not elected. I was up against it big time. I also took into account what we faced as a party.

The public went on and, again, took them at their word. As we seen a lot of advertisements, they had a plan and we were going to like it. Then it was all these catch phrases: You can't lead if you don't listen. And there would be no public service cuts and the HST was a job killer.

AN HON. MEMBER: People matter.

MR. PETTEN: People matter. That's a good one. People matter. I was forgetting that one. It's been a long night.

In fairness, I never questioned any of that stuff prior to the election; I really never. As I went door to door and people would make some of the comments of that and I really and truly never argued about it. I said that's fair, thank you and have a good day type of way. It was respectful. I understood where they came from.

Then, we were six days, maybe, from election day, or was it seven? We finally saw the red book. In actual fact the sad reality is they didn't even have to put out a red book. I really think the decision was made, with or without the red book, that the government was changing, which is fair enough. That happens and that's happened in the past.

I remember thinking it was somewhat insulting to the electorate that we're voting for them. Me, personally, I was waiting for this economic action plan or plan for the economy that we were going to like. I said, whatever, I guess we'll see it sometime along the way. I was busier trying to be elected. There were a lot of people out there – and the polls were showing it – who were supporting this party. They never even had enough courtesy for their supporters to put out the red book in enough time – six or seven days before the election. I believe it was put out on the day of the advanced polls.

Something interesting happened that day. I guess if the election would have been six weeks, who's to say what could have happened; the numbers in this House could have been different. When they put it out it was, hang on, these numbers don't add up, that number doesn't add up; something is wrong with this number, something is wrong with that number.

When they got it out and people started analyzing it, they were saying these numbers are not making sense now. This did come from the captains of industry, who were part of the Liberal economic action plan, who were part of that economic plan that we were told people would like.

When this started to unfold in the red book – and this is actual fact, you can go back and look at the clips – everything started to slip away on the government opposite then; you felt a shift. There was a time there that it was like, wow; you couldn't cut a break, until the red book came out. That's why the red book came out seven days prior to the election, because everybody within the red machine knew what the outcome was going to be.

It wasn't a well-thought-out plan. A lot of this stuff was unrealistic. There would have to be job cuts which it was already promised there wouldn't be. They would have to raise the HST which they already promised they wouldn't.

All the promises were basically partially uncovered in the red book. So it was get us to November 30 and we'll deal with that after. When November 30 came along, lo and behold the election was held. We knew the outcome.

Now, there was a little shift in popularity, I think, at the time, but they never had enough time to read the red book thoroughly and have a proper analysis. That was November 30. Here we are in June and all I can say is wow. What we've seen unfold since April 14 has been astounding. There is no one here that can say it hasn't been astounding.

They may disagree with a lot of the stuff that we say across the floor, but I don't think there is a word I've said here that anyone could disagree with. I'm just basically telling you what's been in the public domain since the last of November. This is all fact. I may be off a day on when the red book was issued. Everything else has been public information. You can go research it and back it up.

This is the problem I find when the government opposite stands up on a daily basis and tells us about we're going to diversify the economy. Well b'y, I know we struggle sometimes and we're probably not as smart as Members opposite, but that's not diversification. Taxation is not diversification.

Now, maybe someone across the way can correct me; that's fair enough. By this hour of the day and the lack of sleep in this House, I could easily be corrected, but I think I'm right.

Taxation is not diversification, is it? Is taxation is diversification?

MR. LANE: (Inaudible) diversifying the paycheque.

MR. PETTEN: What's that?

MR. LANE: (Inaudible) diversifying the paycheque.

MR. PETTEN: Diversifying the paycheque, yes, that's probably more like it. As my colleague that's sitting on the edge of his seat right now said earlier today, you don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out. It's not the way.

We hear all these analogies – taxing yourself. What is it? Prosperity is like standing in a bucket and pulling the handle – it doesn't make any sense. What the public was sold – it's like you put your order in for your BMW and someone hauls up in a 1980 Chevette. It's basically what we have from this. I mean, we were getting the Cadillac –

MR. K. PARSONS: There's nothing wrong with a 1980 Chevette. I had one.

MR. PETTEN: I had one too; that's right.

AN HON. MEMBER: I had one too.

MR. PETTEN: We all had one. See, everyone had one back in the day.

The point being said what was advertised and what was sold to the people wasn't what was delivered to the people in this budget April 14. That's a pretty simple statement. What was advertised and what was delivered are two totally different things.

This government opposite are going to have to face the public and they're facing them every day. This filibuster is a great way to expose that. They need to talk to the people. They need to look the people in the eye and tell the people what was advertised and what was actually delivered are two different things. It's incumbent upon them to do so.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

He didn't even have to be reminded. He was in his seat exactly as the clock timed out.

Good morning to my colleagues in the House of Assembly. I see some fresh faces, which are good to see. The Minister of Health has another great tie on today, as always. Good morning to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Most people are getting up and getting ready to start their day.

It's still Tuesday here in the House of Assembly. We are now in, I think, the 65th hour, or it might be the 64th hour – I'll check my math afterwards – of consecutive debate here in the House of Assembly. During that time we've passed several pieces of legislation, but the two we're stuck on relate directly to this Liberal budget and the damage it's doing for families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're talking about the Liberal levy. The government has backtracked a little bit, but it's still bad. It's still bad fiscal policy. It's still bad economic policy. It's still bad for taxpayers. It's bad for families in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're also debating the 15 per cent increase in home and auto insurance that everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador is going to face as a result of this budget.

Based on the feedback we're getting from people around the province, they don't want us to let these issues die. Every hour of even the night – and our crew that's here now has been here all night – we're still receiving emails from people throughout the province who want their concerns brought to the House of Assembly.

They're not just concerned about the Liberal levy, they're not just concerned about the 15 per cent insurance tax increase – although those things are hitting people pretty hard – they're concerned about the drastic cuts this government

is making to our K to 12 education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. They're concerned about cuts to health care. They're concerned about cuts that will limit access to programs and services in rural communities. They're concerned that the Liberal government promised a plan to grow and diversify the economy and doesn't have one. They're concerned about all of that.

The Liberal Members keep saying: Bring us alternatives; you're not talking about solutions. Yet, over and over again we're reading out notes from people all over Newfoundland and Labrador who do have ideas, they do have solutions and they do want to propose alternatives as we have as well. We've talked about some of the things that we would have done differently.

We had a plan. We had a plan and we were on the road to implementing the plan. I respect the choice the people made back in the fall. We now have a new government with a mandate to govern, but unfortunately it's a government that was elected on a whole host of false promises. That's part of the reason why people are so outraged right now.

Anyway, I've talked at length about our plans. I want to get back to reading some correspondence that I've received from many people throughout the province: Please ask someone to make sense of the decision to spend \$43 million on all-day kindergarten, while cutting back on teachers in the K to 12 system and combining grades. What makes this a priority at the expense of all other children?

We all grew up with half-day kindergarten without it causing any long-term problems. It belies common sense to think that anyone can believe this is a positive step. Someone please stop this madness. Paul Underhay.

Well, Mr. Underhay, we're doing our best to stop the madness, but it seems that government is not interested in listening. I'm a proponent of full-day kindergarten. I believe it is the right thing to do, when we can afford to do so. I was looking forward to full-day kindergarten starting in September. In fact, one of my children will benefit from full-day kindergarten starting in September.

The difficulty is that now this government is blindly, stubbornly pushing forward with the implementation of that policy at the expense of the K to 12 school system. So we are going to have combined grades, multigrade classrooms.

This government has launched a brutal attack on French education in our school system, making cuts to French immersion, making cuts to Intensive Core French, raising class caps, taking teachers out of our schools and changing teacher allocations. Given all of that, it is completely irresponsible to be plowing ahead with full-day kindergarten in 2016.

Let me read out another message while I have time during this segment. We're speaking in 10-minute intervals, so I'll have time within the next hour to get up again, hopefully, and read some more messages.

Extra tax on gas, tax on insurance; these two alone affect our life in that they are mandatory. We have to get to work. We are law-abiding, working-class people who have no choice but pay the increased amounts in order to transport ourselves to and from work. In saying that, add the 15 per cent tax on everything and our cost of living has increased to an amount that is barely manageable.

Now you want to add a levy, continue to increase the cost of living here as our income stays the same and you are taking directly from my children. If all of our income is barely enough to pay the bills, we will not be able to put our children in sports, music or arts programs.

We are a double-income family with decent-paying jobs that we had to acquire education and experience to obtain. Yet, this government continues to rain hardship on the working class. The levy must go. Put in toll booths; stop wasting money on middle management. Find other ways to offset the deficit, not on the backs of the middle class. Anyone earning below \$100,000 a year is already paying enough.

That note is from Tracy. Tracy, thank you for sharing those thoughts with us. I think those are sentiments that many people in Newfoundland and Labrador share.

This note is from Sara: I may be too late to have my voice heard, but just in case. *Budget 2016* is already affecting my pocketbook. On Friday, my new tax-included insurance renewals came; house and auto. There is \$188 added to one and \$320 dollars added to the other. This, of course, means a large monthly payment.

Between that and the extra \$20 per fill-up for gas, I'm wondering how I'll be able to do it. Last week our household cut its cable service to help keep up. I don't have any fancy phones or clothing, I don't drink and I don't do drugs. My money goes to bills and necessities. Things we wanted to do are now on hold including – but not limited to – making necessary renovations on our home and starting a family.

Several weeks ago I emailed these sentiments to my MHA, the MHA for Terra Nova. He promptly responded and offered to discuss how the budget will affect us. However, I declined, because he has already made it publicly known though *The Packet* newspaper that he supports the budget as is.

I was prepared for tax and fee increases, but not everything else all at once. I was also not prepared for the level of dishonesty the Liberals have displayed. Overall, I feel hopeless about their ability to govern this province. Thank you for representing the views of hard-working people like me.

That's from Sarah on Random Island. We'll continue to speak out for people like Sarah on Random Island.

I only have a minute and a half left, so I'll try and find a short one, Madam Chair. The Liberals are living in la-la land says Jody. They have zero compassion or comprehension of what the average Joe is dealing with.

Since the Premier and his fleet of puppets have dropped this budget, I haven't had a decent night's sleep. Why? Worries, that's why. I'm a single working woman with two children. I struggle every day to give my kids a normal home. I pay \$1,300 for rent, \$186 for car insurance, \$65 a week for gas, \$250 for heat and light and \$35 a week for school lunches. I haven't included clothing, kids' activities, food and general life.

I don't smoke, I don't drink and I'm completely tapped out. Month to month I'm broke. Where am I getting the extra? How am I paying my insurance when that increase comes into effect? I can barely put the gas in now that's needed to get me to my dialysis treatments.

Liberals, stop this. Please, enough is enough. You cannot take more money from us when there isn't enough now.

Madam Chair, it's just too much. Enough is enough. This plan will not grow our economy. It will not help families. It's clear the Liberals don't have a plan. This budget reflects that. It's an attack on families, regardless of income. Particularly, it's an attack on the lower class and middle class.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand once again in the House of Assembly. What are we at here now? It's 6:45 a.m. on what's this, day three or day four? I've kind of lost track.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's day three.

MR. LANE: Is it? We're in day three. Anyway, we have many more days to come. I look forward to continuing this debate as long as is necessary for us to see some movement on the other side of the House to see some change like the people are asking for. As I've said and I will continue to say, I'm prepared to stand here in this House of Assembly day and night, if need be, for as long as it takes to get some movement for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, I have a constituent of mine who sent me a text this time. Before I read the text, I want to say to people who are listening I want to

thank them once again for all of the feedback that I have been receiving and we've all been receiving. Whether it be email or Facebook or Twitter or text messages, whatever the case might be, we continue to receive commentary, we continue to receive questions and so on.

I'm going to continue reading them throughout the debate. I hope, at some point in time, that we're going to actually hear some answers to some of the questions that people are asking. We continue to ask these questions on behalf of people and we're not getting any answers on the other side. I'd love for someone to start actually answering some of the questions.

I have a constituent here. His message is: I listened to government for days talk about how there are no solutions offered. I have emailed every MHA in the House to discuss this proposal. I have contacted the Premier's office and had communication with his assistant. I have developed, over the past couple of years, monumental money revenue-generating programs that will change the landscape in which government operates for the advantage of the people. I have talked with a few MHAs of present, with two of them being Liberal, and one who is my own MHA who is now an Independent.

I am asking my MHA – which is me – to take this up in the House as a last-ditch effort to help the people of the province before the next election. I do not hold any party alliance. I have always voted for what I felt was best for the people and ready to serve the people. I ask this filibuster never stop without change in this budget. There is a better way and I respectfully ask for the time to discuss my work.

If the government is refusing to listen and to work with ideas that are amazing for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, I will take my message to the people on a website, which he has created, votenl.com, which is not activated but the idea is there.

Now, I just want to say that he is a constituent of mine. I have met with him. He has a lot of ideas. He is a very intelligent individual. He's a problem solver. It is what he does for a living in terms of business solutions and things of that matter and a very, very intelligent guy. He has

an awful lot of ideas. I will say that some of the ideas are definitely outside the box of what we normally see in terms of government programs and services and how they would be offered and ways of generating income, for sure.

Nonetheless, there are a lot of ideas there. A lot of good ideas that certainly could be explored. It would certainly change the way we are doing things in many cases. But if the status quo is not working for us, then I see nothing wrong with exploring different ways of doing things.

He has offered that up. He has tried to contact every MHA. He has talked to a couple of them. He called the Premier's office, spoke to the Premier's assistant, and he told me the Premier's assistant said I'll call you back to arrange to a meeting. That never happened. This is his last-ditch effort. He asked me to reach out and ask that government would meet with him. Someone from the Premier's office, the Minister of Finance, what have you, to meet with him and discuss possible solutions and ideas that he has. He said that if anyone would like to meet with him, then I could certainly give you his name and phone number to make some arrangements.

I do that on his behalf. A constituent of mine and a Newfoundlander and Labradorian who would like to be involved in trying to solve the problems of this province. I thank him for that.

I have a Facebook message I'm going to read. I want to say to people as well before I read this one, if I don't get to your messages, I apologize if I don't read them all. I've lots of time, but it could be three days from now before I get to read some of these. Quite frankly, I'm still trying to get through the emails; I've got a whole bunch not even printed off. I've got 179 Facebook messages here I've to check. So there's no doubt a lot of them are going to be comments and questions and what have you. That's not counting some direct Twitter messages and so on – and they're still coming in. Look, my phone is just going here again.

If I don't get them all done right away, I apologize. I'm trying to get each and every one, and I'll have lots of time to do it, but I only get 10 minutes every hour or whatever by the time everyone gets a chance to speak. So I say to people, keep the questions coming. Keep the messages coming. I will do my very best to get

them out there throughout the debate. But if you send me a message and I don't read it right away or whatever – it could be two or three days later before I do – I apologize, but there's only so much I can do, and I'll do it to my very best.

Now, this gentleman here has a concern. He's from the Harbour Breton area, which I think is the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune's district. Anyway, he says here on Facebook to me: Closure of dialysis in Harbour Breton is of grave concern. The Bay d'Espoir Highway is a long and dangerous road to get patients to Grand Falls-Windsor. Think about mid-winter. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune herself lost a tire on that highway a few weeks ago.

After years of lobbying for dialysis in a growing community like Harbour Breton, it is foolish to go and close it in exchange for only four long-term care beds. I'm also concerned about the reduction of X-ray services in Bonavista – oh, here we go, that one again, Bonavista – and removal of on-call radiologists. I'm concerned about closing clinics in Carmanville and Wings Point, as well as the removal of a nursing station in Black Tickle. They serve all the little fishing stations in Labrador, as well as Black Tickle.

I know, Madam Chair, you share those concerns, you have lobbied and I've heard you, and I'm sure they appreciate that.

These could be enough to swallow if government hadn't decided to squander these savings through whimsical expenditures on Labrador tunnel studies and Nalcor severance and legal teams who dropped the ball on contract negotiations. This government is not concerned with savings; they're more concerned with dropping rural Newfoundland and Labrador off the back of the sled and hoping its people flock into the supposedly cost-efficient urban growth centres.

This is a message from a gentleman. He's obviously from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. He certainly has roots there. He's commenting on issues in different parts of the province. He's not a constituent of mine, but he sent this directly to me as a direct Facebook message and asked that I would raise those

concerns and read them in the House of Assembly, and I have.

I won't have time to read any more, but I will keep saying or try to remember to say every time I stand up to the Members opposite even though the budget vote is done, it's never too late. It's never too late to make some changes.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are being quite clear that they're not happy with this budget. They feel that you've gone too far too fast – is what the people keep saying. They're not happy with the decisions on education which are not even a monetary issue; it's just a bad decision. It's not too late to do the right thing.

I'm going to take my seat. I know other Members have lots of stuff they want to say as well. I'll get the opportunity to speak again.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly an early morning here in the House of Assembly. It's been a long night since I came back after a short nap at 1 o'clock. I know Members of the House on both sides are trying to make sure that they manage the sleep fatigue at the same time as they're doing the work they need to do to represent their constituents.

Madam Chair, I do want to thank the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands. It takes a very hon. man to acknowledge in the House when he makes a mistake. I appreciate that when you made the mistake about referencing me as having laughed when you were talking – I really do appreciate that you corrected that because this debate has been very serious. It's one that I take very seriously. I wanted to say thank you for that.

Also, I wanted to make a quick comment to the Member for Cape St. Francis who also

commented last evening during the debate about a conversation he and I had about oil prices, oil royalties and how the fact that when the barrel price goes up, yes, we will benefit from the royalty perspective, but that depends on the US dollar. It also depends on production. I want to thank the Member for Cape St. Francis who said that the conversation we had was productive and he had even deeper appreciation about the challenges of the oil royalties that we face, Madam Chair.

As I've said in the House a number of times, we have seen a significant change in the financial capacity of the provincial government. As a Finance Minister the most important thing that has to be acknowledged is the truth about the financial situation of the province.

Now, Madam Chair, I have to say that as somebody who has been a representative in this House for a couple of years, I was really surprised in January of this year, after being sworn in in December, to be told by officials that we were finally at the point where Public Accounts was going to be released.

For those people listening at home, Public Accounts are the books of the province, the audited books by the Auditor General. That information was made available to me in my role as Finance Minister back in January and was released immediately. It is quite stunning that information wasn't released before that. I don't know why. I wasn't in the seat in the minister's office. But we do know that our Premier asked the former premier in September of last year for a status update on the finances of the province and it didn't happen.

Madam Chair, why is that relevant? Well, it's relevant because our province has seen oil royalties go from an all-time high of over \$2.7 billion down to less than \$600 million, which is where we are today.

I know the Members opposite are very interested in this discussion and are talking about the drastic change in oil royalties. I know the Member for Mount Pearl North, in particular, is very interested because last night in debate he finally acknowledged the problem that has been plaguing the provincial government finances –

his words were we have a spending problem. He said government has a spending problem.

I would suggest to the Member opposite that I think it's very honourable of him to acknowledge that in addition to the oil royalty problem we have, that spending – which increased some 37 per cent 2008/2009, well beyond population and inflation growth – has put our province in a situation where we don't have enough money to pay the bills of the province.

Madam Chair, I understand – and, believe me, I have read the emails. Contrary to what the Members opposite have insinuated, I have read the emails that have been provided to me that people have sent. I understand that people of the province are angry about some of the initiatives in the budget.

I also understand that underneath that anger there are many, many, many people in our province that while disappointed and frustrated, understand that a provincial government representing a population of 500,000 people – equivalent to the City of Brampton, in a geographical province as large and as beautiful and as magnificent as ours, the size of Alberta or even the country of Norway – has limitations in how we raise money to pay for services.

To protect critical education and health services, we had to take some serious action to prevent what would have been a fiscal crisis. If we cannot borrow, we cannot have health care. If we cannot borrow, we cannot have the services in education that are still there.

People say: Is it possible that we can't borrow? Well, here's what I think might happen. If we are unable to borrow, I think somebody else will come in and borrow for us, somebody with a balance sheet that's much stronger than ours, and we will lose control of being able to make our own decisions as a people and as a population of Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't believe anybody in Newfoundland is prepared to turn over our future to anybody else.

Madam Chair, we spend more money on just servicing our debt – just servicing it. Not principle payments, not like your mortgage payment where you pay interest and you pay a

mortgage, just on the debt expenses. We spend more on debt expenses than we do on educating our children.

Madam Chair, I don't believe there's a Member in this House, I don't believe the Official Opposition, I don't believe the NDP, I don't believe the Independent Member wants us to spend more on debt expense, just servicing it, than we do on the children in our province. We have to maintain and create a way that we can modernize and provide a more sustainable public service – critical public services – and deliver these public services in an efficient way without waste that is favourable to the future realities.

Do you know what? Everybody in this House would wish for oil to go back to \$140. I'd probably put my hand up as being the one that wants it to go there the most. But, Madam Chair, we cannot avoid the truth and the facts that spending in the last number of years – the last decade there were multiple deficits ran. Six out of 12 years this province ran a deficit. Debt continued to grow by over 60 per cent in the last decade. How can we stand here as proud Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and be prepared to pass that legacy on to our children?

I know that there are many, many, many people in this province that are finding this budget very difficult. That is why we moved as fast as we could on changing the Deficit Reduction Levy – the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy – and we'll continue to do the things we need to do to protect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Getting our fiscal house in order as a province is critical to the steps we need to take to be able to grow our economy and provide even more opportunities for the people of this province.

I want my kids to stay in this province. I intend to work as hard as I can to make sure that they and everybody's children and every person have an opportunity here. But I won't be deceitful with the people of the province on the facts of our finances and avoiding a fiscal crisis. Quite frankly, I don't believe anybody in this hon. House wants to be deceitful with people about the realities of what we are faced with, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Interesting; it's 7 in the morning so we'll see a few more of government Members up on their feet.

The minister just got up that time and really tried to give a passionate speech. I don't know if it was passion or not. She talked about spending and how the previous government overspent. For those of you at home, there is more spending in this year's budget than was in the previous years.

There are a few reasons why – there are a couple of reasons. Someone will get up and say, now, there was the pension plan for the teachers, but that will only level it to where it was last year. So she's criticizing the government for spending money last year, yet she's doing the same thing this year.

I just had a person say to me: Ask the Minister of Finance, if she's so worried about spending, why is she continuing to full-day kindergarten? They want to know why you're still doing full-day kindergarten when there's a crisis on the go.

She just explained the contingency fund of \$30 million for disasters and everything else that could happen in this province. I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance: Does she consider what her plan – this is the Minister of Finance's plan now. She talked that time about keeping children in our province. She talked about how important it is to keep her children in the province. On her plan that she has on page 17, from right now in 2016, she says there are 527,000 in this province right now.

In her plan that she's put forward in front of us and she's presented to the people of Newfoundland – her plan in 2021 is to have 507,000 people. So her plan, she wants to keep her children in Newfoundland and drive away the rest of us. That's what the plan is. Her plan here –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: It's in the books. It says that we're going to have less people in the province. Where is the plan? That's what the people of the province are upset about. There is no plan. There hasn't been a plan since day one.

You can talk all you like. You can get up and say that we have a plan and we want to keep our young people here in the province. You put out your budget and you tell people in the budget that we're going to lose 20,000 people. I want to keep my children in Newfoundland also. So does every parent in the province. They want to keep their grandchildren here. If you get up and say one thing and you have in your budget something else, that's why people have lost the trust in this government. That's why people feel betrayed. People really do feel betrayed about this.

There isn't anybody in this province who doesn't understand that we have a fiscal situation that's on the go. Everyone does understand. I really thought that last night when we went through a few things – I heard the Minister of Transportation read out an email where a person on the email said it's way too much, too fast. He got up and he said I understand where that person is coming from. I thought we made great progress. I really did. I thought we made great progress because finally government understands why people are upset. They understand why people are mad. They understand why people feel portrayed. Then, we listen to the minister that time. It's unbelievable.

In her own budget document on page 70, in *The Economy* document, it states that we are going to lose 33,000 jobs over the next five years. That's not what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador were sold. That's not what was told at the doors.

They'll come down and they'll say we didn't know. We didn't know how bad it was. Well, a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador were watching what happened in the last little while and they started to understand what was wrong in Newfoundland and Labrador. They understood that the oil prices were dropping. We have a serious problem here in Newfoundland and Labrador because we're very dependent on

oil. We're very dependent and it means a bottom line to what is happening in our province when it comes to our revenues.

To let the people know, we are discussing a bill. When the minister got up that time, sure, I could see where she was coming from when she said about the economy and to keep everybody here, but she is driving everybody away with this budget. The reason people are so upset is because it's really affecting the bottom line. It's affecting the bottom line to hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

AN HON. MEMBER: Another successful filibuster led by the NDP.

MR. K. PARSONS: I'm glad they call it our filibuster.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: We're here debating Bill 14. Bill 14 is about the levy. No matter whose filibuster it is, it's a filibuster that we're all working very hard to try to get government to listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We heard during the campaign that people matter. A big slogan: People matter. That's what we are here for – people matter.

What really matters to people is how they've been treated and what the bottom line is to what's going to happen after this budget. People really do have that fear. They have a fear that I don't know where I'm going to get the money to pay for the bills that I have to pay.

Part of this debate that we're doing right now is about the increase on insurance on cars, on vehicles, on RVs and our homes. On July 1 people are going to have to pay an extra 15 per cent. They really do have that fear, wondering where the money's going to come from.

We have a fear with people with the levy. Again, we've got a lot of people that are looking at the levy and they're thinking the levy is unfair; it's unfair to working-class Newfoundlanders. Someone read out an email last night about somebody that's making about \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year. He's a single parent with three

children and he's going to have to pay \$400 on a levy. Yet, there is income for another family that could have two people, less than around \$50,000, and they'd get away with paying nothing.

When we looked at the levy in the first place, everybody was really upset because it was so unfair that people around the \$20,000 mark would have to pay \$300, yet a person that was making \$500,000 or \$600,000 would have to pay \$900. So they fixed it up a bit, I've got to say. I give government credit that it is fixed up a bit. It's moving up the line. The more money you make, the more the of the levy you pay. But still, most people in the province just feel that the levy is a cover charge and it's a tax.

I listened to a gentleman talking to Fred Hutton yesterday. He said other jurisdictions in Canada were looking at the same type of taxation that is done here in Newfoundland and Labrador. He said they're just looking at it and saying they can't believe it because it's so unfair. That's what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador say.

We're here doing this filibuster and we're here to try and talk and bring forward the concerns of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're here to try to have people's word heard in this province. They were told that their concerns mattered, that people mattered. Government said we are going to be listening; you can't lead if you can't listen. They've heard all that.

Once this budget came down and people saw what was in the budget – and these people went to consultations, they did submissions to government. We heard in the email from the Minister of Transportation – and it's what we're hearing from everyone in this province – it's way too much.

Government said beforehand this problem occurred over years and years and years. We can't be expected to fix it overnight; yet, you're doing it on hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are singing out, they're asking people to please listen to our concerns. Please listen to what we have to say. Make some changes in this.

People do understand some kind of situation that's happening in the province. All they want you to do is make some changes and listen to their concerns.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to get up and speak again to the budget debate. It's interesting, somebody said we have the Progressive Conservative Opposition and the Third Party, though they haven't spoken in quite a while now in the debate – you have the NDP Opposition and the PC Opposition arguing over who's leading the filibuster. Somebody said it's tantamount to politicians fiddling while Newfoundland and Labrador's economy burns. It's certainly been burnt down pretty far, but that's the nature of politics today. People have had very colourful ways of describing what politicians are doing in here, I say.

The Member got up and he just complained that they got up in the budget, he said, and they said 20,000 people are going to be leaving the province over the next while. That's contrary to what some of them have said. Nobody would be living here in a couple of years if you listened to what some of them said. We had one Member – I think the Member for St. John's Centre got up and said there were hundreds of thousands of people going to be leaving the province. There are only a little a half a million here so if hundreds of thousands left, well, I don't know who'd be left here, but it wouldn't take very long for somebody to turn the light out.

These are statistics first of all; we didn't fabricate them, unlike last year when the government of the day absolutely fabricated the economic forecast document that was included with their budget. In addition to the fact we have

an aging population – and I believe there's no one in the House of Assembly who would not acknowledge that is a piece of factual information – the previous government torqued the economic data last year. When they told the people of the province what was in the economic forecast, for example, because the major megaprojects that have been underway related to mining, related to the oil industry and related to their multi-billion dollar boondoggle, Muskrat Falls, because all that's winding down, they threw Bay du Nord and thousands of jobs associated with that into the economic document.

Well, there's no reason to throw Bay du Nord in there because that project is pretty far away from being thousands of jobs working in an industry associated with that. So that was absolutely foolhardy, and that's part of the reason why we had to update the figures. What they provided to the people of the province last year was not factual.

Some of the other things – another reason why we have a population decline is because they absolutely wrecked the public Treasury. I read out here last night that we went from a \$6.7 billion deficit, which was manageable, in 2013, all the way up, in just three years, to \$15.7 billion deficit projected for 2016. Almost increased the public debt of Newfoundland and Labrador by three times over the course of three or four years – just wrecked the Treasury.

Now, I want to get back to something else that I had raised here in the House yesterday, and I'm going to continue talking about this. People are starting to ask questions. I'm glad we have this filibuster on the go because there are lots more I can say about this. As we go along, I'll be putting more information out. I'm glad the media is starting to pay attention to this now, too, because it's really important. Hopefully, we'll be able to provide as much information as we can and, through the various work that they do, they'll be able to get the necessary information.

Here's one thing that is the core to what I'm trying to point out to people. In the year before the provincial election, the provincial government spent \$670,000 on advertising, marketing and promotion by external advertising

companies. Even though they're spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, millions of dollars on professional communications staff internally, they spent \$670,000 on external consultants' contracts for communications. However, in the election year, that cost quadrupled. In the election year, nearly \$2.4 million was spent on external communications contracts for marketing, promotion and communications. That's a \$1.7 million increase in that, in the election year.

I know this because we had all the departments of government come in and present to Treasury Board and talk about their spending and to try to find ways to find efficiencies in what they are doing. This does not even include all the agencies, boards and commissions. We know that some agencies, boards and commissions told us that they got calls from ministers' offices and they got calls from the Premier's office saying extend that contract now with this particular marketing agency. Extend that; don't go out to tender on that. Don't put out a request for proposals on it; extend that.

Well, see, why is all of this important? Why is all of this important? The first thing – I had a conversation with somebody about this last night who asked me some really interesting questions. Like I said, I hope these are the sorts of questions that will get out now into the public sphere because these are the questions that we ought to ask.

First of all, was the government trying to use public money, millions of dollars in public money, to use external agencies, external consultants, communications and advertising and promotions, external to government, to somehow influence public opinion? Is that what they were doing? Were they trying to influence public opinion through the use of external communications contracts?

It gets more interesting than that I say, Madam Chairperson. Because if it is the fact that this previous administration quadrupled spending in core government – and God knows how much increases in spending on external contracts for communications in the agencies, boards and commissions. We know that ministers were out making telephone calls and the Premier's office was out making telephone calls asking for these

to be extended. Well, who were the companies involved?

We know the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador had bankrupted their political party in the same way they had bankrupted the provincial Treasury. So is there any correlation between the companies that were given millions of dollars in additional funding, in government money, millions of dollars in contracts, and this direction was provided to agencies, boards and commissions directly by people sitting over there in the election year – during the election, were any of these companies that were given these additional millions of dollars doing advertising for the PC Party in the election? If they are the same companies, how much did they pay?

Now, the good thing is we're soon going to have a new Chief Electoral Officer. The new Chief Electoral Officer is going to be appointed through the new Independent Appointments process. That person is going to get to work right away putting together all the numbers on how much was spent on advertising by all the political parties because that has to be accounted for publicly.

We will find out who the PC Party contracted with for their promotions and TV ads and all of that. They had no money for it so we'll have to see what they paid. Was there something done here, because all of this is very suspicious?

How could you go from one year before an election spending \$670,000 a year to quadrupling that in an election year just prior to the election? Was it an attempt here somehow to grease the wheel? That's what we have to find out. We have to get to the bottom of this to find out why the public Treasury, when we were being sold down the river, when the public Treasury was being wrecked by the Members opposite – was there an attempt to use public money to curry favour with certain consultants in this province?

It's a legitimate question that's being asked. We will find out because when the Chief Electoral Officer provides an accounting –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – of those contracts for the political parties, all of this will become a lot more clear.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's indeed a privilege to get up and speak to the budget issues that people are bringing to the forefront. They are touching base with us and sending us emails, sending us letters and asking us to put forward their concerns regarding the cuts or the devastating impact it's going to have.

This one is unique because it's fairly lengthy. I'm going to try to read most of it and if I don't get it, I'll get up again to complete it. It's relevant to one of the bigger issues. One of the biggest outrages here in this budget is the cuts to our library system. It's been brought up by a number of people on this side of the House as we debate it and talked about the impact of cuts to libraries, but particularly in isolated or remote areas. This is the cut to the library on Fogo Island.

This is a fairly lengthy letter that was sent to me, but I'll read it because it outlines all the positives of the library. It also talks about the community as a whole and what that does for Newfoundland and Labrador and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This letter is an appeal to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Provincial Information and Library Resources Board to reverse the decision to close the Fogo Island Central Public Library. Fogo Island, located off the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland, is comprised of 11 small communities. The island is considered an isolated area due to the fact that it's only accessible by ferry or air service.

Due to this isolation, Fogo Island's residents will not have reasonable access to a public library if our library is closed. With the ferry service at its best, the nearest public library is two hours' drive away. According to the 2011 census, the island had a population of approximately 2,400 residents.

For its size, Fogo Island considerably contributes to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. Two of the major economic contributors are the Fogo Island Co-op and Shorefast Foundation. The Fogo Island Co-op has annual revenues of \$25 million to \$40 million a year. In the last five years, the Shorefast Foundation had revenues of \$50 million for the economy.

There are also a number of fishing enterprises and small businesses who contribute to the economy. Fogo Island is not a drain on the economy. Fogo Island is an active and significant contributor and its residents deserve access to services available to other residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Located in the heart of the island is Fogo Island Central Public Library and it's the heart of the island. The Fogo Island Central Public Library has 986 registered users. That's a staggering 41 per cent of our population. Since the closure of the Employment Assistance Services – EAS – office in 2013, the Fogo Island Central Public Library has become a place where residents come for assistance in completing online job searches, resume development and EI applications. There is no other place on Fogo Island that provides these services.

The Fogo Island Central Public Library has also introduced a program where community volunteers help residents complete tax returns. These services are essential to our residents. Fogo Island Central Public Library is also a Community Access Program – CAP – site. The Community Access Program is an initiative of the Government of Canada to provide affordable public access to Internet, as well as aiding the public to gain skills to use the Internet effectively. The closure of our library would also mean the closure of the CAP site. This would be detrimental to the residents of the island.

Due to the isolation of the island there are at least three communities without access to high-speed Internet. Residents of these communities regularly use the Fogo Island Central Public Library to access the Internet. The Fogo Island Central Public Library had over 1,400 Wi-Fi accesses in 2014-2015. Some of this was due to the lack of reliable Internet access in the communities on the island.

Many things that could be done by mail are now being required to be done online. One such example is fishing licences. A fishing licence must be completed online and printed when completed. How are residents expected to do this without access to Internet? This is an example of another essential service that our public library provides.

In addition to seeing an increase in use for assistance with and access to technology, Fogo Island Central Public Library has seen an increase in circulation. In 2014-2015, circulation for adult fiction was reported at 881. The 2015-2016 circulation for adult fiction increased to 1,381 – a 57 per cent increase.

The Fogo Island Central Public Library has seen similar increases in circulations of DVDs, uncatalogued paperback, juvenile fiction, juvenile non-fiction and e-library books. Use of the Fogo Island Central Public Library is increasing and must remain an essential resource for the residents of Fogo Island.

The library is an asset for tourism as well. Tourists also use the local library for Wi-Fi access and to obtain culture and heritage information about Newfoundland and Labrador and Fogo. This resource must not be taken away.

Because the Fogo Island Central Public Library is located in our school, Fogo Island Central Academy students use the public library every day. Public library hours are set such that students can access and use the library during their lunch-hour period. Students use this time to use the computers for homework assignments and leisure.

Students discuss books with the librarians and their peers. Students play board games, cards and complete puzzles. Our students feel safe and wanted in our public library and use some of

these activities to help relieve stress and anxiety during mid-term and final-exam periods.

The Fogo Island Central Public Library also hosts the Homework Haven program for the school. In addition, the public librarians assist students with research assignments and request books from other libraries in the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Libraries system when needed.

Students borrow books from the public library to use for buddy reading with primary and elementary students, and borrow books for the public library to read as part of their own independent reading program in the intermediate and secondary school levels. The public library is a vital element of the school.

In a world where so many people feel isolated, the Fogo Island Central Public Library is a place that brings people together. The library is used on many occasions by our local 50-plus club, Scouts Canada for Beavers and Cub Scouts meetings and various other community groups. The public library has an active book club that meets regularly. The library hosts self-help programs such as walk to stress free and colour your way to stress free. The public library offers scrapbooking and craft-making classes. The library offers reading programs for preschool and school-age children.

The Fogo Island Central Public Library is the centre of the community and is essential for all residents of the island of all ages. The Canadian Library Association stated in a media release on April 28, 2016: "Closing libraries closes opportunity." Do not take these opportunities away from the residents of Fogo Island.

According to the Canadian Library Association, investing in public libraries is an investment in the people of the province. We must continue to invest in our people. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Provincial Information and Library Resources Board must reverse the decision to close the Fogo Island Central Public Library. It is a vital and essential part of our island and community. Our public library must stay open.

Mr. Chair, the information outlined here is a reflection of all the communities, the 54 communities that are being hit by this ill-thought-out, regressive decision to close public libraries. As was stated here, libraries are not just a place where people go in and take a book. They're much more. They're about engaging in the community, they're about a better opportunity for access to information around employment, about services that people need.

It's about engaging young people, it's about engaging the middle aged and it's about engaging our seniors. It's about being productive. It's about offering services that some areas take for granted: High-speed Internet access, information to applications, supports on online processes, things that people would have because in bigger centres they're available. Or just in the community to live, these are just standard services that are available.

In some communities like Fogo Island, my own home island of Bell Island and all these other communities on the coastal areas of Labrador and every other community in between, there are challenges around supportive services. That's why libraries were set up. They were set up to be a literacy tool, to be a support mechanism. They were also set up to be a major support mechanism for the community, to provide information and access and be a safe haven for people to be able to come in and learn and be engaged.

We're taking that away for a minimal amount of savings to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on the bottom line. We all know it's not going to be any savings because we know the services that are going to be lost. The inconveniences and the opportunities that are going to be lost by individuals in these respective communities are going to outweigh financially and socially tenfold, maybe fiftyfold, the small savings that are being made here.

Keeping in mind as technologies change and access to information changes over the next number of years, communities like that and those services would have been imperative for us as a society and us as a government to be able to get the information out to people. It could be around health care, it could be around other levels of education. It could be around

something else that is a service of the day that we now don't have or we now don't see as a priority. But in the future it would be, and we'll spend 10 times or 50 times as much to try to provide that service to the people in these same communities.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll get a chance to speak again about the cuts to our library system.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly an honour for me to stand again. Thank you to my colleague across the way who realized that's the principle of sharing. I appreciate that. It's been another long night, Madam Chair, and more to come. We don't have a problem with that for the hon. Member. We enjoy it because it's giving us an opportunity to really get our message out as I said earlier this morning.

I just want to talk for a minute about the emails because I really appreciate emails. What I've basically done, as I said before, I might have missed a couple or two. It's very difficult because you put yourself in an awkward position if you said that you have responded to every email, and then all of a sudden someone says you missed me and that's unfortunate. I'm not going to say I responded to every email but, as much as I know, I've responded to just about every one that's been addressed to me personally.

What I've done, Mr. Chair, when I have responded, I haven't just responded and said thank you for your email, I've talked about a few things. I'm just wondering, the Member for Mount Pearl North was up a few minutes ago talking about his email. It's very easy to talk about emails. I'm just wondering about the response to the emails because actually one of the emails he read out, if I remember correctly, was with regard to full-day kindergarten.

When he talked about full-day kindergarten, the email that he received and read out talked about the fact that there was \$40 million, or whatever

the amount was, with full-day kindergarten. I'm just wondering if the Member opposite responded to that email and said thank you so much for the email, but I just wanted to point out to you that our government spent \$30 million in preparation for kindergarten. The actual this year is about \$13 million. So I'm just wondering to what extent these emails are responded because it's very easy if someone comes in with a negative email to go back and say and keep them coming, what you're saying is right.

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands read an email this morning talking about we should put 10 cents on every cup of coffee that's sold in Newfoundland and Labrador, but didn't do a whole lot of research on what would that equate to with regard to the temporary levy. If he had done that, if he had done his research it would have meant that every single Newfoundlander and Labradorian, man, woman and child –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: – would have to drink 60 cups of coffee a day. It's easy to get and read emails but you should –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: – really do some research and I would have done some of research on that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

It is getting a little noisy in here.

The hon. the minister.

MR. HAWKINS: I would have checked out and responded to the person in the email and said, thank you very much for your suggestion because it's a good suggestion; however, according to what I would have, this is what you would have to do in order to be able to equate that. These are issues.

The other thing, I like talking to people – I don't know if I am permitted to do this, but I would like to recognize the young man in the gallery, who left a few minutes ago, and I had a very intelligent chat with him. A very intelligent young man who has been sitting here, early hours of the morning and late hours in the evening, and really getting a good appreciation for what this is all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: Yes, absolutely.

I took the time this morning, I went up and sat with him and had a chat with him. He is getting a really good, clear understanding of exactly where we are in this province. A young man who has concerns that he will be one of the ones that we have been talking about that we're kicking this debt down to. That's what we're doing. This young man is concerned because we have a debt that we never ever seen in this province before. We've never seen it.

Who do you think is going to pay for it? We can't raise taxes. We can't cut programs. Don't do this. Don't do that. What do we expect? Come on, what do we expect? We expect to give these young people a hope that they have to pay for our debt. That's not something that I want. And, of course, the young gentleman up there will see people laughing. It is not a laughing matter. I'm passionate about where we are in this province.

I know that people are going to be impacted by this. I have said it before, I'll say it again and I'll say it again whether we are here for the next two weeks, three weeks, four weeks. We will say it again and again, and the longer we're here in this situation and the longer we're here in this type of forum, the better it is for us to get our message out and we need to get it out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: We need to get it out, because I'm upset. I'm upset as a person having to sit here and listen to the fact you don't cut programs, you don't raise taxes, you can't do this, you can't do that, just keep on borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing.

Well, we can't borrow. That's the problem. We can't borrow. We can't borrow. Well, what are you going to do if you can't raise taxes? You don't have to be a mathematician, you don't have to be highly motivated, you don't need a degree in mathematics to be able to determine if you can't raise taxes and you can't cut expenses, how are you going to do it? You've got to borrow.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, you don't.

MR. HAWKINS: No, b'y? You don't have to do it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: This is an interesting exercise in mathematics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind Members the hon. minister has the floor.

MR. HAWKINS: You've got expenses up here, you've got revenue down here, you can't do anything about it. So how are you going to close the gap? How can you close the gap? How can you do it? You have to borrow or you are going to go into bankruptcy, like my colleague talked about last night where some other countries that have per capita the same as we have that are now in bankruptcy. We can't do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: You can't do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAWKINS: I am so upset. I think the longer I'm here, the more upset I'm getting because I've been hearing this thing over and over again. I have no problems in reading emails. I have read them. I don't have any problems in reading positive and negative parts, but the truth, the absolute total truth, is that we are in a financial crisis that we need to address. We have to address it, and we cannot address it by doing nothing. We cannot address it.

Madam Chair, it's important for us to realize that we cannot continue doing nothing. We cannot do that. We have to own a responsibility, and the responsibility that we have is to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, man, woman, and child, no matter if you're 102 or if you're two. We have to deal with the problem that we're facing. We have to deal with that problem. We cannot borrow our way out of our problem. That's the reason we are where we are now. That's where we are. We have borrowed our way into a problem. We can't borrow our way out of the problem. There has to be some other way. So we need to address that, and I will continue to be passionate about what I believe in.

I believe in this province. I believe every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has a right to live in this province with a hope for tomorrow, and our young people need a hope for tomorrow. I believe that we can do that by taking measures that will point us in the right direction and minimizing our reliance on debt.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To continue on with the debate and continue on with our plan, again, it's about being the voice for the people. The Minister of Transportation made a few points that I think I should pass from our side of the House, what we feel. We read out emails and he questions the content of those emails and the facts in those emails. I know my

colleague for Mount Pearl – Southlands pointed out correctly, while he was having his rant, we're not the research – these are coming from citizens of the province. They are directly sent to us and we have them all here, and they want to be heard. No one said that they may be off by a percentage or they may not be exactly accurate.

It's irrelevant sometimes if they are off by a dollar or two. That's not the point. The point is they want their voices heard because they're concerned. Whether it's 1 per cent or 2 per cent, or 3 per cent or 5 per cent, their point is they want their voices heard. We've committed to bringing their voices to the floor of the House of Assembly, whatever day it takes. We feel the same way. Now we are into Thursday, and we'll continue to fight. I think it's very important. Again, on this side of the House, we are bringing the voices from the people across the province. They are speaking up, they are letting us know how they feel and we're bringing it to this House. Again, I'll remind everyone here it is what we were elected to do and what we'll continue to do.

Another point that was said, doing nothing is not an option. I never and I don't think any of my colleagues – I mean, I stand to be corrected. I don't think any of us have ever said once over on this side of the House do nothing, status quo. We've never said that.

I think it can be quantified. Every time we get up and answer it, we acknowledge we are facing a financial situation. We have a financial crisis on our hands. We just don't agree with the decision that's made by the current government. I don't think anyone here ever said do nothing. I find that a bit puzzling because we've been in this House for a long while now and the minister has been sat across listening to a lot of commentary. It's kind of surprising that he hasn't heard us, speaker after speaker, acknowledge we have a financial crisis. We just don't agree with the choices.

We always say – and I'm sure you've all heard us say this – it's about choices. Right now, you have the majority as a government. The Liberals have the majority. It's about Liberal choices. It's not about us saying do nothing and leave everything status quo. That's not what we've

said. We've never said it and that's not our stance.

We just say we don't think these options that have been laid on the table in *Budget 2016* are the same options we would put there, are the same decisions we would make. It's fine to get up and it looks good sometimes – sometimes it doesn't, but it does, sometimes, look good on camera when you get up and you have your rant. You feel good about it. I mean, fair game, that's part of the process in here too. We've never said once that's not an option.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: We've never said it and I want to stress that point. Probably the last time I was up, I spent a fair bit of time on our youth and the effects of a lot of the decisions and importance. Our youth are our most valuable asset, the youth of our province. The minister rightly points out that young gentleman that's been taking in a lot of our debate.

Actually, we think that a lot of these budget cuts are going to have a negative impact on our youth. A lot of education cuts are going to have a negative impact on our youth. It's fine to say it in words, but I mean action – and I'll know what rhetoric will follow and all that, but call a spade a spade. We've gotten up, and Hansard will show that too, that we have spoken about youth. We've also never once said – I know I never – that doing nothing was our option.

Yesterday in the news when the Premier spoke to the media, he was pointedly asked the question – I can't remember exactly, but I think it was: Are we going bankrupt? And the Premier said no, which is nice to hear. Most of the messaging so far from the other side of the House – and I say that with all sincerity, actually. When I heard him say that, I said, okay, that's good to hear him say that. Because – and I say this in total sincerity – the messaging I hear across the way, and I say it every time, almost every time I'm up – I'm glad he said it, because that not the message you hear across the way.

The Minister of Finance got up not too long ago and said if we don't do something, there'll be

someone else with another balance sheet running our province. So, again, you don't have to be an economist to figure out what the point was there: We will be bankrupt.

So that feeds into the gloom and doom, but that's never, ever what we said on this side of the House. I think it's fair, in the spirit of debate, to be balanced and to do it in a respectful manner. I stand to be corrected, but I'd rather stand to be corrected by solid facts – Hansard would be the thing than someone getting up and rebutting it for the sake of rebutting it. I think it's important to be said.

Madam Chair, the minister also pointed out raising taxes or borrowing was the only two options. There were other choices. There were other things. You could have reduced your spending elsewhere. The budget is more – and I know they'll tell us that it's about the debt servicing, that's the reason the budget is higher than last year. But there was no real cut in spending as was promised. I know these figures were bandied about. We heard a 30 per cent cut was in store.

They couldn't achieve that. I've heard people say that's a hard thing to achieve within government, because government does have to operate. And again, it's about choices. You couldn't find it on that end in cutting your expenditures back. To balance it out, you were in a dilemma, so you just whopped the taxes to get it to balance. I say this and I say it over and over again, it's a spreadsheet with columns coming down and you add up the numbers and when the numbers add up, we got a budget. That may seem very simplistic, but I really believe I'm not that far off.

There's another aspect I wanted to address, too, Madam Chair. The minister pointed out about being passionate about the people in the province. I have to tell you, I don't know if we'd be stood here day and night if we never had passion for the people in this province either.

Fair game; the minister can have his opinion and make his comments, but I don't think our passion for the people in this province should ever be questioned based on what we do here on a daily basis and what we've done in this filibuster. As I look around here, I see almost

every desk with piles of emails from residents. If that's not passion for the people – we could be up blowing our own soapbox, but we're not. We're reading emails from average common people.

I think it's very important to do. We know by the responses. I'm not putting it out on the front page of *The Telegram*, but I have a lot of messages internally, people who have said simply, thank you. Now, that didn't mean I got up and I spread their name or I was going to reinvent the wheel, it's just that we got up and read their email in the record. It was all they wanted us to do. They know their names are not attached. They know their voice has been entered into the record. Their views have been entered into the record in the House of Assembly.

It's what we promised them we'd do. We never made unrealistic promises. We promised we'd bring their voice to the House of Assembly. I think most Members on this side of the House have done a great job of that and we're going to continue to do that.

I don't think we should ever be questioned about our passion for the people of this province, our passion for the youth and our passion to bring people's issues here on a day-to-day basis, to represent their district and to represent the people in this province. It's what we were elected to do – I'll say it again – and what we'll continue to do.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Madam Chair, thanks again.

I appreciate the opportunity to get up and participate in the debate. I hope we're here for a lot longer because I have a lot more to say about this advertising scandal that I've been releasing the details on. I've been talking to people in the public about it and having some interesting conversations with the media about it. So the longer we're here, the more I can say and put on the public record.

I agree with the Member for CBS that we should celebrate. We should celebrate our province. Every person in here who runs for election and all the people who run and aren't successful as well, we should celebrate them because that's our system. That's what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians went to war to preserve, to protect. I absolutely agree with him.

I don't agree with a lot of other things he said. A lot of the things he just said really typify the convoluted nature of what we've been hearing from the Progressive Conservative Opposition. I don't know if it's the lack of sleep that's getting to him, but the Member gets up and he says, on the one hand, we have to be fair and respectful to one another – we have to be fair and respectful. Then he gets up and he says the minister gets up and he rants and you feel good after you get up and do your rants, just basically denigrating the person who spoke before him.

I appreciate the Member's input, but why does he have to get up and demean what the minister said? The Minister of Transportation and Works was very passionate when he got up. He talked about his grandchildren, protecting what we have here. Then the Member gets up and just more or less slams him, like I said basically called that a rant.

Nobody got up and said what he said was a rant. He contributed to the debate the same as everybody else. Why is it when we speak it's a rant and when he speaks it's sort of like, I don't know, Moses from the pulpit or something? I don't understand, but it really is a convoluted nature. He wants to be respectful on one hand, but then again wants to just demean other Members on the other hand.

Then he gets up and he says they've been up there time and again saying: You cut this, you shouldn't cut that; you cut this, you shouldn't have cut that; you cut this, you shouldn't have cut that. It's like one side of a record going around and around and around. Then the Member for CBS got up and said there has been no real cut in spending. There has been no real cut in spending he said. They've been here since Monday talking about the things that we shouldn't have reduced in the budget and then he said, sure, there's been no real cut in spending.

How can you spend hours and hours and hours here in the House of Assembly saying that you shouldn't have cut things and then to get up and say, well, there's really nothing been cut anyways. I don't know if it's sleep deprivation or not, but there's something really wrong with that argument because it doesn't make any sense. It's like a circular argument and I'm not sure what's accomplished by it.

If you've got real things to contribute, if there are real solutions that you have, get up and tell us what they are. Like I said before, we know that they want to get rid of full-day kindergarten. They want to disadvantage 5,000 families in this province in September. We know they want to do that. Certainly, I'll be around to remind all the people over there who wanted to disadvantage 5,000 families. I'll be around to remind them and the 5,000 the year after, and the 5,000 the year after and the 5,000 the year after. That's no problem.

That's \$13.3 million they're going to save. They want to discontinue the contract for the Labrador link; that's \$750,000. They want to cut the seniors' advocate because they don't think seniors should have a public advocate in the province. That's a luxury according to them. Having an advocate for seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador is a luxury, according to the Official Opposition.

So that takes us up to about \$15 million and change. But as I said before, the spending spree that the previous administration was on – and I'm going to get back to the advertising angle on this. I have a lot more to say about that today and the various connections and the interweb of what was going on there, but I'll leave that for the moment.

The spending spree that the previous government was on, I would go so far to say we have seen nothing like it in Canadian history. The extent to which they destroyed the province's Treasury is unprecedented in the history of the Dominion of Canada, Madam Chairperson. It is absolutely amazing.

The interesting thing about it is that it's not like they weren't told. Forget what the Opposition said. The Auditor General, an official, an independent Officer of this hon. House of

Assembly – and we can get the reports and we can stack them up because they would be about that high – while that government was in office every year said you cannot continue down this path. Why did he say that? Go back and read the reports. Most of the recommendations were not acted upon, they were ignored.

Millions and tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars that could have not been wasted because the Auditor General every year said stop doing this; they did not do it. So what was the net effect? In 2013, the public sector debt for Newfoundland and Labrador was \$6.7 billion. Here we are just a few years later in 2016 and that debt has almost tripled.

I noticed the Minister of Transportation and Works was up there saying we can't continue borrowing. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands was over there shaking his head, laughing as if to say what the minister is saying is foolish, that no, no just continue borrowing; borrow ourselves further into oblivion.

Like the folk tale about buddy who drove the car off Signal Hill for the bucket of chicken, that's the attitude. Just drive it right off the edge. Go on b'y, just drive her right off the edge. Keep going right off the edge; that doesn't matter. Let somebody else's kids worry about the disaster they created to the public Treasury. Just drive it right off the edge b'y. Don't worry about it.

He thinks it's funny over there. He thinks it's hilarious. It's absolutely hilarious to the Member for Mount Pearl –Southlands that the previous administration that he's basically sitting over on the same side with again now – the previous administration tripled the public sector debt almost in this province in just less than a handful of years. We have not seen anything like this in our country before. This is absolutely shocking.

When we try to do something to stop going over the cliff, to pull back, to not go full force over the edge of Signal Hill you say, oh no, don't do that, don't do anything. The convoluted argument – here's a way to save \$15 million and change, that'll solve all the problems. Don't increase any taxes and don't cut anything. They get up time and again and say don't cut programs. Then we have Members stand up and

say, there's been no real cut in spending anyways. It's hard to follow.

All of us in here have lots of professional experience. We all come from diverse backgrounds. We all have something to contribute. But we're having trouble following the argument here because it doesn't make a whole lot of sense sometimes. That may sound offensive, but I don't know why the Members can't understand that.

The Member for St. George's – Humber stood up here in debate last night. He said: Tell us, what exactly you would do to fix the \$15.7 billion debt that the previous administration racked up over a three-to-four-year period. What would you do specifically to address that problem?

Instead of doing that we get these, sort of, very bizarre suggestions and laughing, and it's all funny and just lampooning what somebody says. If somebody gets up here and tries to make a serious argument about where we are, it's all funny, it's all a big rant and it's all this and that.

The Members of the Opposition want to have a filibuster, and I hope we stay here for as long as possible so we can get some of the facts on the table. But the more we stay here, the more it's obvious that there are no ideas. This is an exercise in frustration, to some extent, because there's no coherent argument coming forward.

It's not funny, I say to the Member for Cape St. Francis. This is not funny. It's \$15.7 billion worth of debt that somebody has to pay for. You're just satisfied to kick it off to somebody else, to say: Oh, let somebody else pay for it. We can't do that anymore. It just can't be done anymore.

It's unfortunate that you didn't have the courage, when you were on this side, to do something about it. Now we're trying to do something about it and you have no solutions. Your solutions are: Don't cut anything, don't touch anything and don't tax anything. Those are the solutions. I'm not hearing anything else.

If you've got other solutions stand up and tell us. Stand up and tell us what they are. I haven't heard any so tell us what they are. This is

valuable time that we have here in the House of Assembly. Tell us what your solutions are and then we can consider them. We've got to debate about that.

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: We can't have a debate about nothing.

CHAIR: I remind the Member his time for speaking has expired.

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning to you. We are now in, I believe, the 66th hour of consecutive debate here in the House of Assembly. I'm going to try and change the tone a little bit to, hopefully, a more productive and respectful one.

I did watch for the last 10 minutes. I didn't see the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands laughing because I don't think there is anything to laugh about here this morning. I certainly didn't see the Member for Cape St. Francis laughing because, on this side of the House, we don't think there's much cause for laughter.

I just did an interview with *CBC Radio, Central Morning*. I did point out that over the last 12 hours or so there have been some moments, brief moments, where we can have a little bit of lighthearted conversation, lighten the mood a little bit and have some friendly banter back and forth the House. It was a fairly respectful debate throughout the night and into the morning.

I see the Minister of Natural Resources is still with us; she's been here all night. I think she would attest to the fact that it was a fairly civil discussion, dominated, of course, by Opposition Members as filibusters tend to be. But we had several government Members rise and join in the discussion that took place overnight.

I'd like to get back to sharing some messages from people around the province, which I've had the opportunity to do a multitude of times during the debate. I received a notification from a resident of Bonavista who wanted us to let people know that there is going to be a

demonstration at the Bonavista hospital parking lot Thursday, June 9, at noon. While it's Tuesday here in the House of Assembly still, it apparently is Thursday in the real world. We've been asked to encourage people to attend the demonstration that is taking place at noon today in Bonavista on the hospital parking lot.

There have been some cuts to X-ray services at the facility that's causing some concern for citizens in the area. Residents are feeling their concerns haven't yet been heard by government. Well, maybe they've been heard, they haven't been listened to.

There is another demonstration today at noon and people are encouraged to attend – I'm hearing voices, Mr. Chair. The MHA for Conception Bay East – Bell Island is so interested in what I have to say that he is listening to it twice, it seems. For most people in the House it is hard enough to listen to it once, let alone twice.

Here's an email that has come in the last 48 hours. It says: I'm writing today to comment on the 2016 budget and levy. Newfoundland and Labrador is mostly rural and citizens have to drive far distances in this beautiful province to get to most services. Now gasoline prices are increasing, forcing people to become more isolated as they cannot afford to drive places that often and stay home, and cannot go anywhere due to their finances.

Tourism will be impacted by high gas prices, and seasonal operators will be impacted. Leisure activities, such as the respected Newfoundland and Labrador tradition of going to the cabin or camping in many areas, more than likely won't happen as much because of the high gas prices. People will have to choose carefully when they will go somewhere to relax, simply because they cannot afford to go as much as they were used to.

This levy is an attack on the middle class. Why does the supposedly almost 25 per cent here have to bear the brunt of this levy? Why aren't the high-income earners paying more? The middle class are hard-working people who are putting money into the economy and they are the ones who have to pay this levy. Where is the equality in all of this? You took away the levy

for the low-income earners; why not take it away from the middle class?

Why close public libraries? These are the places where people gather to learn. These are places where cultural groups, such as Aboriginal groups, meet. These are public places where seniors can learn about computers, where people can learn to read. These places are important and essential to most of the rural communities. The library closures are pitting communities against other communities.

For example, why are all the libraries on the Port au Port Peninsula closing, the library on Fogo Island closing and libraries in Labrador closing? Yet, the libraries in the Deer Lake area, that are all less than 30 minutes away from one another and do not have the book circulation numbers like some of the libraries that are being forced to close – why are they still open?

Why aren't the local MHAs speaking out more about their library closures? The closures are an attack on education, literacy, cultural places and thereby isolating people even more. You say municipalities can take over the libraries; most rural municipalities cannot afford to pay to keep their local library open. Most struggle to pay for basic services. There are going to be empty buildings all across the province that will be a testimony to the Liberal government's poor handling of finances with this budget. There were better choices to make and cutting funding for libraries is a very poor one. Again, where are the Liberal MHAs speaking out about the closures?

That is signed by a resident who hasn't given me explicit permission to share her name, so I will refrain from doing so.

I have a few minutes left so I'll try to get through another one. Sorry, I'll pick a shorter one just in case I run out of time.

This is from a lady who starts by saying she's been watching the filibuster the past few days and wishes us well. Talking to the Opposition she says: It appears you are my best bet in getting my voice heard. I am middle aged. I am middle class. My family is raised. I can survive this budget and government, but I have real fear

and concern for my children and their children, my beloved grandchildren.

My children are unemployed university-educated parents with student debt, a \$300,000 mortgage and property taxes the highest they've ever been. Now, with *Budget 2016*, I have real fear that they will either leave the province or end up bankrupt.

I have been a proud Newfoundlander all my life and fear it has been a life wasted. What was the point of chugging it out in this province all my life, only to find that it will now never be a good place to live and have a family?

I look around this province and I don't even recognize it anymore – then there's some personal commentary I don't feel would be parliamentary, Mr. Chair, so I'll skip that. We are on the hook to provide – I'll have to skip the last couple of lines there because I don't feel it would be appropriate language to read in the House.

I still have a couple minutes left so I'll try and pick another short one or two. This one is from a resident of Mount Pearl: Would you please remind the Premier that he is not the president of a congressional government. He is a Premier in a Westminster parliamentary system; therefore, he's required to defend his actions and policies to the House's Opposition. If he refuses to address his critics, not only does he come off as a coward, but he further demonstrates his apparent lack of basic understanding of the position he chose to run for.

MR. KIRBY: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Point of order.

MR. KIRBY: This is under Standing Order 49. Mr. Chair, as I pointed out the other day, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune got up and read an email that said the Premier was a liar. That was unparliamentary. I raised a point of order on it.

I'm raising another point of order on this again today. I'm raising a point of order, I say, Mr. Chair, and I have the floor. The Member for Mount Pearl North just got up –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: – and referred to a Member of the House of Assembly as a coward. Again, that is unparliamentary language. As I have said to the Chair previously, you cannot do through the back door –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: You cannot do through the back door –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: I say, Mr. Chair, I have the floor.

CHAIR: Yes, exactly.

MR. KIRBY: I have the floor, Mr. Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: You have a job to do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: I'm trying to do a job here.

MR. KIRBY: Standing Order –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Chair, is the Member challenging the Chair?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Unbelievable, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Chair, in any case, I ask you to take this under advisement, please.

CHAIR: I will take this under advisement.

MR. KIRBY: The Member for Mount Pearl North called a Member – he says he’s reading it in an email, but he is doing through the back door what he cannot do through the front, which is call another Member a name that is unparliamentary.

The Members can try to speak over the Chair and challenge the Chair all they like, but this is definitely unparliamentary. I ask you to take this matter under advisement and make a ruling at some point today because I have raised now on two times –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: We have the Members speaking over the Chair. I’m making a point of order here. The Member got up and read an email that calls another Member of the House of Assembly a coward which is unparliamentary. The Member then challenged the Chair demanding an immediate –

CHAIR: Order, please!

On the point of order, I’m asking if we can put two minutes back on the clock so the Member opposite can finish his statement. Can we do that? If we can count it down, two minutes?

MR. KENT: I’ll withdraw, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Would you withdraw?

MR. KENT: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay. We’re good? Two minutes back.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl North for two more minutes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I withdraw the comment. I apologize to the Member who is clearly upset.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: I withdraw unequivocally, Mr. Chair. I apologize if I’ve upset the Member, although he’s been upset all night.

Just to explain my action –

MR. KIRBY: That’s not withdrawing unequivocally.

MR. KENT: Now he’s yelling.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: He’s yelling at me, Mr. Chair.

I was reading an email. Not all of these emails I’ve had an opportunity to read in totality. Hansard will show that oftentimes I’ve paused because –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I just remind the Member if you are going to read an email in this House, it will be language that is not offensive in any way to any Members of this House. I would ask you to withdraw that last wording unequivocally, please.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For the third time, I withdraw unequivocally.

The difficulty we have in presenting anything to the House is that we haven’t always had an opportunity to fully read it, so I’m doing my best to screen the comments as I go. I missed one and I apologize for that, Mr. Chair.

Back to the email, in the 40 seconds I have left: He doesn’t understand this position and the gravity of his decisions. He cannot hold himself to his word on any issue and he has damaged the people’s trust in their government. Tell him that is why he needs to resign. I won’t read the last line because again, as I’m reading it here, I do find that it could be ruled as unparliamentary.

Mr. Chair, I thank you for your ruling. I'm sorry that the Minister of Education continues to throw tantrums in this House and eat into the speaker's time, but I'm sure I'll have more opportunities as the debate continues.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Before proceeding, I would like to caution everyone. If you are going to read emails, please scan them first, read them first before reading them on the floor. Once you get your emotions up, it's quite easy that some wording would be out.

I would recognize next the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

I respect the Members opposite for recognizing, as was pointed out by the Member for Mount Pearl North, the person's agreement in this House that debate alternates. I appreciate that from the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

Mr. Chair, I've listened to the debate and participated in the debate. I guess one of the questions I would ask, as Members are reading the emails that they are presenting – and the one that struck me as I heard the Member for Mount Pearl North read the one that he just read a couple of minutes ago, or several that he read a couple of minutes ago, I would ask him as he reads the email and he thinks about the circumstances that the province is in today, a mere six, seven months since he sat at a Cabinet table, as the people of the province are demonstrating their disappointment and frustration and concern about the financial situation that the Treasury is in, I would ask the Member opposite, as he reads the email, does he think or consider his role, his accountability, his government's accountability in the situation that the people of this province are grappling with today.

Mr. Chair, as I've said, I'm very concerned about the financial capacity of our province to be able to borrow for critical health care and critical education services. I think it is everybody's desire in this House, Members in the government side, Members on the Opposition side, Members in the NDP and

certainly the Independent Member; it is all of our desire to represent the voice of the people. I think we all want to accept accountability for our roles in our decision making.

I have acknowledged and we have acknowledged that this budget is very difficult. Mr. Chair, I would like to hear if the Member opposite who said last night – and I remind the Members of this hon. House – spending is the problem, government spending is the problem – I'd ask the Member opposite if government is the problem, what would he say to that constituent that wrote him that email? What would he say?

Would he say that the spending is something they didn't take care of? Would he say that he would have preferred that the choices in this budget be to lay off thousands and thousands of public sector workers? Is that what he's saying? He stood up in this House –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

He stood up in this House and talked about their plan, the attrition plan. Well, Mr. Chair, the Auditor General commented that it would take 19 – the equivalent of 19 – of the former administration's attrition plans to be able to deal with the financial imbalance we have in the Treasury. I would ask the Member opposite what accountability he takes.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise in this hon. House and to speak once again to the budget and these bills. I have to say, Mr. Chair, I have gone out of my way – I really have – and been very cognizant of the fact that this is a very touchy subject for a lot of people. I've done my very best to be respectful and I'm going to continue to. I want to say to the Minister of Education that when he referenced the fact that the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands is over here laughing at what

he was saying, I wasn't laughing at what he was saying at all.

I'll say to the minister the only thing I did chuckle at was when he referred to the urban legend of the guy that drove over the mountain for a bucket of chicken. That actually happened here in the St. John's area in the late '70s, early '80s. I actually know who that individual is. So I just found it a little funny when he made that comment. I wasn't laughing at what he was saying. That's all I was laughing at, was the commentary that he made about the guy who drove over the mountain for a bucket of chicken. I just put it there for the record.

Mr. Chair, another thing that the Minister of Education did say – and he referred to the Opposition but he also referred to me – was that I'm okay or I want to disadvantage 5,000 children. Now, that's pretty provocative language. I find that a provocative statement. All the minister had to do is say the Members are saying that we should not proceed with full-day kindergarten. That's what we're saying because: (a) I really don't believe we're ready for it; (b) it's going to cost us additional money at a time when we're saying we have no money; and (c) we're being told by school councils, parents, teachers and everybody that while doing this, we're going to be damaging programs that already exist. Those are our concerns.

I've said numerous times full-day kindergarten is a good thing. The research is there; I support full-day kindergarten. When we are at a place that we could proceed with full-day kindergarten and have it properly resourced and the proper amount of space for children so they're not jammed in classrooms and maintain the programs that we have for our children that are already going to school so that children with special needs are getting the resources they need and we're not into multigrading and all that kind of stuff, when we reach that point – and I hope we reach it next year, I really do, but I'm also realistic about our financial situation.

When we reach that point, let's give 'er; I'm all for it, 100 per cent. When you say I want to disadvantage 5,000 children next year, that's not true. That's just being provocative for the sake of being provocative and, quite frankly, being

political and it's rhetoric. I don't want to get into that; I really don't. I just put that out there.

I also want to say to the Minister of Transportation and Works – who I've known for a long time in our municipal world and our paths have crossed in terms of support for the Alzheimer Society and other things, a man who I really do respect. I just have to say that we're getting emails from people. In some of those emails people are making suggestions, and maybe they're drawing certain conclusions like the one about how much money could be saved by putting 10 cents on a cup of coffee.

Yes, maybe that person's numbers, if you do the math – obviously, I think we all know it's not going to eliminate the levy. It would raise some money. Now, how much money, I don't know. I didn't do the math. But to suggest now that I'm going to hire a researcher or something now and I'm going to start researching every email I get, doing a thorough analysis of every email that I get from a citizen before I read the email on behalf of somebody, or I'm going to go back and say did you do your research on that email before – I'm screening the emails in terms of making sure they're respectful.

Any language in there that's offensive, I've taken out. I've acknowledged it. I've read parts of an email and said I'm not going to read the rest because it's disrespectful. That's what I'm going to continue to do. Realistically, I can't research everybody's email. I'm only reading them because people are asking me to. They have concerns.

The other point I want to make I've made many times. I guess it ties in, again, to the comment from the Minister of Transportation and Works. I understand. When he talks about he's a grandfather and he wants good things for his grandkids, I get that. I'm going to be a grandfather – well, not right now. I have a daughter getting married in July so hopefully now, not right away –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – but in a couple or three years, when the time is right, I hope to be a grandfather

too. I'm looking forward to it. I want what's best for my children and my grandkids when they come along. I absolutely do.

When we talk about having to worry about the future, I agree with that. But the concern I have and the concern people have when we talk about the future is I'm not just talking about the long-term future. Tomorrow is the future. Next week is the future. We get into a situation where we have people we're hearing from that are saying, listen, if all these taxes and fees go ahead, I can't survive it, I can't absorb it. That's what we are hearing from people. So what about their future?

Can you go to the bank and say, Mr. Banker, when things get better in the future, I'll pay my mortgage. Can you go to the store and say I need baby formula for my baby; I'll pay you Shoppers Drug Mart in the future when things are better. I need groceries; I'll have to pay you in the future. My child comes and says I'm hungry; I'll feed you in the future. You need gas for your car and you can't afford it. Well, I'll drive my car in the future, but I guess this week I can't go to work because I can't afford the gas.

I know you might say some of these examples are outlandish, but I'm saying it to make a point. The point I'm trying to make here is that while we have to be concerned with the overall fiscal future of the province – which we all agree with, we all acknowledge – at the same time we have to remember the people who are living here and their future.

You have to remember their future.

They have to be able to afford to put food on the table. They have to be able to afford to pay their mortgage. If they have children and stuff, then they need school supplies or they need whatever. They need to be able to afford to do that. That's all we're saying. That's all I'm saying at least. I'm not going to speak for any other parties.

I'm not going to speak to comments the Minister of Education made about spending in the past. That's fine if they want to get into that row back and forth, party to party. That's fine. Fill your boots. All I'm talking about is that I'm hearing from people who have concerns, legitimate concerns, about the degree of taxation. That's what we're hearing.

We have offered solutions of things we could do or other options we could look at. I know it's a tough budget. I'm not trying to paint the government as bogeymen or anything, that you're trying to –

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, you are.

MR. LANE: The Minister of Justice says yes, you are. No, I'm not. I know that everybody over there, like everybody over here, wants to do what's right for the people in their districts. I know that. I know tough decisions have to be made.

I acknowledge we have a financial issue. I absolutely acknowledge that, but I just think we're gone too far. We're just gone too extreme. Some of the measures we're taking are just too extreme. There are other options; there are other choices that we could be making.

We've talked about the \$30 million contingency. We talked about that. I've acknowledged that it's a good idea to have one. I understand it. Agreed, it is a good thing to have, but we haven't had it the last 10 years. Now, you can argue we should have had it, but we didn't and we still survived. We're still standing here. That's money that could, in theory, be directed towards helping some people and so on with some of these measures that have been taken.

I'll say again: We've gone to the government departments and said we need you to find 30 per cent savings. Go to Nalcor; ask them to find 30 per cent savings. Let's get the Auditor General to do a value-for-money audit at Memorial University.

When is the last time anyone ever looked at Memorial University? I'm not talking about cutting programs and all that, but the operations at Memorial University. When is the last time anyone actually went in and started doing a line by line of what's happening there and all the money that's flowing into it? Is it the best value for money? I'm not saying it's bad, but we need to start looking in some places besides everyone's pocketbooks.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: I recognize the hon. minister, but before doing that, I realize emotions are running a little high in the room right now, people are very low on sleep. I would ask, before proceeding on to the next speaker, that the Member for Mount Pearl North would apologize to me and to this room for remarks made his last time. You will have time for an apology only and then I will recognize the next speaker.

Thank you.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize unequivocally to the Chair and to this House for any comments I made in the last 10 minutes or so. I thank you for the opportunity to apologize to you and the House.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, it's unfortunate, really, what's been going on here in the House of Assembly. I think the recent outburst by Members opposite really indicates some of the things that have been going on here in the course of this debate.

Like I said, I'm happy to have this debate. I love the fact that I have the opportunity to be here in the House of Assembly. When I was in Opposition I loved being in the Opposition because I had the privilege to sit here, to stand here and talk about what I believe, talk about what my constituents are telling me, talk about our vision for the province, offer solutions to problems, criticize.

There are 40 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that have this absolutely beautiful privilege to sit in the House of Assembly, but we've got to accept the fact that there are obligations. We have a Members' Code of Conduct. There's a book on the Table of the House there, about yay thick. Those are the rules that we have – the way that we have to conduct ourselves here. You can't get up and just talk over the Chair and tell the Chair that they don't know what they're

doing and to do their job, all the stuff that was just said.

The other thing that has been going on, which I have to say is just making a mockery of the rules of the House of Assembly and I hope, at some point, the Speaker will rule on this practice. I've only seen this in this filibuster. In the 4½ years that I've been a Member of the House of Assembly, I've never seen this before where the Members of the Opposition would get up and they say this is an email, I'm not going to say who it's from because I'm not allowed to say who it's from, it's an email I got and then they will get up and say the Member opposite is a liar, the Member opposite is a coward, use words that we're not allowed to use against other Members.

I would never call anybody else on that side of the House of Assembly those things anyway, but I would certainly never stand up and say I got this email now. Oh, I can't say who it's from but this person says the Member over here is a liar and get up and tell the story. This person says that the Member over there is a coward. Now, I know that is unparliamentary to use those terms, but I didn't say it. No, no, I didn't say it. The person here unidentified, anonymous, unaccountable person, they said that.

What if somebody sent them an email that made a racial epithet towards somebody here of Aboriginal heritage, would you get up and read that out? What if somebody got up and made a disgusting sexist comment about one of the female Members of the House of Assembly over here, would they get up and read that out?

Where is the line between what is an acceptable practice in this House of Assembly and what is allowed? Because like I said, we had one Member who got up and called – then they get up and say I apologize for saying that. I mean, there has to be a ruling at some point that says you cannot get up and make those sorts of statements because it is unparliamentary. Our rules say it's unparliamentary.

I live in hope that we will see a change in attitude with the Opposition because you cannot do that. You cannot get up and use your speaking time to cast aspersions on people and malign them and to use words against people

that we are explicitly prohibited from using against them. Then you get up and you say, oh, I apologize, to escape accountability for calling people liars and cowards and all of that here in the House of Assembly.

Can't we have a civilized discussion? Can't we have a civilized debate? I know Members opposite don't like the budget. I don't know what the solution is. I don't know what their solutions are. Instead of offering solutions, they get up and read an email and this one here says the Premier is an absolute liar, but I didn't say that. This person who wrote this email, I can't tell you who it is, can't tell you who wrote the email, but that's what they said.

AN HON. MEMBER: They should have to table it.

MR. KIRBY: If you're going to get up and use unparliamentary language and then hide behind the fact that somebody else said it, well, you should have some evidence that somebody actually said it because I don't even know. I'm not calling them disingenuous, I'm not saying they're not telling the truth, but if that's a fact, then let's see it. I'm at my wit's end here.

Like I said, we can have a constructive debate or we can have what we just saw from the Member for Mount Pearl North, which is getting up and using that sort of language against Members, calling people cowards and then saying it was in an email. Then, when the Chair tries to make a ruling on whether it's a point or not, tell the Chair, more or less, they don't know how to do their job. Get out of the Chair or whatever; do your job or whatever.

We have to respect the Officers of the House. The Speaker, the Deputy Speaker and the Chair of Committees, they're trying to prevent this from turning into an absolute circus. What we saw over there was the biggest circus act that I've seen in 4½ years in the House of Assembly, basically just disregarding the authority of the person who has the ultimate authority sitting in the Chair, using that sort of language, calling people names and then hiding behind the fact that it was somebody else that said it. I can't believe that's allowed to go on.

I know the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune over there doesn't like what it is I'm saying. She was one of the people who got up the other night and basically said the Premier was a liar, and then said it was somebody else who said it in an email, I apologize. I just find it mind boggling to me.

Like I said, we have a stack of rules there. The Westminster parliamentary procedures explicitly say if she said that directly, then that would be a serious problem. I don't know, I'm happy to have a serious discussion about the budget, but we can't continue to have a discussion this way.

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Again, I'm here to represent the people of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: This is what the people of Cape St. Francis want me to do: to advocate on their behalf. Madam Chair, I take great pride in what I do here in the House of Assembly. I take great pride in representing the people in Cape St. Francis. I take great pride in speaking for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I tell you, what I do in this House of Assembly I do it with the utmost respect for everyone in the House of Assembly because that's who I am as a person. People who know me know that's the way I am, as a person. That's how I was brought up, to be that type of person.

When I listen to what's happening here in the House of Assembly – I tell you, I came to the House of Assembly during this filibuster to speak for people from Newfoundland and Labrador, people who are talking to me at the local stores, people who are calling me and saying: Kevin, this budget is going to do this to me. They're talking to me and saying: I'm after

sending emails, I'm trying to talk to my MHA, but they're just not listening.

The Minister of Education said this is only an exercise of frustration. Do you know what? People are frustrated. People are very frustrated. I had a gentleman the other day – I'd like for you to tell me how frustrated this gentleman is. He's 85 years old – I told the story yesterday. He went up to the drugstore to get a shot that normally he could get under his prescription drug plan and he was told no more, you have to pay \$12.16 for that shot now. Now, that's a gentleman who was frustrated.

The Minister of Education might not like to listen to what we have to say and he might think I'm doing a mockery of the House of Assembly, but I'm speaking for the 85-year-old gentleman because he's has a right to be heard. He has a right to have his concerns listened to.

Nobody on this side is saying do nothing. There's a \$30 million contingency plan for disasters in this budget. I suggest to the government that your budget is a disaster and take that \$30 million and give that gentleman the free drug that he always had.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I went into a briefing yesterday with the Finance Minister – I thank the government for arranging it. I really do thank them for arranging it. When I went to the briefing, I asked about their \$30 million contingency plan. Myself and the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, we asked the question: How much does it cost for taxes on books? What's the revenue? They told us about \$2.1 million.

We asked the question: Could they have taken the \$2.1 million and made less on their contingency plan, made it, say, \$25 million? They said that was a choice they made. The \$30 million contingency plan was never in the budget before, yet they're taxing books.

A gentleman went on *Open Line* the other day – for an 85-year-old gentleman to call me and for a gentleman to get on *Open Line* and talk about a stool softener the other day for \$4.50, I hope the Minister of Education will listen to their

concerns and tell that gentleman and tell the other gentleman that we are going to put a \$30 million contingency plan in place and \$30 million in the budget, but you're still going to go – this about people.

When people went and voted November 30 they were told that people matter. Well, I tell you right now – and the Minister of Education is not going to stop me from getting up and talking –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: He is not going to get up and accuse me of laughing. I'll never laugh at the concerns of people of Newfoundland and Labrador because I'm passionate too. I'm here because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of my district wanted me here. They wanted an advocate on their behalf, and that's the reason why I'm here.

The Minister of Education looked at the budget and he looked at the concerns. Do you know what his comment was? He said it was nonsense. Their concerns are nonsense. I have a school that is not even in my district, the people in the school came to me because they're local MHAs wouldn't come and present a petition for them. I presented a petition on their behalf. They gave a solution.

Does he want a solution? The solution that the parents from Mary Queen of Peace said was, listen, do not go back to where we were to, do not increase cap size, do not reduce teachers. Just hold off on full-day kindergarten for a couple of years until we can afford it. Don't go cutting education like you are doing.

That was a solution. Did he listen to them? No, no, not going to listen to them; I have it done and that's it. The very first day we came to this House of Assembly, people wanted to listen to what the concerns were. Government went out and they said we're going to consult with people. We have 500,000 people that we're going to consult with.

I went to the consultations. I went to them, so did about 1,000 other people also went to them. They wanted their voices heard, but people are telling us and what people are telling me is that we understand the financial situation that is in

this province. We understand where we are to. The price of oil has dropped. There are problems in Alberta. There are problems in Saskatchewan. There are problems all over. But this is about choices. This is about choices. This is about our people. The choices that are made, people are saying have a look at the choices that you are making.

Maybe decide how important libraries are to people in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're listening to people – there is a library association across Canada that had an article in the paper yesterday condemning what's done by this government. It said, my God, you're going backwards, why are you doing this? Yet, we are told by the Department of Education that this is a new thing that we're doing, not done anywhere else in Canada, but this is new what we're doing.

You're only 30 minutes away from a library. Well, tell the senior that you have to drive 30 minutes to the library and you have to drive 30 minutes back. Tell the lady that takes her grandchild to a Mother Goose program, like they do in Pouch Cove, tell them that. I'm not standing up in the House of Assembly for the last three days because I want to make a mockery of anything. I'm not here to do that, nor am I going to do it. I tell you what I am here to do; I'm here to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've read emails after emails after emails and there are some times that they'll stop in the middle of the email and say, no, can't say that. I respect the House of Assembly so much it's unbelievable. I had a father that was here; I had a great friend in Jack Byrne that was here. I respect the position the two of them held and I respect my own, and so do most Members of the House of Assembly.

We've listened to the Minister of Education get up all morning. He was angry the whole morning. His tone of voice in this House of Assembly is an angry tone of voice. That's the way he carries himself. I carry myself with trying to respect everybody in this House of Assembly. That's who I am as a person and that's who I'm going to be as a person. That's who I am. I will respect every person in this House of Assembly because I believe everybody has a right to say what they want.

I presented petitions here in the House of Assembly and I presented petitions about libraries. All I'm saying to the government across the way is that you have a contingency plan in place, you put in \$30 million, you put in full-day kindergarten. There are other things in the budget that you can look at.

You're cutting 54 libraries that are essential to communities. They're essential to people in the province. People use them. People are upset over them. There are all kinds of different choices that we make in this budget and everybody realizes that the choices you're making, some are good and some are bad. We looked at the levy. When the levy first came in, oh my God, it was the worst thing ever. Now you've improved it a bit, you made it a bit better, but there are still improvements that can be done. I discussed them earlier this morning.

We're here hoping that the government across the way are going to listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. You campaigned on people matter. I'm here to speak for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I've given you suggestions. I'm saying take that \$30 million and use it for other things. Use it to keep our libraries. Take the taxes away from books. We're the only province in all of Canada that's doing it. Help our seniors and people on low income that are going to the drugstores that have to pay for stool softeners and shots. Help the seniors that are out there because they're on fixed incomes.

That's why so many people are frustrated. That's why we see people in the gallery frustrated. That's why we see people protesting. They're hoping that someone is going to listen. That's what they want from government because people matter. That's who we are as people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We're hoping that government is going to listen. There's no way that you can say we're not going to change anything.

As soon as the budget came down the Premier said what's in the envelope is in the envelope. That's not right because people want to hear their voice. There's nothing wrong with changing your decisions. There's nothing wrong with making changes.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

For the Members opposite, I'll try to contain my emotions this time. I'll try not to be too theatrical or rant. I just wanted to make a comment.

The longer I'm here I realize that people all the time make the right choices, particularly when you're in politics. The more I hear from the Member for Mount Pearl North I'm convinced of that.

I met the former premier last year, probably for the first time. I didn't know him all that well. Actually, it was just prior to the campaign and I was in Buchans. The former premier recognized me and congratulated me for running. We had a great chat.

I came to appreciate that he is certainly a great guy, and now that the House is open and I've had more engagement with him, I realize that. So when they had their party nomination in their party, they obviously made the right choice. After what we've been seeing here in the last few hours, they were able to do that. It's something that I would certainly want to recognize in this House.

Madam Chair, my honoured colleague; I didn't mean to put you on the spot or anything when I did mention this morning we talked about that coffee piece. Sometimes we get caught up in that. I understand fully that you don't have the resources to do all the research on that.

Madam Chair, this is certainly a time that all of us really need to get an understanding of where we are, because I think it's important for us as a government to realize the debt we're in. We need to address that debt.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to get up again this morning. As I was leaving here last night the Member for Mount Pearl North read into the record an email he received from a constituent. Now, I'm not sure if this constituent was from Labrador or where this constituent was from, but I do have a copy of the email. It disturbed me a whole lot, I tell you. Hansard will show, the records will show that this in the records coming from the Member for Mount Pearl North.

I'm going to read it: Please relay a message to the Member for Torngat Mountains. If he's willing to sit back and wait for adverse things to happen to our province that we have talked about in all our emails, then we are in a terrible state. Now listen, just because he comes from an area of Labrador where basic services are a luxury, all the more for this Member to listen to his constituents because they will become more worse off than they are now.

Now, Madam Chair, I'm going to repeat that because, to me, it borders on discrimination: Just because he comes from an area of Labrador where basic services are a luxury, all the more for this Member to listen to his constituents. The last filibuster that we had – I'm not sure if it was the last one, but certainly if it wasn't the last one, it was the one before that – ended in this House around accusations of racism. I'm not suggesting this person is a racist, but what I'm suggesting, to me, when I heard that last night, my heart dropped to my feet.

I'm a Labradorian. My hon. colleague for Torngat Mountains is a strong, strong Labradorian –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: – who is here in the best interests of his constituents. We talked about filtering our emails and what we read into the record in Hansard. When that's read into Hansard it shows that it's coming from the Member for Mount Pearl North. To me, if he's willing to put that into Hansard, then he is condoning what's in this email.

I know a lot of people from Torngat Mountains. I know a lot of people from Labrador South – the Member for Cartwright- L'Anse au Clair.

That's my home. I've met a lot of people from Torngat Mountains.

When I heard the minister last night –

AN HON. MEMBER: The Member.

MR. LETTO: – the Member, sorry, last night refer to them and said that basic needs are a luxury, that, to me, is absolutely, absolutely, absolutely shameful. It's telling me that these people are living in need. They're desperate people.

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that the people of Torngat Mountains are great people. They're great people. They're very resourceful people. They take pride in what they do and how they live. To even insinuate that their basic needs are luxuries, to me, is totally, totally shameful.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's disgusting.

MR. LETTO: It's disgusting. As I said, and we've said so many times in this House in the last 48 hours, I respect every email that comes from a constituent, from a person in Newfoundland and Labrador. But ladies and gentlemen, we have to be careful how we are relaying that message.

If I get up and relay a message from a constituent or from a Member or from a person in Newfoundland and Labrador, if I read that into Hansard, I am condoning what they say. To me, when I heard this last night, as I said, my heart went to my feet. To me, it was nothing but an insult to the people of Torngat Mountains.

My hon. colleague, the Member for Torngat, worked very hard to get what his people deserve. They're not looking for luxuries. They want to be treated equal, as everybody else in this province. And so they should because they are people of this province. They're a proud Aboriginal people. They deserve what everybody else in this province has and takes for granted. They're not looking for that as a luxury. They want clean drinking water. They deserve clean drinking water. They want affordable housing. They deserve affordable housing and so they should have it.

To read into the record something like that, that their basic needs are considered a luxury, it goes to show what the Member for Mount Pearl North really is made of. For him to read it in he is condoning it and he agrees with what this person said.

I am insulted as a proud Labradorian. I grew up on the southern part of Labrador in a little place called L'Anse au Clair. I'm very proud of my roots. I spent most of my life in Labrador West. I'm very proud of my roots there too.

I've known the Member for Torngat Mountains for a long, long time. I saw him when he represented his people as a member of Nunatsiavut town council. I saw him at the table at Combined Councils fighting for what we take for granted. I tell you, Madam Chair, he was not looking for luxuries.

He was looking for clean drinking water. He was looking for good, safe, affordable housing. He was looking for a good education for his people and for his children. He was looking for good medical services that would take care of his people on the North Coast of Labrador.

For an hon. Member in this House to come in here and read into Hansard that the things they were looking for are luxuries, the Member should get up and apologize to this House and to the people of Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: If he has to go and do it, he should do it right now. I ask the Member to stand up and apologize to the people of Labrador and to the Member for Torngat Mountains for condoning and for reading into Hansard something that is an insult to the people, a slur to the people he represents. For anybody on the other side who want to get up and challenge what I'm saying, I dare them – I dare them.

Madam Chair, this is nothing but an insult. It's an insult to the Member for Torngat Mountains, it is an insult to the people he represents and it is an insult to this House for even suggesting that the basic needs of the people of Labrador are considered luxuries.

A luxury, to me, is something that I don't need, but I'd love to have. That, to me, is the definition of a luxury. What the Member is fighting for his people are basic needs. I don't consider clean drinking water a luxury. I don't see good education as a luxury.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: I don't see affordable housing as a luxury. They're not luxuries, Madam Chair, they're needs. This gentleman, who represents those people, fights every day, tooth and nail, for those basis needs.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. Welcome back to the House of Assembly again this morning and in the Chair. It's always a pleasure to see a female in the Chair. Certainly, the guys do a great job as well.

Madam Chair, I'm going to start out this morning by giving some honourable mention to my colleague for Cape St. Francis. Oh, here he is. He's back. As I arrived here today he was delivering his speech.

I have to tell you, I'm so proud when I listened to him and all of my colleagues, in particular on this side of the House, and some Members opposite when they speak. The Member for Cape St. Francis, in particular, is genuine and sincere when he speaks. It really comes through. I think that's why you have such a high rate of support, to my colleague. I have no doubt it will continue.

As long as you run for the people you will have the people's support because you genuinely support them. They know that when they raise their concerns to you, you don't just say you're going to listen, you demonstrate with your actions that you are genuinely listening. So it

does my heart good to see politicians of your calibre in this House.

Every person who has ever sat in this House, I'm sure, since 1949 genuinely tries very hard to do their very best, Madam Chair. Some do it better than others. At least when we first seek the job and come here, we are all very focused primarily, first and foremost, on the people of our districts and doing what it is they expect us to do on their behalf here in the House. People do certainly deserve to have their voices heard.

I'm going to continue, Madam Chair, because unlike some of the Members opposite who think that there's no substance to the content of what we're bringing forward – that amazes me because, in reality, we're bringing forward the people's voice, literally. They are taking the time to watch this filibuster and send in what they want us to say into the record, what they want us to say to Members opposite in hopes that someone will begin to listen and make the changes that people are asking for.

Madam Chair, I don't think they're asking for too much. They're not asking for Cadillacs; they're asking for some changes to be made that will alleviate the massive pain and suffering this budget is bringing to the fine folks of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm going to go back, Madam Chair, to the health care services in the Coast of Bays region. As I stated last night, I do feel the Coast of Bays region took the bulk of the cuts from Central Health last time in this particular budget, in *Budget 2016* part one.

I'm going to read into the record, just so people keep it real and understand the implications of just what's happening to people, the people we represent, Madam Chair. These letters, when I read them, it breaks my heart because I empathize and understand how challenging it is going to be for our citizens with these cuts.

This letter, I won't give the names, but I will read into the record what they've wrote: Before the clinic closed, my husband would walk to the clinic in Hermitage on Thursday morning for his weekly blood work, something he has to do as a result of blood thinner medication he has been using since his open heart surgery two years ago.

Doctors change his prescription dosage almost every week because of complications related to the surgery. There are times when he needs his blood checked twice a week when his potassium goes up.

Now he has to travel to Harbour Breton once or twice a week for this service. Remember, Harbour Breton is 45 minutes away on a good day in the summer. He has to travel once or twice a week for the summer. Since neither of us drives, nor do we own a vehicle, we have to call upon one of our two children, if they are not working, on a particular day.

I'm going to stop here again and take a break from the letter, Madam Chair, because the pain these people are going to endure is extensive. They're fortunate; they actually two children still living there. What about the seniors who live in Hermitage that has no children living there? I tell you, there are a lot of them.

Going back to the letter again: We have to call upon one of our two children, if they are not working on a particular day; otherwise, we have to pay someone to take us down and wait while the blood samples are taken. Of course we have to pay the gas costs when our children are the drivers, but we don't have to pay the additional cost of the hour's drive down, hour's drive back, and perhaps an hour or so waiting.

So they are paying someone for three hours of their time, plus gas, if it's not a family member. In any event, this will cost us anywhere from between \$30 to \$70 each week, depending on who takes us and if we make one or two trips.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: Madam Chair, I'd like to ask for some quiet here in the House; there seems to be a lot of noise. I think it's important that Members opposite listen to what the people are trying to say to you. Listen to the impact, try and get an understanding of what people are actually going through.

Anyway, they go on to say: For the love of God, what were you thinking? This can cost us close to \$300 each month, and you're looking at two senior citizens who live on Old Age Security and the Supplement. You have no idea how your

decision to shut down the clinic in Hermitage will affect the lives of people like us. I am sure there are many like my husband and I in Hermitage-Sandyville, Seal Cove, Gaultois and McCallum. Please get the clinic open again and restore the basic services such as blood collection.

Madam Chair, again, this community has been operating without a doctor for quite some time. They have been functioning with a visit twice a week from a nurse practitioner. Although not ideal, not utopia, it has worked, and it has at least provided them with basic services, which are now gone.

Think about this, you really need to think about what you're doing. We have increased every tax possible. We've increased the price of gas. We've increased the cost of insurance. And now these are two seniors living on Old Age Security and the Supplement – that's all they have. Because of this decision to not allow the nurse practitioner to drive from Harbour Breton to Hermitage, these people are going to be out \$300 additional a month. That's significant.

Where is \$300 going to come from? You really need to get an understanding of what it is to live on a fixed income. On a fixed income there is no extra \$300 a month; it just isn't there. That's what we're trying to get across to Members opposite. We're really trying to get you to realize the devastating impacts on the people of the province, given the austerity measures that you have imposed. It really needs to be revisited.

I tell you, I'm gravely worried. I've been worried about my seniors ever since I've become an MHA. I've seen their struggles. I've felt their pain. I'm baffled myself to understand how they're going to make it through the winter. I genuinely don't know.

A fixed income is not easy to live on, Madam Chair, and most of our seniors are in that position, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I can appreciate that Members perhaps living in urban areas have a lot of seniors they know who actually avail of a pension. Many of them probably worked with the public service. That's not the case, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, where you are taking away our services, forcing us to drive an

hour or an hour and a half to access the services, increasing the cost of gas for us to do it. It's not going to work.

It is impossible for people to make ends meet. People will not be able to feed themselves and heat their homes and get to the doctor. The money isn't there on Old Age Security and Income Supplement if that's all you have to live on. There are many people, Madam Chair. One person suffering to that degree is one person too many when these are the people who we are responsible for. Of all people in our province, seniors who have worked to make this province what it is are certainly deserving of more care than that.

I want to remind the Members opposite about their mantra that I haven't heard once since November 30, that people matter. If people matter, let's do what we can to help people. It is more important, in my view, that a senior avail of blood work than we do a study that sits on a shelf until such time as we can find a couple of billion dollars to implement the study, if the study recommends you proceed.

There is no logic in some of that, Madam Chair. We implore that Members opposite to really think about what they are doing to the people.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Thank you.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is certainly always a pleasure to stand in this House, particularly since we've been having this debate for several days now. I certainly want to add some answers to a question that I had this morning. I was speaking with an individual who said: Cathy, why are you not reading from emails? Why are you not standing in the House reading from emails?

I had to explain to the person that the rules of the House require that any Member of Cabinet – a

minister – who stands in this House with a piece of paper in their hand has to table that document. A practice and a habit I'd add, Madam Chair, that I have come to learn to appreciate for Question Period. It certainly has helped me, as a minister, provide some information to my colleagues opposite the House when I'm able to present them with some pieces of paper that provide some extra details.

I'm certainly very aware, as I said to this person this morning, that as Ministers of the Crown, we have a responsibility that we stand in this House and if we have pieces of paper in our hand, we have to table them. That's a very different circumstance for private Members. So the private Members of the House aren't required to table the documents that they have in their hand when they're reading, is my understanding.

I wanted to make sure that for the individual who asked me why I wasn't standing here holding in my hands email after email after email and reading it, quite frankly, I have to table the documents. Out of the privacy for the individuals whose names were on those documents, I couldn't confirm whether they wanted it to be read in this House or not. I wanted to make sure that I respected that. I think all ministers would certainly want to do everything we need to do to protect the privacy of constituents.

What I have done, Madam Chair, I have some emails which I have shared with some of my colleagues, some of the private Members on the government side. Emails that they can choose to do with as they wish so that some of the voices that have been articulating to me their feedback on the budget are also heard as part of this debate.

Madam Chair, as I have said, especially over the last number of hours, we understand that the budget has been difficult for the people of the province. It's frustrating for me as a Finance Minister that there's a lack of accountability from the Members opposite as to the legacy that they've left us to deal with as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That frustration must not get in the way of us in this House doing the job we need to do, which is getting the province back on fiscally stable ground so we can turn our attentions to growing the economy.

Madam Chair, I look forward to today explaining again why the Members opposite have the privilege in this House of standing with pieces of paper and reading them without having to table the documents and without being required to table the documents. Certainly, we'll provide that information to my hon. colleagues on this side of the House from some of the emails I've received. I've brought binders in this House – like Members opposite have – of some feedback. I certainly look forward to my colleagues – should they chose to share that – sharing that, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise once again and speak to the budget. Madam Chair, I've noticed the last two or three speakers on the government side keep referencing the emails we're reading. I don't know, it would almost give one the impression somehow that they don't want us to read the emails. I don't know.

Nothing offensive, I certainly haven't read anything offensive.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I say to the Member I haven't read anything that's offensive. I'm doing my best to screen through them. Any time I've seen any words that were offensive, I've deleted them or I just said bleep or something like that.

With that said, I do have some –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I say to the Member, I can only speak for myself; I'm not going to speak for other Members.

I did have one comment here that was sent to me just a little while ago. I'm not going to quote this one because I don't want the words to be, in any way, offensive.

The gist of it is that the individual wanted me to pass on to the Minister of Education that he feels there are an awful lot of concerns in the education system around full-day kindergarten, and he would be better off speaking to what he's going to do to fix that as opposed to some of the other issues he's been raising. I'm just being respectful and just passing that along because he wanted me to say that. By the way, I totally understand that just because the minister is the Minister of Education – he's a Member of Cabinet, he's a Member of government and he's a Member – he can speak to whatever he wants, but I'm just passing that along to him.

I have an email here now. It's entitled: Surely some hopeful changes can be made. It's says here: Mr. Lane, thank you for receiving my letter. My name is – he didn't say I could say his name so I won't say it. I ask you keep that private though – there you go. We are good. He said: To state my district is perfectly fine. I am grateful for the stand you've taken. He said you can state my district but the district is not listed here. That's pretty good.

No one should doubt that measures need to be taken to deal with Newfoundland and Labrador's financial situation. I must ask, though, who among the MHAs or parties believe they can craft a budget that is perfect, that is without flaw. Nobody, I would say to him. I hope that no one in the House of Assembly believes that – we certainly don't – for we all know that none of us are perfect and none of us are able to create perfect work. I would agree with that.

My question is, with such a complex and broad piece of legislation, how can the government not realize that some changes and accommodation **MUST** be made – he has must capitalized, so I guess he wanted emphasis. Without some alterations, there is no doubt that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are not, by any measure, being well led.

And please – I'm emphasizing this because he has it in bold letters – don't respond with the straw-man argument almost every Liberal Member is getting on with, essentially claiming the only two choices are either, one, to do exactly what's in the budget; or two, to do nothing at all. As examples of small beneficial

changes, I point to finding a million dollars from the contingency fund and using it to support dozens of libraries in rural regions threatened with closure. Also, I point to delaying full-day kindergarten. Tens of millions are saved there.

I would say for the benefit of that individual if he's listening, it's not tens of millions. I think the minister said it's \$13 million. Is it \$13 million or \$16 million?

AN HON. MEMBER: It's \$13.3 million.

MR. LANE: It's \$13.3 million. So for the sake of accuracy and facts it's \$13.3 million. He's saying tens of millions but it's \$13.3 million. Perhaps a little bit of it could go to easing the cutbacks you've made to education of the province's whole population school children.

Basically this individual is saying what an awful lot of people have been saying, including this Member. He's talking about full-day kindergarten. He thinks it's tens of millions. That's not true; it's \$13.3 million that could be saved.

What he is saying is that you could save that money. You could save the libraries using that money. You could take money from the contingency fund to look at things like saving the library and also investing that \$13 million back into the existing programs we have so that children – he doesn't say this, but it's what I've been saying. It's the same thing, I think; children with special needs, class cap sizes, not going into multigrading and all those issues that we have raised.

That's what this person is saying. What he does say, and I'll say again to emphasize because we've also made this point, please don't respond with the – he has a quote – straw-man argument almost every Liberal Member is getting on with, essentially claiming the only two choices are: one, to do exactly – and he has that capitalized: EXACTLY – what's in the budget; or two, to do NOTHING – which he has capitalized – at all.

That's what we've been saying all along. That is the answer. That is the message we continue to get, do exactly what you're saying or to do nothing at all – saying we do exactly what you're saying and if we're not agreeing with

that, then that means that we're somehow saying do nothing at all.

Nobody is saying that. He's not saying that. He just gave the same examples we've been giving. He's saying don't close down the libraries. You have \$30 million in the contingency, make it \$29 million. Libraries saved, done deal. Don't do the full-day kindergarten right now, put it into the resources we need for the children already in school. Those are legitimate issues he's saying are not going to have one iota of difference on the budget. It's not going to change the budget. You save two things.

I would go further. As the Member for Cape St. Francis said, the \$2.1 million for the tax on books; you could make those changes, at least. That would satisfy a lot of people and it wouldn't impact the budget.

There are other things we've talked about, other things that we can do, other choices that can be made. That's what people are talking about. It's like death by a thousand cuts. All people are saying is that there are things you can do. There are some different choices you can make.

But we keep getting the message over there: Oh, if you don't go along with what we're saying, then what you're saying is borrow, borrow, borrow and put us in the hole. I'm not saying that. I haven't said that. Not once have I said that – not once. I agree you have to do a lot of the stuff you're doing. I agree with a lot of the stuff you're saying.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, it's not, though, because it's in your budget already. It's already in your budget. It's not passed.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Madam Chair, it's not cash in the drawer. None of it is cash in the drawer; it's all money that can be borrowed. We just borrowed \$3.4 billion, isn't it? So it's all part of that money.

We did a briefing and they said they put \$30 million under this line here as a contingency. We asked the question: Could you have made that \$25 million contingency and said \$2.1 million tax on books and a million dollars to save the libraries. Another \$1.8 million could have gone towards maybe those seniors who have to go paying for their vitamin shots and all this stuff they never had to pay for before, as an example.

We were told that was a choice that government made. Now, that's what we were told by the officials; that was a choice that government made. They could have done it; they chose not to do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: That's right. All some people are saying, all I'm saying and the other Member is saying, is that we don't necessarily agree with all the choices. That's fair, it's democracy. That's democracy.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Well, it's all borrowing, if you want to look at it that way. Yes, but it's not going to change the bottom line.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Member who's speaking to direct his comments to the Chair.

Thank you.

MR. LANE: I apologize, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

MR. LANE: But that's all that people are saying, Madam Chair, that's all people are saying, is there are things that we're doing we could be doing differently.

Before I sit down – I only got 30 seconds left – but I will say once again, start looking in some other places besides where you're looking. Look to Nalcor. The information that I've received and people received, there is money to be found in Nalcor. If you can find 30 per cent in all the departments of government – you can write these deputy ministers: I want you to find 30 per

cent – well, then there's no reason why they can't call up Stan Marshall and tell him the same thing. Now maybe he can't find 30 per cent, maybe it's 10 per cent, but he can find some money.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Thank you.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Another day has dawned and I'm younger again, because it's still Tuesday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

A shower and a breakfast and ready to roll again.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAGGIE: Sorry, I missed that, but never mind.

I had –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAGGIE: I had intended to develop somewhat the theme the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development had started earlier on, but as is often the case with these debates and to and fro, something crops up in more recent comments.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands has been up again, as he has been through the night, and yesterday, in actual fact, he delivered a little – I won't use the word, rant, because I don't think it was. It may have been a sermon, but I

wouldn't like to characterize it. Other Members seem to be labelling the way we speak.

Basically, he talked about the difference between hearing and listening and acknowledging, and somehow suggested that we on this side of the House had been deficient in at least one of those steps – the acknowledging of what we had been hearing and listening to – because he automatically leapt from hearing and listening to the next step which he referenced, which was action. It seemed to imply, if you followed the logic of his argument, that whatever we heard and listened to we had to immediately act upon.

Then, if you set that in the context of what we've heard overnight and this morning, we have had a litany – although I don't mean it necessarily in a negative word, but it is a litany – of emails. The implication somehow is that whatever is read out we have to listen to, immediately acknowledge, and somehow act upon. Really, I think that lot is logically flawed and inconsistent – and I'll develop that perhaps a little bit later.

The whole issue of emails is an interesting one. I'm new to this process, but having watched filibusters in other jurisdictions – which might suggest I don't really have a life, but I have done that – this is a new twist, if you like. I'm caught between not wishing to abrogate anybody's options to advocate for their constituents, or indeed, any member of this province, but on the other hand there are some procedures – and we have this rather thin tome and the books get progressively larger as they get nearer to the Speaker's elbow – determining what is acceptable conduct in the House of Assembly.

Section 48(2) refers to needless repetition. Now I understand styles of oratory and the idea of telling people what you're going to tell them, telling them, and then telling them what you told them. We learn that as educators and there's some value to it.

So the bottom line is we're arguing about degree. Certainly, I think the Member for Mount Scio, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, started along this line in terms of the clearer end of the spectrum. What is unparliamentary behavior? What we've seen

are apologists, really, who have got up and said, well, I'm not really saying this but I'm going to read it into the record. It's anonymous, so we can hide by protecting the identity of people with whom we've not discussed this.

One could argue then that the privilege of the House, anything that's said in this House by a Member –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAGGIE: – is subject to some degree of legal protection from civil action, and in actual fact there are protections there. So I'm not so sure I would necessarily buy that argument of anonymity. But then what happens is when you move from the unparliamentary language – and I really would be interested when the Speaker and his management committee sit over the recess to see what their views on this are, because I think the Opposition have pushed the boat out beyond the line which I would personally find acceptable. I think hiding behind words that are on a piece of paper that no one can have access to is disingenuous at best and perhaps shows a lack of intestinal fortitude.

We then move from unparliamentary language to facts, opinions and misstatements. Essentially, what happens is the Members opposite have used the cover of these emails to perpetuate myths and smoke and mirrors that we have dealt with in Question Period as Members of Cabinet; yet they continue to keep bringing them forward and treating them as somehow monopolists of truth.

I know we've had several issues here that have been brought up, read into the record as emails, which are factually not correct. They have been issues that have been brought up at previous Question Periods. They have been issues that the Member opposite, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, for example, have brought to me in my ministerial capacity. I have dealt with and had no push back, yet she stands in her place and repeats these into the record ex-cathedra as though they are some kind of documentary proof.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HAGGIE: Sorry colleague, yes.

So I think reading letters on issues, there is an amount of due diligence. What is the role of an MHA advocating? Are they simply conduits, passive tubes through which this information flows or do they not have a responsibility as Members of this caucus, of the governing body, because in a sense that's what they are, too? They have a responsibility to go back and say, I know this to be factually incorrect. I have looked; I have spoken to the minister concerned, this is simply not right.

For example, when the Member opposite references four long-term care beds in Harbour Breton – Connaigre, he is factually incorrect. There are actually six new beds; a fact which the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune has conveniently omitted from any and all of her statements.

On the issue of dialysis, for example, I quote: patients should have their dialysis as close to home as possible. The Minister of Health and Community Services gets up in Question Period and says there is no place closer to home for home dialysis than home dialysis. Where is the problem? Yet, that's glossed over. So we have, again, needless repetition, endless repetition that is not actually a rhetorical device to make an argument, it is simply a baseball bat of incorrect facts to beat you over the head.

The problem is, Madam Chair, what is the line that is not acceptable. How many of these facts and misstatements can be allowed to slip through on the pretense that I am reading somebody's email and that is a justification for simply standing there and beating the government over the head.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands talks about binaries. Either you have this choice here or you've got to take the budget as it is. Well, he's presented us with a binary several days ago; I will stay here as long as I can and never go away unless you change the budget. No negotiation, no discussion about what that change is.

He stands up with these suggestions again about using contingency money, but we're trying to keep our borrowing down. Any contingency

money that's used (a) cannot be used for contingencies, and (b) is borrowing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAGGIE: It's money we've got to pay for. He stands there and says it can't be all that and then presents us with an ultimatum and it's exactly the same philosophy.

He issued a challenge yesterday. He said, I challenge anybody in this House to stand up and say you should do this, this, this and this and do it all at once. Well, I went to two GRI presentations and that is exactly what I heard.

You need to sort out the tax system. Poll tax was the term they used. You need to do a gas tax. Why not put the price of gas back to where it was a couple of years ago? In actual fact, the price of gas today on the Avalon is \$1.30. Now, I accept in your district that is not the case, but that's another issue for another day. There is a mechanism in place to do it.

Basically I would ask the Chair, over the summer, to get that committee together to look at this and to decide at what point the liberties that have been taken with parliamentary privilege have to stop.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Topsail – Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for recognizing me this morning and giving me a chance to speak again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Member –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Excuse me, I ask the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, I've given you some latitude, but I've recognized the Member for Topsail – Paradise. I ask the Members in this Chamber to respect that.

Thank you.

MR. LANE: I apologize, Madam Chair.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I hear the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands apologize over there.

Madam Chair, last night I had a discussion here in the House about some of the positions that this government sometimes takes on matters. We know that they have a growing reputation for always finding someone else to blame. We know they've blamed the library boards for what's happening with libraries. They've blamed the school board for decisions they are making for education. They've blamed the Nalcor board for government not keeping track and keeping their hands on what's happened with the severance for the former CEO and the process took place, even though they met directly with the CEO and not the board, so they blame the Nalcor board for that.

They blame us constantly; they blame us all the time for what happened. They blame the media, at times, and we just heard the Minister of Health blame the people, which they've done before. They said, oh, the people told us to put up gas tax. People told us to put on extra tax and increase costs to residents. It would be very interesting to see if there is anybody in the province who told them to do all of it. I'm sure people suggested, well, maybe a good way to battle what you have, is put up gas tax. Oh, good idea.

Maybe you should increase the HST, like we committed to do and we stood and said it was the right thing to do, even though people were opposed to it. They said, oh yeah, good idea. Maybe you should even put GST back on insurance. Oh, yes. I don't think anyone told them to do all of it. I really don't think anyone told them to do all of it.

The province is in a tough fiscal circumstance and it's because of oil. Alberta and Saskatchewan I talked about last night, but with Alberta and Saskatchewan, oil-producing provinces, the same as Newfoundland and Labrador, are in the same position we are – ours is probably a little bit worse because our percentage of our budget was a higher reliance on oil than Alberta or Saskatchewan, but they are all impacted.

Now, I suppose the Members opposite would say that's my fault too. That's the Newfoundland and Labrador PC Party's fault that Alberta and Saskatchewan are in the position that they are in. But the difference that's really interesting to point out, and it is a very important difference, is that the premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan have been advocating publicly, stating that the equalization process is flawed and should be corrected and that they should be entitled to equalization. They received zero in 2016-2017. Premier Notley, the NDP premier for Alberta, is not receiving any equalization. Premier Brad Wall, who is the Saskatchewan Party premier in Saskatchewan, is not receiving any equalization.

But if you look at what's happening even our neighbours next door in Nova Scotia are receiving \$1.7 billion – \$1.7 billion, with a B – in equalization this year. If this government had \$1.7 billion, we wouldn't be having this conversation. We would be in a very different circumstance. New Brunswick is receiving \$1.7 billion this year in equalization. Equalization is an important factor in our country; PEI, \$400 million; Quebec, \$10 billion; Ontario, \$2.3 billion.

By the way, a Liberal premier in Quebec, unlike Ontario and Saskatchewan – he's even spoken up publicly and said publicly the federal government needs to help Quebec even beyond the \$10 billion equalization because they need to help Bombardier, a major employer, a major industry in their province. He's even publicly said and lobbied publicly for the federal government, their Liberal cousins and friends in Ottawa, to help Quebec. He hasn't been afraid to speak up and say I'm going to step up for my constituents; I'm going to step up for the people of my province.

What the Members opposite have done is they blamed everybody else and they blame us. They blame every day – maybe I’m wrong, but if not every Member, most every Member over there had blamed the previous administration. How many times have the words “previous administration” been used?

Madam Chair, the problem with that is I would imagine that Members opposite and the government opposite is knocking on Ottawa’s door making a case for equalization help because of the fall in oil price. I certainly hope they are and I would imagine they are. That’s what happened.

Madam Chair, the Premier said one time – I think it was late December, early January – since the election we’ve lost \$400 million in revenue because of the fall in oil price. The Premier said that. I think it was January because the price really bottomed out in January. The Premier said it himself, \$400 million because the price of oil, but Members continue to blame us.

So while they’re knocking on the door in Ottawa saying please help us, we’re in a situation, Ottawa can say, hang on now, it’s not the problem of oil. You’re up every day in your own House of Assembly saying it’s the previous administration. You’ve taken away your own argument with Ottawa for equalization. You’ve taken away your own best argument that Alberta is using, that Saskatchewan is using and that even Quebec has spoken up looking for help.

Madam Chair, what’s equalization? Equalization comes under the *Constitution Act*. The *Constitution Act*, section 36 says: “Without altering the legislative authority of Parliament or the provincial legislatures, or the rights of any of them with respect to the exercise of their legislative authority, Parliament and the legislatures, together with the government of Canada and the provincial governments, are committed to” – and here are three things they’re committed to – “(a) promoting equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians;”

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SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: – so no matter where you live in Canada, you have an equal opportunity – “(b) furthering economic development to reduce disparity in opportunities; and” – right across Canada, no matter where you live – “(c) providing essential public services of reasonable quality to all Canadians.”

So it’s about everyone receiving the same, and Members opposite have said we’re now taxing at a level that’s consistent with other provinces. They’ve said that. They’ve argued and said, well, the taxation we’ve done now is consistent with other provinces – but we’re reducing the services to the people. Well, that’s contrary to what equalization is about.

Section 36(2) of the Constitution says, “Parliament and the government of Canada are committed to the principle of making equalization payments to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public service at reasonably comparable levels of taxation” – reasonably comparable levels of public service at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

But for Members just to simply say it’s somebody else’s fault, takes the legs right out from their own argument, that very strong argument that they could be making to the federal Government of Canada. The same argument that Saskatchewan’s making for their people and the same argument that Alberta is making for their people. But Members opposite, by blaming everyone else in all their problems and all their challenges, takes the legs right out from under their own argument.

I certainly hope the Members opposite, and I’m sure they are – and I’d be very surprised if they’re not – behind the scenes having their discussions with their federal counterparts and saying that the Constitution applies and we are deserving in equalization. If the equalization process with the federal government right now – I know Members opposite have said, well, equalization is not up for a couple of years yet, and that’s the rules. But the federal government has the right and ability to change the rules.

The federal government has the right to bring a bill or legislation to Parliament to say we’ve got a circumstance in Canada today that’s

unprecedented with the fall of oil – at least in recent history. We've got a circumstance today where oil-producing provinces are suffering because of the loss of oil revenue. Because of that, you should go to Parliament and change the law. You should change your regulations. You should change your policies. To simply say, well, they can't do it because that's the way the rules are, it's unacceptable. Well, change the rules. That's what governments do and that's what parliaments do. They change the rules.

What has the federal government done? Well, they've given us \$23 million, I think?

MR. HUTCHINGS: \$32 million.

MR. P. DAVIS: They've given us \$32 million. They've given us \$32 million, when Nova Scotia is getting \$1.7 billion? They give us \$32 million, when Quebec is getting \$10 billion in equalization? PEI is getting \$400 million; we're getting \$32 million. And a time when the province needs it because of the crash of oil prices – and a crash it is. Go on bloomberg.com and if you look at the oil prices, the chart, in five years – we are not allowed to use props – and here is the oil price and all of a sudden, boom, look at the drop in it. Look at the drop in oil price that happened.

Well, that was the impact right there. There it is. It is simple to see. There is the impact on what happened. There it is: bloomberg.com. I'll take a photograph of this and put it on social media when I get a chance. Because that's what happened to oil; it dropped like a rock. It's impacting countries around the world. It's impacting Saskatchewan and Alberta. If Members are suggesting that's our fault – that's probably what they are going to do. Oh, it's our fault that Saskatchewan and Alberta are in the place that they are today. It's not –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: They have an opportunity to lobby the federal government with a good argument and I suggest that be the path they follow.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister for Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to stand and have a few words here, very briefly, today about this debate. Madam Chair, I'm not signalling anyone out, but sometimes you hear things in this House of Assembly which is totally disingenuous. I'm not pointing any individual out or any MHA out, but I can tell you when you sit here and listen to the rhetoric here – you want to talk about disingenuous, you want to talk about the budget we have here and people saying, oh, you are not being honest with the people.

Madam Chair, I'm just going to point out a few things in my speech and I don't want to point it at anyone but when you talk about disingenuous statements – I'm sure it can be related to other people – I just heard the former premier of the province who was supposed to lead this province make statements. I respect the guy and I have always respected the position of the premier and I respect the Member. He knows that, but the statements that he just made as a former premier of the province.

I don't want to get into it too much, but he was saying oil is the problem. He should have walked over last night when his former deputy premier said spending is the problem in Newfoundland and Labrador. When he got up the other night, he said spending is the problem.

I think we have a leadership issue over there. One says oil and one thinks it's a spending problem. That's the former premier saying it is oil and the former deputy premier saying it is spending. The former premier just got up and talked about equalization. Madam Chair, I always say and I always said it for years, if you let statements be made and if you feel that they are factually incorrect, you have to correct them or people will believe them. I always said that.

For the former premier to stand on his two feet in this House of Assembly and talk about equalization when he knows very well – and if he was standing on his feet right now and if he wanted to come to this Legislature, he knows

very well that equalization can't start again; negotiations are not until 2019. He knows that.

Madam Chair, not only that, his administration, on equalization, had two opportunities. He was in Cabinet for one of them. So he can bark now as much as he likes. He can try to shut me down, but he's not going to do it. He was in Cabinet for one, Madam Chair, never even asked for changes to equalization – never even did it. There was another opportunity when he wasn't in Cabinet, but there was one when he was in Cabinet and equalization came up and he never even asked, never pushed it, to have changes to equalization.

Now, all of a sudden, after the big crisis we have, oh, we should have pushed equalization. We should blame nothing on them. We shouldn't be doing that. We should be up fighting with Ottawa over equalization when that Member, the former premier of the province – because I can tell you if he sat now with any premiers of the province and he made those statements that he just made, he would be laughed out of the room. He knows he can't go up to former premiers and make those statements about equalization.

He can make it here in this House of Assembly because no one can say anything. He's hoping the people in the province are going to say, oh, what's wrong with those Liberals out there; they're not fighting with Ottawa for equalization. He knows he can stand up here and some people may say the Liberals won't fight with their federal cousins. I can tell you if he was up and he was with other premiers, he would be laughed out of the room for the statements he just made in this Legislature. He knows the difference. He absolutely, categorically, knows the difference of the statements he just made. He's thinking that because we're not up bawling and shouting and fighting over equalization, we're just blaming it on them and we shouldn't be doing that.

Mr. Chair, we have to look at where we came from. I was in Opposition and I respect the Member for Topsail. I respect him, absolutely no doubt. I respect the position he was in as the premier. I respect the institution, absolutely, no doubt. We've been over there saying for years you have to make a contingency plan. This oil

isn't going to last. It just can't last. Yet, they just kept spending and spending and borrowing and borrowing. Then he looks over at us over here, looks at the Premier and the Minister of Finance and says, oh well, it's not our fault.

We look over on December 15. Was it our fault that we have to put \$1.3 billion into Nalcor because people were asleep at the wheel, no one asked the tough questions? Mr. Chair, what do you think? What do you honestly think? Do you think from December 15 to December 16 this \$1.3 billion transfer over to Nalcor happened in that day? Of course not, how foolish is that, Mr. Chair, to thinking that all of a sudden the next day it was not their fault, asleep at the wheel.

I asked them before. Sitting in that seat right there was the minister of Natural Resources, Derrick Dalley, who I have a lot of respect for, a nice guy, a great guy. They stood up on their feet – he was the premier when we asked questions about the dome at Muskrat Falls. When we asked who's paying for the dome, to put it up and take it down, we were told repeatedly Astaldi is paying for the dome, not one cent of taxpayers' money.

Here's what I'll do, Mr. Chair, the former premier is sitting in his chair right now. If I'm wrong on my statement, let him stand up and say Astaldi paid for that, 100 per cent; there was not one cent on the taxpayers, the people of the province. Here's your opportunity; I'll sit down, stand up.

The statements that were made in this House of Assembly, Mr. Chair, that it never cost the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador one penny to put up that dome, to take down that dome, the former premier, let him stand up and I'll sit down. I'll give him the rest of my time to stand up. He can't do it. He won't do it.

Mr. Chair, that's the difference, when you want to say you can't attack us, you have to attack Ottawa. The former premier of this province knows very well that equalization is a complicated formula that comes up every so many years. They had two opportunities; 2019 is the next one. I say to the former premier – he's over there listening to me now very attentively – you know very well, Sir, 2019 is the next date. You know well, Sir, as he's looking at me, I'm

telling him, he knows, and if I'm saying anything wrong, stand up. You had an opportunity when you were in Cabinet to reopen this equalization. Your government – which you're a part of Cabinet – never even asked to open up equalization. So now you want to talk about shifting blame. Look at the reality. The reality is we walked in with a \$2.7 billion deficit.

What's the former premier – don't blame it on anybody, but it's your fault for not trying to push for equalization which he could have pushed for. I'm not even sure if he could have gotten it done, to be fair to the minister. I'm not even sure because they know how equalization works with the oil revenues coming in. I'm not even sure he could have gotten it done, but he never even took advantage of the opportunity, Mr. Chair.

For him to talk about our federal cousins, I think once again it's disingenuous. I honestly do. Last night I stood in his House and he was there – and he is fully aware of it. You can wave around \$140 million, almost \$180 million because the federal government came to the table to help out all towns across Canada, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and all communities and towns in Newfoundland and Labrador – a lot of opportunity. The Trans-Labrador Highway is another one that we are going to get done.

AN HON. MEMBER: Coley's Point Primary.

MR. JOYCE: Coley's Point Primary.

Mr. Chair, here is the opportunity of what I'm going to do. Here is what I'm going to do. I have a minute left here. I have one minute left in this speech and the former premier is looking at me right straight. Here is what I'll do. I'm going to sit in my chair. I ask the former premier – I have time left on the clock; I'm going to sit down in my seat. Former premier, the Member for Topsail – Paradise, stand on your feet and say that you never took the opportunity or if what I'm saying is absolutely incorrect or when is the next time equalization is open, 2019 – you know it. I'm going to sit in my chair. If I'm wrong, here is your time. I'm sitting in my chair, Mr. Chair. I have plenty of time left.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: Stand up and say that equalization right now is not in 2019. Here is your chance; I'm sitting down to let him defend himself. Here's his opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand here this morning and have a few words in regard to this bill. It has certainly been a lively debate over the past number of days, a lot of information exchanged and a lot of ideas exchanged. It has been a good venue for engagement by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians through various mediums; through direct contact with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as we all do, as 40 elected representatives of the people; letters we receive, information we receive through social media; and it is not only a venue like this and a filibuster that you repeat those views and commentary, it's every day you do. You do it in Question Period. Someone may write you on a particular interest of concern. You articulate their views; you often quote them. You often quote their views and bring them into the House, and that's what the House is all about.

To indicate that there is anything wrong with that, flies in the face of what we do here in this Legislature and what we do as elected officials. You bring views, concerns and issues to light in the people's House; that's what you're elected to do. Sometimes you're bringing those concerns, ideas and suggestions forward, you may not always agree with them. But the point is you're representing the people of your constituency and you're representing people's views from across Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what we

do. And we'll continue to do that and we'll continue to do it.

I listened to the Member across the way just that time speak to equalization and the issue regarding the formula that's in place. As we know, equalization is a constitutional right entrenched as a part of this great federation we call Canada. Provinces at times of need have an opportunity, based on a formula, to determine what that input would be, based on your ability to provide comparable level of services and a comparable level of taxation. Through that, you're able to provide those services to people of any province of Canada.

Indeed, the Member mentioned there is a formula and there's a review process and a renewal process which looks at 2019 right now. But like any legislation or any program of the federal government of this great country, it's always open for review where changes can be made. That's the important thing to remember here when you look at various jurisdictions, particularly Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador, that have been hit dramatically over the past year in regard to the global fall in oil prices and been affected dramatically.

So that's what a program like this is for. Oftentimes, based on circumstances within the country or various programs, there may be times to intervene and deal with particular circumstances within the country. That's all that's being suggested is that the effort be made to do that. Obviously, the administration thought it was important. I understand they did make a request under a provision of the equalization, called the stabilization fund, to access some funds. I understand that was paid out in the last fiscal year of \$32 million.

So be it, that's what they should do. If it's there and available, you try and access it and to assist. We look at some of the other jurisdictions – this fiscal year, I think it's about \$18 billion going to be paid out. What we're getting is \$32 million, just through the stabilization fund and nothing else.

That's been the request, and I know in the House in previous Question Periods –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: I know in the House in previous Question Periods I've asked the Premier directly what efforts he is making in regards to this. Since we've opened the House, I've certainly asked him that. To certainly respecting him, he's got up and said they're having talks and he's had some discussions and looking at things from his perspective. I hope he is, because he really needs to do it.

Past administrations, through a former Liberal prime minister, Prime Minister Martin, there was \$2 billion through looking at the Atlantic Accord and redefining equalization that was done and was attained by the province, was done through that, through negotiations and working and advocating to Ottawa to make changes so additional funds could be received. That's something our current prime minister and administration should do and continue to do because, indeed, it is important. We'll see where that goes over the next period, I guess, and see how we can get there and what we can do, but it is extremely important. I certainly advocate that the current administration work on that and keep moving that forward.

The other thing I want to mention, Mr. Chair, in regard to some comments here this morning is specific to my district and some of the things I've heard related to the budget. Some of the commentary I've received have been through calls, through discussions with people in my district one-on-one, emails, social media and onward. That's very important because you get that, people expect you to speak to it.

Some discussions you have, like we all have as MHAs, we don't always agree with our constituents on various issues but we're respectful. We have that discussion. We find a way forward. We find a way forward to agree or we often find a way forward to disagree, but certainly still respect those who have contrary opinions and try to work collectively. At the end of the day, it's all about representing our constituents and the best interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's what we try to do. That's what we're elected to do, all of us.

Over the past number of months, and I guess weeks, I've worked with folks in my district. Education is a really significant issue. Some of the decisions that have been made in this budget really affect many in my region. The busing issue has been a huge concern. We're working with two different regions in my district in regard to that and the implications of it.

Infrastructure; when we look at a new middle school in my district that was cancelled in this budget. Over the past number of years we had lined up a plan to get there, to build a new middle school in my region for the area of Bay Bulls to Bauline, which is extremely necessary at this stage due to the significant growth we had in the region and continue to have. Outside of that, we continue to build recreation infrastructure.

Educational infrastructure is extremely important. We need to continue that and continue to get that developed. That's extremely important, as I said, as we look forward to economic and social development. That's what it's all about. We need to build that infrastructure to make sure people have the ability to access those services. That's why people want to live in a particular community, a particular region.

If someone's coming in and want to build a new home, want to buy a home from outside, or someone that's lived – the family has lived there for a generation and they're old enough now to buy and purchase a new home. The first thing they do is look around and see, well, what are the services that are available as I raise my family. Do I have access to appropriate health care? Do I have access to appropriate education? Do I have access to appropriate recreation facilities? What's the environment there in which I'll raise my family? That could be a young family, it could be someone that's retiring and want to stay in an area or move to an area. I mean they're going to look at all number of factors.

In a broader sense, from a provincial perspective, you're going to look what's a taxation regime in place in a jurisdiction. That's very appealing, as it should be, to individuals in terms of whether they stay in a particular area, stay in a province or whether they want to move

to a province. That's why over the past number of years we've tried to make it very competitive, which we have done, the prior administration, for people who want to move, live here, have a good standard of living, put money in people's pockets.

We believe that money in people's pockets – they have consumer confidence. They have consumer spending which allows that spending to drive the economy on all levels from small to medium business right up through. That drives the economy. It drives entrepreneurship. It drives business activity. It drives growth. It drives jobs, which allows people to live in various communities in various regions of the province.

Other things that we've done, which is extremely important – I know there's a little bit of money thrown in the budget this year in regard to an initiative we had started some years ago, the Rural Broadband Initiative which we had invested significant dollars to bring particularly high-speed Internet to various regions of the province and to upgrade it. Now we're in the high 90s in terms of connectivity in regard to high-speed Internet, which is extremely important again for the economic and social well-being of our province and how we continue to grow and the importance of that. I am pleased to see that there was some, not a lot, of money in the budget for that.

The other side of that telecommunications is cellular coverage, which is a huge challenge based on our geography. In terms of implementation of towers and those things and the cost, it's certainly challenging. I'd like to see the current administration, not only our Opposition – they had a lot of talk about that and how they would do it, but we haven't seen anything yet in regard to that. We'll see what happens moving forward.

There are a number of issues that are relevant, that provided good discussion in the debate over the last number of days. We'll continue to represent people and bring their views to the House, whatever those views are so collectively people can hear them and understand them. I look forward in the days ahead to having more discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is a privilege for me to stand here today and continue on our discussion around various bills that impact *Budget 2016*.

I want to say, first and foremost, that I am deeply appreciative of the people of the District of Terra Nova for having their confidence in me back in November to come to this House and represent their interests. I do that every day with a full heart and honesty, and very much an open mind.

We've been here in a filibuster debating various bills that are associated with this budget, and we've been here many hours, through the day and through the night, and I know many of us are tired.

One of the things I said last night – and I really want to clarify or remind everybody that the purpose of a filibuster is an opportunity to bring clarity to issues. I get deeply concerned when I listen to Members opposite when they pick and choose what they want to talk about.

Last night when I got up and spoke, and, of course, the Leader of the Opposition got up and spoke after. Initially, when he started to speak I was a bit encouraged, because he talked about working together. In my past experience, that's certainly something I would have always aimed for. You find the best kind of solutions when you work together, but it quickly went downhill.

What deeply concerns me is their rhetoric changes all the time, because you're picking and choosing what you want to put out there to the public. I've been accused, and we've been accused, government Members, of making all kinds of promises that we've gone back against. I will be very clear in this House here today that what I campaigned on was to represent the people of this district to the best of my ability, to advocate for every issue to the best of my ability, and to be honest.

There is a reason why we are all referred to as hon. Members. I don't cherry-pick. I don't choose what I want to say. I provide all of the information, good, bad or indifferent. So when I listen to – unfortunately, what happened overnight was that the Leader of the Opposition decided to share what was a private message between myself and a constituent in my district. He talked about – and I see that the Question of the Day on VOCM is about, where is a Member most effective? Are they most effective as an independent – which we've seen when the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands decided to go and sit as an independent.

I have been very clear with the people of the Terra Nova District that I think, as part of a team – and I've always been part of a team in all my previous capacities – that you're more effective because you can work together, you can collaborate and you can find solutions.

I can tell you that my constituency assistant in my district office in Clarenville, who works tirelessly to advocate and support the people of the Terra Nova District, brings issues forward to me that I need to intervene on and try to assist with. One of the things that happen when you're a part of a government – and I would argue that we are part of a team – is that you have access; you can bring clarity. Decisions get made within government based on the information you have at the time. So one of the things I can do, as the effective MHA, is that I can meet with ministers, I can meet with officials in departments and I can help bring clarity. Because, with clarity of new information, sometimes you get a different decision and sometimes you get a better decision.

My concern last night, as I listened to the Leader of the Opposition who decides to make it political that I'm saying I don't want to be with the government; I'd sooner be sitting as an Independent – am I going to be representing the people in the district? I can tell you I represent the people in this district each and every day. I put in a tremendous amount of time to do that.

It goes back to my point that the rhetoric keeps changing time and time and time again. Well, it is time for that to stop as far as I'm concerned. If you're going to get up and speak in this House,

at least bring forward all the information so that we can find better solutions.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, it bothers me to no end that when we talk about the libraries – and it has been said: Are we listening? Are we hearing? So I'm going to say this for the people who are listening at home. When we talk about school libraries – and the Minister of Education has already clarified it, but I'm going to say it and I'll say it so hopefully people are listening and are hearing. School libraries are not closing. Our issue is access for the public.

Now, access to schools for the public has been an ongoing issue for a very long time. A number of years ago when the previous government was in power, I had been part of an approach where liability insurance was an issue for outside groups to be able to come into schools. In all due respect and credit to the previous administration, there was a path forward found so that organizations could come into schools and access those public buildings after hours.

When we talk about school libraries, the access to the buildings is an issue. We have to sort that out. In my district, the school library in Glovertown is one that I have been actively working on trying to find a solution, working with the local library board, working with the English school board, working with the local school administration and the town council. We will find a solution. So it's a solution about access, not about closure.

When Members opposite get up and talk about 54 school libraries closing, it is inaccurate. Please, I implore upon you, talk about things that are factual. Stop leading people down a certain road with inaccurate information. It does nothing to try to solve the problem that we have in this province and the problem of massive debt. I implore upon you to do that.

The Member for Mount Pearl North wants to change the Standing Orders in this House. I encourage that; Standing Orders are out of date. Now, I'm a new MHA. I'm learning this process, just like many of my colleagues. I agree that with the onset and use of social media, like Twitter and Facebook, that some of those things should be considered as we're talking about

Standing Orders and what's parliamentary good procedure in this House.

The Member for Mount Pearl North talks about the fact that he retweets something doesn't mean an endorsement. I'll give you an example of where that rhetoric changes. When I was a public servant, I can remember retweeting five different announcements, media releases. I can tell you that the Member for Mount Pearl North, who was the minister responsible for the Office of Public Engagement at the time, had the senior executive at his department call me in and chastise me because I had retweeted. His comment at the time was that was an endorsement by me.

If you can do it as a minister and say to an official, when I was an official in the department, that in his mind that constituted endorsement, how can you stand in this House and say that it's not a constitution of an endorsement? What hypocrisy. That's what's gone on all through the debate on this budget and the various bills. I encourage the people at home, please – I think Members opposite really don't give the people at home enough credit.

People in this province are extremely intelligent. They can see through that one day you'll say this, another day you'll say something else because it suits your political need. Please, it's been said in this House we can work together. I want to work together, just like the rest of my colleagues. Stop with the rhetoric. Stick to the facts.

We have a major problem in this province where we're trying to address the long-term deficit. We don't want to see the debt for every person going from \$24,000 to \$56,000. That is unfair to the people today. It is unfair to the people tomorrow. It is unfair to my daughter, to grandkids of many of the Members in this House and that has to change. Please keep the information accurate. Let's work together. Let's find a solution.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I am very happy to be back in this House and to be able to speak to Bill 14, the levy legislation, but also to the entire budget. After having been in this House for 24 hours straight, I did go home for a few hours last night to replenish myself, to get a little bit of rest so I could stand again and be effective to speak in this House on behalf of the constituents of the lovely, amazing, fantastic District of St. John's Centre and also to be able to speak on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are asking us to do so. They are asking us to do so through social media, through Twitter, through email, through phone calls.

I find it interesting that the Minister of Health and Community Services would disparage that approach when, in fact, this is the modernization of our House. We can actually have constituents from all over the province participate in full time, in real time, in this House of Assembly. Which is what this House of Assembly is all about: bringing the concerns and the voices of the people of the province to the floor of the House so that influences the legislation and the policies and the laws we make on behalf of the people. Not on behalf of this House, not on behalf of the Members in this House but on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, since I was away for a few hours, I'm so sorry I missed the intervention by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, who's the Member for Corner Brook. I'd like to proudly say I was born in Corner Brook. My mother was from Port Saunders. She was always so proud to say the Great Northern Peninsula, but I was born in Corner Brook and spent my first few months in Corner Brook – the glorious, lovely City of Corner Brook.

He stood last night and spoke in the House saying that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

I'm sure the good people of the province would like to hear what we might have to say about some of the goings on last night.

Now, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills said he believes that we need family-friendly timing and hours for the House of Assembly, but what he said is that night sessions are a bar to women entering politics. Now that might seem like an advanced thing to say; however, I would think, would not my male counterparts in this House also participate in child care, also participate in the running of their families and their households? Why would it be that family-friendly hours would only benefit women?

I would say that's really not an advanced, certainly not an advanced understanding of where we are today in terms of gender analysis. Actually, I find it quite surprising and somewhat offensive that it would be assumed that it's only women who are held back by late night sittings. You would have to extrapolate then that he was thinking that none of these men, none of my colleagues here in the House are responsible for the running of their households or the responsibility for the care of their children.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

It's a little noisy in the House.

Order Please!

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

So I would think that my male counterparts in the House would also be quite offended by this statement, because what's being insinuated by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills – who's not very advanced – I would think that my male counterparts would be insulted by that because he is insinuating that the men in this House are not taking their full responsibility in terms of their family obligations. So let's put that to rest.

I would think that, yes, we do need family-friendly hours in our House of Assembly. We

see that is the policy in a number of jurisdictions and we know that has –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Chair, I ask for your protection.

The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, I'd be happy when he gets up –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: I'd love to hear what he has to say about that.

Mr. Chair, when we look around this House there are only 10 women out of 40 representatives. Only 25 per cent of the MHAs in this House that have been elected are women. Here we are in the year 2016; it doesn't bode well for us.

Now there are 13 Members of Cabinet, and this government, unlike their federal counterpart who have made a commitment to have 50 per cent women in their Cabinet, this government, this provincial Liberal government has only three women in their Cabinet. Less than 25 per cent of their Cabinet is represented by women. I think that is absolutely regressive, incredibly regressive.

I believe the former administration, although they've had some very regressive policies, at least had a higher percentage of women in their Cabinet than what we see here today. I'm not quite sure, we need to do that math but it could very well be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: I would like to thank the women who are working very hard on behalf of the women of the province.

Mr. Chair, I have asked in this House repeatedly, I have asked the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who is also the Minister of Finance –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – I have asked her repeatedly, did she have a very concrete gender analysis done on the budget? Did she use a gender analysis tool? Because I believe that the women's policy – as a matter of fact, it is a policy that the Women's Policy Office be asked to apply a specific gender analysis tool to any legislation and policy before it comes to the House of Assembly.

I've asked her repeatedly and I haven't gotten a very clear answer or a very clear commitment about whether that actually happened with the budget. Aside from she said she's concerned about women, but I have asked for a very clear answer about the specific gender analysis tool that was used, when it was used, and I've also asked for a report of that gender analysis. So nothing has been forthcoming.

I see that we have Madam Chair in the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, who is now taking the Chair there. It's great to see a woman in that position. It's the first time in our history, and I say bravo to that.

I actually had to do an ATIPP request, and I've asked for a number of things in my ATIPP request. I asked for a copy of the specific gender analysis tool used by the Minister of Finance, by the Women's Policy Office, which is under the guidance of the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. I finally did get that. I believe this may be the most updated tool they have, which was published in 2003, 13 years ago. So I got this historic document that is available through the Women's Policy Office. The only way I could get it was to ATIPP it. So I do have it. It's called *Guidelines for Gender-inclusive Analysis*, published in 2003.

I also asked for any correspondence between government, Women's Policy Office, Cabinet, officials in the Status of Women, officials in the Finance Department, specifically around requesting a gender analysis of the budget before it was tabled in the House, or even subsequent to. So far I have received nothing. I've also asked for the report of the gender analysis tool that was written after the analysis of the budget was done. So far I have received absolutely nothing.

So I am asking the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who is also the minister responsible for finances of this province, to please table that information. She's asked us this morning to table any of the documents that we read from, which I'm happy to do. They are documents that have been sent to us, requests that have been sent to us from the people of the province who feel they're not being heard and they're not being listened to. That is the ultimate frustration they experience.

Because my time is running out, Madam Chair, next time I get up to speak I'm going to be talking a little bit about the specific negative impacts on women by this particular budget that the Minister of Finance, who is also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, has presented to this House on April 4, 2016. We know the analysis that was done – there's a gender lens analysis that was done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and that was done by the request of the local women's community and labour because I believe that in fact the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women hasn't done one.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

MR. HAGGIE: A point of order, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health and Community Services on a point of order.

MR. HAGGIE: Yes, 50(1), Madam Chair. Yesterday I made references in the House to the issue of stickers. A comment I made has been subsequently repeated and there's been some variations on it. I misspoke when I said the decision had been originally taken in September of 2015. It was, in actual fact, November of 2015. I wanted to correct the record. It had also been referenced as the fall. I just want to make sure there was no doubt in the official record of the House, and I apologize for having erred.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm delighted to respond to some of the comments that were offered by the Member for St. John's Centre. It's an interesting debate that we had last night. I want to correct for the record something very upfront.

There was an insinuation by the Member for St. John's Centre that these comments that I was stating were my own, that these are my views that I was imposing, and that these are values that are not consistent with others that take on the position of advocacy for women and women gaining a greater opportunity to run for office and succeed.

No, Madam Chair; what I said on the floor of the House last night, as I did the morning before and the night before that, was that there was a very interesting perspective that was offered by a female representative in this House, a former representative, a very successful representative by the name of Charlene Johnson, the former PC minister of Finance who came forward in a Facebook post about two weeks ago and this is the totality of the discussion that occurred.

While we were reading out Blue Jays scores and other things to fill up time during the course of this debate, I said why don't we enter into something very pertinent, which is the point of view of a young woman who has been very successful in politics, who had an idea about how to encourage more women to get into politics. This is what Charlene Johnson had to say and gave this information, this point of view to the entire world, to the public.

She said that evening sessions of the House of Assembly (a) are – and this is her point of view – expensive. They cost a lot of overtime and, from a budgetary point of view, should be reviewed as to whether or not they're the most efficient use of time. That's her point of view. No one should misconstrue that these were the reflections of my points of view. This was the point of view of a young woman who was a former finance minister, very successful and,

quite frankly, an opinion that was blocked for discussion in this House.

I offered an opportunity not only to the PCs, but to the NDP last night to come forward with a discussion about this. It was not accepted. Notwithstanding all of that, but here is what Charlene Johnson had to say for herself – and she was very clear about this – that given some of the duties that she felt she held, she felt it was a barrier to access for women getting into politics by some of the practices of the House, including late-night sessions. That's her opinion. If the hon. Member for St. John's Centre wants to refute that, refute it with Charlene Johnson.

Now, the second thing, there is a movement that's occurring in this country that the Member for St. John's Centre may not be aware of and that is that legislatures across the entire country are looking at more family-friendly practices to encourage, specifically, a group of people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BYRNE: – who feel disenfranchised or marginalized in the political process, to create family-friendly processes which would be a benefit to men, obviously; but, in particular, given the fact there are a group of people who are somewhat marginalized in the political process, women, that changing the Standing Orders, changing the rules of the House could be very, very helpful to encouraging more women to get active in politics.

These are not my words, Madam Chair. This is what's occurring in legislatures across the entire country. It's occurred in Queen's Park in Ontario. It's occurring in Nova Scotia. It's occurring in Manitoba and it's occurring in the Nation's Parliament right now.

Madam Chair, I will simply sort of recite a particular story that's occurring right now. This is something that appeared in *The Globe and Mail* not long ago. In *The Globe and Mail* it's reported that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask Members for their co-operation so the Chair can hear the speaker that's been recognized.

MR. BYRNE: – Prime Minister Trudeau has asked not only his own caucus, his own party, but the opposition parties to come together to form a basis as to how exactly they can make this process, the business of the legislature, more family friendly and, with a specific note, that by doing so, an enticement for more women to get involved in politics would result.

This is what's occurring – this is not a discussion that's going to be isolated to this Chamber right here right now because quite frankly, Madam Chair, you will hear information about this pouring out over the course of the next months. You will hear that often women feel – this is what's being reported to me, so do not take this that I am patronizing and suggesting that I'm imposing my views. This is the view that's occurring right across the country by leaders who are advocating for stronger involvement of women in the political process. Don't confuse and suggest that I'm imposing my views and this is my paternalistic view that I'm trying to impose. That's not correct.

What's happening in the Nation's capital right now is there is a movement, there is a general understanding or acceptance, not only by the Liberal Party of Canada but by the New Democratic Party and the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois that by changing the way the business of legislatures work, including the elimination of night sittings –

MR. JOYCE: And the Green Party.

MR. BYRNE: And the Green Party as well. Well, I won't be able to speak because I don't know that for sure, but it sounds consistent.

By changing the way the legislatures work in this country, by actually taking on a more family-friendly process, more people will want to get involved in politics, including men; but most specifically, where the greatest challenge lies, more women will want to come forward. There is a feeling that women carry much of the burden of family care. Men have an absolute responsibility in all of this – absolute

responsibility – and no one should try to marginalize or forgive or push away that responsibility. That's not the point. We have to reflect on reality here.

In order to encourage more women to get involved in politics, something has to change. The hon. Member for St. John's Centre will point out time and time again there is something broken here. What exactly is it that's broken? Why is it that more women are not stepping up and being successful in running for politics? There is obviously something broken here. So to just simply whistle past this and not do anything about it is irresponsible.

The national discussion at this point in time is that changes to the Standing Orders, changes to the rules as to how legislatures work, including the specific example that you will hear about soon, is making sure that votes do not occur past 6 p.m. Members of parliament get to go home to their families prior to the supper period and spend time with their families.

What is noted, it is irrefutable, what all the public discourse has said, is that will be one element that will encourage more family-friendly participation in public life. It will create a more family-friendly environment, but it will also be a direct incentive to encourage more women to become involved in public life.

I'm not going to speak to what exactly is the driving force behind that. I think the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre will be able to speak to that very well. All I know is that Charlene Johnson, the former PC finance minister, has said exactly that point. The women's caucus of the Liberal Party of Canada has said that exact same point. Other women's caucuses within the other national parties and other provincial parties have said that exact same point. So if it's not a valid point, I will accept that, if that is the argument that's coming forward; but I thought there would be a great opportunity, given the fact that this is on the national front of discourse, on the national debate, what an opportunity, but right now, here and now, to discuss it here instead of Blue Jays scores.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I hope that clarifies my position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I was so happy to hear that speech by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills. So I would hope that not only would his commitment to women by looking at our Standing Orders and how we can modernize the way we do business here in the House, I look forward to working with him to seeing how we can do that and how we can bring this forward to ensure the way we do business is more family friendly, and also looking at the ways we can ensure we have more representation by women here in this House. Again, only 25 per cent of the MHAs elected here to reflect our population are women – and 52 per cent of our population are women, yet only 25 per cent of our representatives in this House are women.

So I would also like to say to the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills again that I look forward to working with him to see how we can work together on these issues.

MR. BYRNE: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: I would also like to say – Madam Chair, I know the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills is very excited about this issue. He can't wait to get back up on his feet. Maybe he'll just wait and let me finish and I will listen to every word he says yet again so that we can have a very informed discussion and debate back and forth in this House.

Now, the other thing is that I hope then his passionate commitment that he has shared with us this morning about the need to have more women in the House and the need to have more family-friendly policies for the way we do business in this House will also extend to every policy decision, every piece of legislation and every program that he is in charge of in Advanced Education and Skills. Because there are a lot of programs and funding mechanisms that come under his jurisdiction that absolutely directly affect women and children in this province.

I am so looking forward to seeing him using his commitment to improve the status of women, to improve the lives of women in Newfoundland and Labrador. I'd so look forward to him extending that commitment, again, to every policy, every procedure, every program that comes under his jurisdiction. I also hope that any policy, procedure, legislation that he is responsible for that he will ask the Women's Policy Office to do a gender analysis before moving forward on it. I trust, because of his commitment that he has shared with us here this morning that, in fact, he will do that, and that's a good thing.

Now again, Madam Chair, the last time I spoke I referenced the issue of did the Minister of Finance, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, have a very concrete, specific gender-analysis tool applied to her budget before the budget was brought down. I keep asking for that information. Again, I had to ATTIP that. I still haven't received it. However, I did receive what came out of the Women's Policy Office in 2003, which is 13 years ago, and I imagine the research and the work that was done probably was 2002 and then published in 2003. I can't be sure about that, but these things take a long time to develop. Here we are in 2016, so that's a long time ago.

Perhaps it's been updated, but I've asked for the latest one and this is all that I received. Again, I haven't received any evidence yet of the gender analysis that was done on the budget and what kind of gender-analysis tool was applied to it and the report of that gender analysis that was done on the budget.

In light of the fact that it doesn't seem to have been done – and if I'm wrong, I would love to be corrected; I absolutely would love to be corrected. We have a Minister Responsible for the Status of Women who also happens to be the Minister Responsible for Finance. This should be a no-brainer. This should be an opportunity, in fact, for the Minister of Finance to be able to ensure that the budget does not disproportionately harm the women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What happened is that the good people at the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and also the incredible activists at

women's centres across the province got their heads together and talked about what they can do in the meantime because it doesn't appear that that analysis has been done. So they mandated; they asked to have a very clear gender-analysis lens put on the budget. Unfortunately, it's after the fact. We don't know if anything was done before the fact by this government.

They commissioned the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and I have that document here. I'd be happy to table it as well, Madam Chair, but usually it is Cabinet ministers who table documents. Anything that I have, I am willing to share with this House. I will start – I'm not going to have that much time, but I'll get up again and talk about it.

The researcher who did this analysis is Cyndi Brannen. She's a very qualified researcher, and I'll share a little bit about what she found when applying a gender lens to the budget.

She said budgets aimed at deficit reduction – which is what we have before the House right now, we have a budget that's aimed at deficit reduction, also at debt reduction – often disproportionately hurt the poor and working families. In particular, women, who typically earn less than men – and we know that women in Newfoundland and Labrador, on the average, earn \$4 an hour less than men in Newfoundland and Labrador. So she said women, who typically earn less than men and utilize more government services – women do utilize more government services because more women than men are often caring for families and children – they are negatively impacted.

Specifically, vulnerable women, such as lone mothers, seniors and first nations women – we haven't talked a whole lot about this in this House during this filibuster; I've attempted a few times – suffer the most when governments engage in drastic cutbacks in programs. We're seeing drastic cutbacks in programs. We have a whole list of fee increases, additional fees and cutbacks to programs.

I know, Madam Chair, you're seeing that in your own district, some of the trickle-down effects on cuts in programs and increases in fees in your own district. Again, all of us, everyone in this

House, have seen the effects on our particular constituents.

She goes on to say: Women in Newfoundland and Labrador already experience significant gender inequalities. For example, they earn, on an average, \$4 an hour less than men – and we know that. That's a significant difference in terms of what you would then take home in order to raise your family. Women in Newfoundland and Labrador have the lowest median income compared women in any other province. Wow, when you think of the past number of years where we had prosperity, when everybody was talking about the good times, that golden era, have not will be no more, that in fact Newfoundland and Labrador was in a time of prosperity, yet even in that time of prosperity that women in Newfoundland and Labrador have the lowest median income compared to women in any other province, that's amazing.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. ROGERS: It's the fault of the previous administration. Absolutely, I agree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. ROGERS: I saw something when there was an incredible woman activist who was looking specifically at the issue of continental Africa, but particularly looking at her country, and she said: my country in Africa is not poor, but it's poorly managed.

I believe that's what we're experiencing here in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have the most incredible reserve of natural resources in our waters, in our land, and in our people. So we are not a poor province but we are poorly managed, and that's the difference. It's how we are managed that is most effective.

The widespread cuts in programs will come with significant layoffs within education and the public service. Women with a decent income are more likely to work in these positions than in other areas.

Madam Chair, I see my time is running out. I look forward to getting back this document, to look at the specific ways that women are more disproportionately harmed by this budget and

what really needs to be done about it because this budget is really hard on women.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is certainly an honour to be here as part of the continuation of Monday or Tuesday, whenever it was.

AN HON. MEMBER: Tuesday.

MR. BROWNE: Tuesday; we're still into Tuesday.

It's a wonderful thing to be here. We got back 12:30 last night after a little break. We got some shut-eye and we're here ready to rumble. We might even just continue this on moving forward, Madam Chair, because we just have so much to say. My desk is full. I don't even know where to start.

I want to first start off by echoing the words of the Member for St. John's Centre, in that I believe we do need a lot of strong women in politics. I grew up around strong women. I had a wonderful mother who played prominent roles in her profession. I had two wonderful grandmothers; a mother of 13 children and a mother of six. So I had wonderful women role models in my life growing up.

I acknowledge that I believe we need more women in politics. I am certainly very happy to be part of a government where we have a strong female Finance Minister, a strong female Deputy Speaker and strong female Members of our caucus and Cabinet. I do, however, find it a little ironic that the Member for St. John's Centre gets up and regales against the government for having only three female Cabinet ministers. It was only last week the Member for St. John's Centre called on one of them to resign. It is the

heights of hypocrisy to be making these claims. She asked the Minister of Natural Resources to resign just days ago, but, of course, we don't have enough women in Cabinet.

In any case, we have other things that we need to discuss and with such little time, Madam Chair, we have to keep the conversation moving.

I referenced my two grandmothers, Madam Chair. One was in her 90s when she passed away, the other one was in her 80s. I have such a profound respect for the seniors of our province, certainly the seniors who are in my family and the seniors who I represent in my district. That is why I was very pleased we invested the \$76.4 million into the Seniors' Benefit.

For those watching at home, this was a means to improve the lives of seniors and those who are on low income. It's worth noting, Madam Chair, we had a resolution here in the House, a private Member's resolution that the entire Opposition voted against. They voted against the increases to the Seniors' Benefit and the Income Supplement. I was very upset by that. I was very upset by the fact they would not stand, even on one measure, to say this is a good thing. This is good for seniors in our province.

We know that Members opposite have made comments in the past. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune is on the record as saying that a seniors' advocate is a luxury. I just can't agree or come to terms with that.

Madam Chair, as I was sitting here listening to the debate over the last days I got thinking, and what came to mind was the overpayment to the seniors, the public pensioners, the 427 pensioners who were impacted by the overpayments over the years. I'm just curious as to whether or not the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune thought hiring a seniors' liaison to go out and investigate and recoup the money off seniors was a luxury or whether that was a necessary expenditure, to go out to seniors and try and rake the money off poor old seniors who, through no fault of their own, had been given this money.

Madam Chair, I have the contract right here in my hand. I will just read it into the record, a couple clauses of his contract: to investigate and

negotiate repayment schedules and related details for respective pensioners resulting in a final settlement of amounts owing and is directly responsible for making recommendations to the minister for each case; meet with pensioners and their professional advisors to provide information with respect to recovery requirements, processes and provide advice on how to arrive at alternate repayment arrangements.

This one, Madam Chair: reaches and recommends repayments and settlements in accordance with legislation, department policies and procedures, and as per the collections template provided by the Departments of Finance.

Madam Chair, this contract is exhaustive. It obviously took quite a bit of time to put together. There was quite a bit of effort put together by the past administration to go and collect this money, rake it in off the seniors, Madam Chair, who through no fault of their own, were overpaid. Madam Chair, it says he reports directly to the minister. The former Minister of Finance at the time and the individual who they hired was sitting on his district association, the PC District Association.

This is the treatment of seniors by the past administration, Madam Chair. I'm ashamed. I was ashamed then, I'm ashamed now, and here I have to stand in this House of Assembly and recount such details. It's absolutely despicable that we will stand in the House of Assembly and hear comments that a seniors' advocate to protect them, to protect seniors is a luxury but paying money out to a Member of a PC District Association, Madam Chair, that's not a luxury, that's a necessity, to rake money off the poor seniors who through no fault of their own were overpaid.

Perhaps had we had a seniors' advocate in this province it would have prevented a sitting government from going out and taking measures, expending money from the public purse to pay a PC Member to go out and take money off seniors, Madam Chair. I find it reprehensible.

I might be the youngest Member of the House, but I have a profound respect for seniors,

Madam Chair. I just cannot sit here and listen to the hypocrisy that I'm hearing every single hour of debate in this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: Madam Chair, they can heckle all they want. They won't shut me up. I'm going to stand up for the seniors I represent and I'm telling you I will put it into the record that I am a firm advocate for seniors.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: Madam Chair, before my time expires I want to move on to another topic because as I have said, my desk is full. I want to discuss the ferries. I know I've spent a lot of time in this House educating Members and certainly educating the people who are watching at home about my district. I have such a wonderful district, Madam Chair. It's the industrial heartland of the province encompassing so much industry. One of them is the Marystown Shipyard. Currently we are working very hard and diligently to make sure we have sustainable and continued employment in that shipyard.

I want to talk about the ferries in Romania, the ferries that were supposed to go to Fogo Island and Change Islands and Bell Island. As we know, the lemon called the *MV Veteran* is down in the harbour now. It hasn't worked since they got it. They paid a barrel of money for this.

Madam Chair, what gets me about the ferries is the fact that they didn't even do their homework so much as to factor in the cost of the tariffs. It's very clear –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune that I've called order several times. I'm having difficulty hearing the speaker even though he's next to me.

When I recognize a speaker – I know it's the fourth day and we're agitated and tired, but

when I recognize I ask other Members to respect the person who is on their feet.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We know the nerves are frayed and they're tired and it's absolutely excusable, Madam Chair. Me and the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, we have a great relationship. We're both rural Members. I think we work very well together, but we're very frank and honest with each other. I think that's a very good sign that in this House we can come and debate and have our differences, but at the end of the day be able to work together.

I want to get back to the ferries, Madam Chair. I want to reference the trip that the former Minister of Transportation made over to Romania at a cost of \$10,000 – \$10,000 in July of 2015 to launch the *MV Legionnaire* that we still haven't seen, because we're so occupied and busy dealing with the lemon that is the *MV Veteran* sitting down in the harbour. They spent \$10,000 to go over there. I'm just curious as to what insight or planning – or foresight, I should say, went into the purchase of these ferries and why.

The work should have, in my opinion, at least been given the opportunity to happen here in Newfoundland and Labrador. It could have benefited my district. It could have had money right back into the local economy. Instead, it seemed the former administration was content to shove \$25 million out the door, because they didn't do their homework, or perhaps they did their homework and they just didn't care. I don't know. The former Minister of Transportation will have to answer for that.

He was adamant at the time that he was going to get these tariffs relieved because BC had a ferry that sunk. As an emergency measure the federal government excused and exempted them from the tariffs, and on that justification planned approach to get new ferries meant that because the BC ferry sunk that we were going to get the tariffs relieved as well. Well, they weren't

successful. In fact, the Finance Minister, federally, at the time wrote to the minister of the day to say I cannot recommend removal of the tariff. Such a move would undermine the duty remission framework.

What happened, Madam Chair? It's so obvious what happened. Since taking office, as I've said, we've been so busy and occupied – the Minister of Transportation has been so occupied dealing with the lemon that is the *MV Veteran*. What did we have to do? We had to go to our federal partners in Ottawa, the hon. Judy Foote, the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, as well as our six other MPs who are doing a terrific job, and say, can we work with you? We just took office; we thought it was a \$1.1 billion deficit – today that number will be \$2.7 billion – we're having financial difficulties. Poor planning, no homework was done, no foresight, no planning, can you help us relieve these tariffs.

Madam Chair, I am happy to report to members watching at home that we were successful in that. So that is money we can now invest into this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BROWNE: I can tell you – and, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I'm not done yet. I can tell you that I am going to advocate that the money that would have been put out for ferries be reinvested in the industry right here in this province. That's a commitment that I make to work in any way, to put people back to work.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I don't envy you your job this morning, having to deal with some of the Members opposite starting to get silly now. Some of them are a little insulting in their heckling, but that's okay. We rise above all of that, and we appreciate

they're under a lot of stress with the CRA poll coming out later today. So that's quite all right.

Now, Madam Chair, the only thing I'm going to say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. HAGGIE: A point of order.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much for your protection.

The only thing I'm going to say –

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Health and Community Services on a point of order.

MR. HAGGIE: Yes, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I believe I heard the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune utter remarks to this side of the House that could be regarded as unparliamentary. I don't wish to repeat them.

CHAIR: I didn't hear the remarks, I say to the hon. Minister.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Like I said, I appreciate that Members are getting tired, but we certainly have a lot of fuel over on this side of the House, Madam Chair, because we're speaking on behalf of the people and we're receiving great encouragement from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm quite proud to stand here and represent their views and actually listen, not just say we're listening, Madam Chair, but demonstrate by our actions that we are indeed listening.

The only counter comment I'm going to have there now, to the Member for Placentia West talking about Bell Island. Well, they certainly do deserve a ferry, the fine folks of Bell Island. Perhaps the next time he gets up on his feet he

can tell us why the Minister of IBRD went to Nashville and what benefits that's bringing to the province, Madam Chair.

Now, I also want to go back. There was something said in this House that concerns me. It concerns me from the point of view of democracy and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and what they are entitled to as citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador from their elected officials and from their government.

It was the Member, Madam Chair, from Terra Nova who spoke up and said that he defended some of his actions by saying because he's on the government side he can meet with ministers and officials. Now, what is he saying? Is he saying that government ministers and officials will not meet with the Opposition? I beg to differ, that is absolutely not true.

I have to give credit where credit is due; there are some great ministers over there. They indeed do speak to the Opposition and they indeed are fair to all citizens of the province. He would have you believe, Madam Chair, that you have to be on the government side to be able to get a meeting with a minister or a government official, which is absolutely inaccurate. I would say that we are equally as able, if not better in some cases, to achieve things for our district because we don't have any lines to toe. That's a counter challenge I'd put to what he's saying over there.

I have even seen on Facebook some reaction to that commentary this morning, Madam Chair. Someone else is referring to another Member opposite who has recently stated in the media that they feel by being a Member of the government side that they are going to be treated better by government, by people living in an Opposition district. I truly hope that's not the case. It's something we will definitely closely monitor.

As I said, I do feel like my district was disproportionately hit by Central Health but I fully expect that to balance itself out in the next round of cuts. If it's not, then we certainly will be taking issue if Members of any Opposition district are treated unfairly or get less or unable to have a meeting than what a district in the

government is because that is absolutely something that flies in the face of democracy, Madam Chair. I don't know what they're being told, but for some of the new Members to be standing up in this House or talking to media and saying you have to be on the government side to get more, that's a scary situation for Newfoundland and Labrador.

So that's all I have to say about what's been going on in the House for the last hour. I'm going to move the conversation back, Madam Chair, to some positive things, because there are positive things. The doom and gloom message that is being portrayed is one that I don't think is fair to Newfoundland and Labrador because Newfoundland and Labrador does indeed have great potential and I think that is what we need to be talking about, not just to each other but to the country and around the globe.

I'm going to use the example, in my District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, of agriculture as an example of successful diversification that has completely rejuvenated a rural remote area. A \$30 million investment by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has generated over \$200 million in new money from the private sector that has come to our province because we had the vision to diversify.

Many of you may know we had some rough times in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. When FPI closed – we had one of the last three plants – it was absolutely devastating in Harbour Breton. Many of you may have seen some of their stories on the news because many of them were carried, and people in tears really not knowing what their future held.

A few years later, Madam Chair, we had the same experience happen in Hermitage. What did our government do; our companionate, understanding government? We stood by these communities. We were there to provide the programs and supports needed to transition the people over a period of two to three years while the aquaculture industry was being developed. At the end of the day, today, both plants are reopened; operating full-time, year-round; along with a third plant in the community of St. Alban's; all flat out, working to process the farmed fish that is grown in aquaculture.

A real success story and one that can be duplicated all across this province in areas where it is possible to grow fish, because of course growing fish just can't be done anywhere, particularly salmon. They can't live in waters that exceed a temperature of below -1.6 I believe it is because that's lethal for them. They wouldn't survive in waters that cold. So not every part of Newfoundland can grow fish but for those areas that can, it's absolutely an industry that we should be exploring, Madam Chair.

One of the things about the aquaculture industry is here we are today with a number of companies and the interest continues. We know that more companies are still looking at Newfoundland and Labrador.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. PERRY: Absolutely.

I am somewhat concerned, given that *Budget 2016* has totally destroyed the climate for encouraging businesses that they may have to delay their decisions until such time as taxes are more reasonable in this province, but certainly the interest is there. The recognition that in Newfoundland and Labrador you can successfully farm fish and you can successfully be a competitive player in the global industry. So it bodes very well for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am pleased our new minister likes the industry. It certainly is refreshing. I'm confident he will do everything he can to support the industry. I certainly thank you for that. I thank you, Mr. Minister, for meeting with me and addressing the concerns of the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. I certainly trust that you will treat my district very fairly, despite the fact that my people had the wisdom to vote for me in the last election. I tell you, the number of emails I've gotten saying, thank God, I did has done my heart well. I think I'll stay around for a while.

Madam Chair, another thing that I say is thank God, thank God, that there are some of us in Opposition because for a while the pundits and the media were reporting we were probably going to be wiped out. Well, who would have

been the voice for the people, my heavens above?

In fact I think a government that is truly going to work in the best interest of the people – minority governments can't get away with doing whatever it wants whether people like it or not. Sometimes I've often wondered if you had a government where the government side – in our case we have 40 Members. So if we had 21 or 22 on the government side, whatever government was, whether it was Liberal, NDP or Progressive Conservative, then we'd have a much fairer balance of power.

I think, in that case, you would actually see success. You wouldn't see a government on one hand taxing its people to death and continuing to spend, yet saying the problem is overspending but increases new expenditures like the seniors' advocate office. They are going to put \$500,000 on the table for someone else they are not going to listen to; that's what I don't understand.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I certainly appreciate the chance to stand and take part in this debate. Throughout the debate, Madam Chair, we've seen Members across the way in the Opposition, the unaffiliated Member, the NDP, rise on many, many occasions and not so much talk but read emails. Certainly the emails are appreciated.

As the debate goes on – and I'm glad this filibuster is going into lengthy hours and extended hours because what the people in the province are starting to see over the last 24 to 36 hours is the message that is coming from government that's not covered with a doom and gloom lens that is put on it by the Opposition. We've gotten our share of emails as well. The emails are in total contrast to what we've been hearing from across the way.

I'd like to read a few, for the record, just to tell the people of the province that we appreciate that they're taking the time to listen to what we're saying, that they're finally seeing what we're saying. The Opposition and the NDP can't cover up the facts any longer – not in this forum. So we appreciate the length this filibuster is taking and that it's allowing the people of the province to finally see the facts and the truth as it comes out. So we appreciate the longer this goes, Madam Chair, it certainly gives us more opportunity to get the facts out there and to eliminate some of the doom and gloom that's being put on this budget.

In saying that, what we've heard from the Opposition and from the NDP and from the unaffiliated Member is, yes, we do have a problem; yes, we do have a serious spending problem. The Member for St. John's North admitted, finally, we have a spending problem. So we're starting to get our points out there, which are more factual, and it's not a magnification of the impacts. We realize that there are impacts. So I just thought I'd share a couple of emails that we got on this side. Like the hon. Members across the way, we went through them; we made sure we wouldn't be creating any controversy.

A note to congratulate you for your ability to say things simply. Whenever we spend \$1,000, we are borrowing \$250. Such a very clear way to communicate the absence of sustainability. Also, the Premier's point about galloping debt and where the province will be in a few short years if we don't tame spending. Years back, I was struck by a premier from Saskatchewan who said if we want strong social programs, we can't run large deficits. That premier is now NDP.

Here's another one: I feel that it is important to contact you and let you know that while I am not in favour of everything in the budget, I defend the responsibility that you have to make these extremely tough decisions for the future of our province. The protestors are loud in their protests, but they have not articulated any alternatives to get us out of this fiscal mess.

My husband and I have talked to many people who are in agreement that grave action has to be taken to address the debt. Many people who agree with the tough stand you have taken are

solid in their support of you, but you should know that there are many of us out there. You and the Premier answer challenging questions and explain many of your decisions. I hope that you and all Members of government will continue to communicate the message that supports your decisions, as I trust these decisions are necessary to create a viable future for Newfoundland and Labrador in hopes that things improve.

These messages are coming in as a result of this filibuster, as a result of the government having the opportunity to set the record straight. There are lots of them. We could stand up for another 48, 50 hours and do the same thing that the Opposition did. We could stand up and start reading these. Maybe we ought to continue with the filibuster.

Just one more before I carry on. I'm grateful you reflected, listened and engaged and acted in an appropriate manner. I know it is not easy to govern in tough economic times. I support you in these days.

These are just a few of the emails we're getting, Madam Chair. I thought I'd share it, like I said, because the people are starting to see the government's position based on the fiscal reality that we've inherited as a government, the \$2.27 billion deficit.

With that, I'd just like to take into account some of the information we heard. I listened to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands talk about screening his emails and making sure that information comes out that is non-parliamentary. I really appreciate that.

Sometimes, Madam Chair, we steal off for a few hours to have a nap. I think I've had maybe 10 hours in the last 60. I have to single out the Member for Mount Pearl North who strategically waited until I left to come up with a message, that if he doesn't retract I'm going to suggest that he condones. I don't want to read it all because it just makes my blood boil, Madam Chair. I will read part of it, though: just because he comes from an area of Labrador where basic services is a luxury – just because he comes from Labrador where basic services is a luxury.

I was so proud of my hon. colleague the Member for Labrador West who was here, and I think my hon. colleague from Lake Melville was also here and listened to this last night and my colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. We find this very offensive, borderline discriminatory. We come from an area that doesn't have a lot of things that some people are complaining about. We'd love to have them. We would pay for them, gladly, but, Madam Chair, to come out in such a derogatory endorsement of this – I will give the Member for Mount Pearl North ample time to retract, to apologize to the people of Labrador, because if this is an indicator of where this government is, then we have gone so far back in our respect of the Aboriginal community.

We heard the Member for St. John's Centre, we've heard the Opposition talk about: waive the link for Labrador, we don't need it. Why? Is it because it's outside the Overpass, I wonder?

They're asking us to give them examples of diversification. A classic example, tourism would be so much at the forefront as a revenue generator. They don't want to see it, Mr. Chair. They do not want to see it.

Like I said, we're glad this filibuster is ongoing, but we're proud of the Aboriginal component of this province. The Member for Mount Pearl North needs to apologize to the Inuit in Labrador. He needs to apologize to the Innu in Labrador. He needs to apologize to the Southern Labrador NunatuKavut Community Council for insulting remarks he made last night. He can't hide behind the fact that it wasn't me who said it. He stood up in this House and he read it.

We've all heard that once you enter statements like this in Hansard, the speaker who said it is the person responsible for it. Like I said, I will give the Member ample time to retract. I expect nothing less than an unequivocal apology to the Aboriginal people in Labrador.

We're proud, Mr. Chair. We've had an Inuit group that fought for 35 years to get a land claims settlement. They got it. We have the Innu Nation that has an agreement in principle. Mr. Chair, they took a stand, but to listen to the Member for Mount Pearl North try to bring us back 30 years by saying stuff like this, it is

unacceptable. I encourage him – the same as my hon. Member for Labrador West – to stand on his feet, and I will give him ample time to do it, and apologize for the derogatory, discriminatory garbage that he tabled last night.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Bragg): Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand on my feet once again to speak to the budget. Over the last little while I've seen the debate go in all kinds of directions. I suppose to some degree that's good, but we are really supposed to be here talking about the budget, but there were a few remarks made that I did want to comment on.

One issue I want to comment on, and it was almost – a couple of Members now have referenced it over the last few hours, the whole concept about us reading letters, point of order and so on, and I understand. As I said, I have filtered mine as best I can as I'm reading them. It's not my intention, I want to be totally respectful and I filter the emails I'm reading. If I slip up with a word here and there, call me on it and I'll apologize. There's no issue there.

The tone and the sense I'm getting – because there have been a number of ministers who have talked about this. I'm getting the impression, and I can be corrected by ministers, or anyone if I'm wrong, but I'm kind of getting the impression, because it's been kind of continuous, that you don't want us doing it at all. Now, that's the impression I get. You don't want us doing it at all. We're only speaking for the people. This is a democracy, and we were all elected by the people.

I think it's wonderful that we have a vehicle now whereby people, as long as it's done in a respectful manner, that the people can communicate through their representatives to be able to put their concerns on the table, to be able to put their opinions on the table to offer their

suggestions. I just don't like the tone of where some of the conversation has been going. It seems to imply, somehow, that this shouldn't happen. We shouldn't be doing it.

I can tell you, I will remain respectful, but if anybody thinks for one second that I'm not going to continue to convey the message from the people who elected me, I can tell you now, that's not going to happen. I will continue on as long as the people want me to continue on, because at the end of the day this is not my House, it's not your House, it's the people's House.

I also wanted to make mention there, and the Minister of Health and Community Services, when he was up speaking. Again, because he referenced me I will mention it. I almost felt like I was being preached to somehow, or scolded or chastised because I'm actually speaking out on the budget, and because I'm reading out emails I'm getting from the people.

I don't know if he wants to go back to the dark ages where everybody bows down to the king and the king throws a few crumbs out to all us poor serfs, and then if we don't say hail to the king we're going to be sent to the gallows or something. I'm not sure if that's what he wants to go back to, but as far as I know we live in Canada. We're in a democracy. So that's the impression that's being given, and I'm not going to be preached down to, somehow, to say that I'm doing something wrong by conveying the message that the people are giving to me. That's what I was elected to do. I'm going to continue to do so. I will continue to read emails and as far as the budget goes, yes –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Absolutely. I say to the Member for Lab West, you read those emails, absolutely, when it's your turn. Mr. Chair, when it's his turn, he can read emails, absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: Absolutely, that's parliamentary procedure. That's democracy.

When it comes to the budget, the Minister of Health and Community Services was talking about the fact that we were somehow trying to negotiate the budget. I say to the minister, yes, we are, absolutely. We are trying to negotiate this budget. I'm not going to apologize for trying to negotiate this budget. For trying to get somebody over on that side to say we're going to have a second look at some of these things that you've imposed on people. That people are saying they're not prepared to accept. I don't apologize for saying I'm going to stay here all day today and all day tomorrow and I'll be here until next week, if necessary, until you invoke closure. That's it.

Until the people tell me not to do it, I'm going to continue to do it. Yes, I say to the Minister of Health and Community Services, I do expect government to listen to what we are saying, to listen to what the people are saying and to make some changes. Yes, that is why we are here. That's why we're filibustering. That's the reason why we're doing it.

I don't know if the thought process is – because I know it's kind of the way the system works. Some people believe that's the way the system should work that you elect a government, democratically, but then you have a four-year dictatorship. That the government does whatever it feels like doing and how dare you speak up. How dare you protest? How dare you expect change or negotiation? How dare you do that? How dare anybody say I can't do it or suggest I can't do it?

I say to the Member for Terra Nova who's chattering about it – and he was up speaking. He referenced the fact that I was talking about libraries. Listen, I have a library in Mount Pearl and the library in Mount Pearl, thank goodness, was not touched. But then again, it is very, very well used, heavy volume of users. The City of Mount Pearl owns the building and they maintain it inside and out and they lease it to the province for \$1.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: I'm prepared as a taxpayer, a municipal taxpayer, to pay to have that library. I am prepared to do that. But at the end of the day, I'm getting emails and stuff from people in other

districts who want their libraries saved. The message has been that all these libraries are cut. I will say, in fairness, to the Member for Terra Nova, you are saying the libraries are not cut because it's in the school. But you said there's nobody to staff it. So that's still an issue. That would still be an issue, and I hope you resolve it. I really, sincerely hope you get that resolved.

AN HON. MEMBER: Like every other library.

MR. LANE: Well, not every other library. Some libraries are in schools and some are not. But I hope they do it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I guess all that was being suggested is that, as one example, if you have \$30 million in a contingency fund, which we've never had, make it \$29 million and you save all the libraries. Make it \$27 million and you save the libraries and you stop taxing books.

And the education cuts, how many times do we have to talk about that? As a matter of fact, that's costing you money. The minister said it's going to cost us \$13 million, or \$13.1 million or whatever it is.

AN HON. MEMBER: Three.

MR. LANE: Okay, \$13.3 million, to be accurate, to implement full-day kindergarten. We all agree that full-day kindergarten is a good thing, but do you do that and at the same time you have children that are in school now with special needs that are not getting the resources they need; multigrading, jamming kids into a classroom with two teachers and 28 kids into a little space that possibly basically meets the fire code; environments that are not ideal for learning. Do we implement full-day kindergarten at the expense of those programs and those children?

Those are questions that we have. Those are options. Those were choices that were made. And all people are saying is revisit some of the choices. Then, you look at the taxation. I've said it over and over again, but I don't know if anybody's listening. They're hearing, but are they listening? Because with all the taxation, you are going to drive some people – not all

people – to financial ruin, people that are just surviving paycheque to paycheque. And that's not minimum wage people – it could be minimum wage people, but it's not necessarily.

I've read emails from people. I've had people in my district, other Members have, who have decent jobs, but they've got big student loans, they've got big mortgages, they're paying high municipal taxes, they've got vehicles, they've got kids, and they are struggling – they are struggling. The taxes they're going to have to pay could put them over the edge. That's not to say everybody is going to be put over the edge. Can some people absorb it? Yes, they can but some can't. Even those who can absorb it, because they have expendable income, now you're going to take away their expendable income – what's that going to do for the economy? What's that going to do for business?

It was the Premier who said that a 2 per cent hike in HST was a job killer, but somehow a 2 per cent HST hike, plus gas, plus income tax, plus a levy, plus every fee known to man, plus the insurance is not a job killer. Square that circle for me. Somebody explain to me how that works. Nobody has been able to explain it.

I'm not the economist. Somebody who is, stand up and tell me how you justify that and how that works.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Minister for Justice and Public Safety.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to stand here and speak to this particular bill. To be quite honest, I can't recall if it's Bill 14 or 19. It's all blended together. I think people get the gist of why we are here. We are here in this House doing what is called a filibuster. A filibuster is a recognized legislative tactic, not just here in this Legislature; it's used in virtually every legislature that derives from the Westminster system. We've seen them on TV. We've seen them in person. So that's why we're today.

I guess the negative side of any filibuster is that it carries some detrimental effects, personally, to individuals when you get into sleep deprivation and things like that. So I'll apologize in advance if my commentary may be at times disjointed and all over the place.

I'm going to make one comment to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands. If I'm wrong, I'm sure he'll correct me, but I think I heard during his last speech saying something about a dictatorship. He said a four-year dictatorship.

MR. LANE: I said the system.

MR. A. PARSONS: The system. Well, I'm going to respectfully disagree with the Member that this is not a dictatorship no matter who's in power. This is not a dictatorship. A dictatorship is a completely different thing. I'm willing to bet there is not a single person in here – I'm hoping – who has ever had to live in a dictatorship. I think of something different.

MR. LANE: You know what I mean.

MR. A. PARSONS: No, I don't know. The Member says I know when he means. I don't. We're throwing out words that people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: I've had constituents who have actually lived through that type of system and it's a lot different than what we have. We do have disagreements. We often disagree on many things, but that's the nature of this system. So I just wanted to put that out. I think it needs to be put on the record, but I'm going to leave that alone.

What I want to talk about is something that has come up a few times in this House over the last number of hours and that is the Standing Orders. Again, somebody might say, well, that's not pertinent to the debate which we're talking about. Well, there's been a lot of stuff said over the last four days that's absolutely inane and not pertinent to this debate, but that's the nature of a filibuster. I've seen filibusters where people have stood up and read the telephone book. That's one of the things that can happen, but I

think what I have to say is pertinent to the operation of this House as we deal with this process.

The Standing Orders, for people that are not aware, are the rules that govern this House. All Members have a little book – I can't remember how many exactly there are, there are quite a few. They're historical, they're dated. Unfortunately, in this province right now in this Legislature they're completely out of date and need revision. The good news is that one of the things I've been mandated to do by the Premier is to update the Standing Orders, and I'm looking forward to doing that.

What I'm going to do at this point is probably share some of the ideas that I've had. I'm glad to say I've already had discussions obviously with my colleague, the Deputy House Leader, and I think I've actually reached out to Members on the opposite side to talk about what I'd like to see done. I know I've reached out in other ways that are not necessarily Standing Orders, more to deal with legislative, how we handle things on – things that were never done, certainly when I was on the other side. Just to reach out and talk about legislation, amendments and things like that.

The Standing Orders govern this House and they are outdated. They haven't been revised in some time. Now I think one of the debates that occurred here today, tonight, yesterday, has been about some commentary made by a former PC minister. I'm allowed to say her name is Ms. Charlene Johnson.

Let me start off by saying I knew Charlene Johnson before both of us ever got in politics. Charlene Johnson is a friend. She is someone I've known, and certainly when we were sitting on opposite sides I can tell you sometimes it felt that that friendship goes to the side. That's the nature of this House. It's adversarial, but when you get out of this you go back. The fact is everybody in this House is here for a reason and it's to serve their constituents, and disagreements and arguments come with that.

Do you know what? I know Ms. Johnson has put forward some ideas. I'm actually looking forward to considering those ideas, as I'm looking forward to considering the ideas of all

Members as we move forward and try to update and make this Legislature more functional to better serve the people. I think everybody has an interest in that and everybody here has had their experiences, whether it's just in the last three months in their first session or many individuals in this House. The Speaker is a long serving Member. In fact, the Opposition House Leader has actually been in here close to 10 years now. He's got a lot of experience in here. So I look forward to that.

The one thing I would say is that sometimes it frustrates me, though. I put this to Charlene, and maybe she might reach out and chide me for this, but sometimes it gets frustrating when these ideas come after you've been in here and had time to make those changes. That's the frustrating part, is that government was in power for 12 years and had an opportunity to make those changes. We're not talking about changes that are political in nature, it's legislative in nature. It's about how the House operates. Most people really don't know the day to day. I had no idea until I came in how it works.

Sometimes that frustrates me, is when the ideas come after you've been in a position to effect change. The good news is we are in a position now to effect change, and we are going to effect change. I'm going to make sure that happens. I've been mandated to do it, but I look forward to those ideas. The fact is a lot of things – in fact, if you look at the simple things like quorum, which given the fact that I may be a little bit rattled, this Legislature has decreased in numbers from 48 to 40 just in the last year, but the quorum has stayed the same. That's something that needs to change.

We look at our sessions. Now there's no actual legislative rule that when you sit traditionally – there is a calendar in the back of the Standing Orders. Traditionally, this House sits in the spring, which is the budget session, and in the fall, which is generally a more heavy legislative session.

I actually brought forward a private Member's resolution back in 2012 – because that's when we first got elected. In October of 2011, the government of the day, the administration, many of them sitting across, didn't open the House. There were a lot of reasons given at the time.

Many were offensive. One of them was: we don't think the quality of debate is there and, well, we didn't have much of a legislative agenda to put forward – which I found amazing at the time. So I proposed a private Member's resolution to mandate somewhat of a sitting schedule, allowing flexibility though, knowing you have to have that flexibility. That was voted down resoundingly by the government of the day. It was a heated day. I can remember it quite clearly, and I can remember the previous Government House Leader. That was a heated day.

Why can't we change that? Why can't we change? Why does it have to be those two sessions? Why can't we have – again, the sessions, sometimes, in many cases they start – and I've seen people online talking about sometimes the nature of it is that when we start, especially the fall session, it can get quite close to Christmas, and there's a pressure on people. Because, you know what, there is a pressure when you're here.

I can remember in 2012 we had the filibuster on Muskrat Falls. We adjourned this House – I think it might have been December 23. I have to tell you, when you're in here five days, day and night, it's tough. At that time my child was two years old, and I had Members on the other side calling out to me saying you're not going to get home this Christmas. I hope you enjoy your Christmas down here. That was tough, that was hard. I've been through that. I won't put any Member through that. That was really hard.

I guess what I'm saying is, why do we have to set it up so that that happens? Why can't we start the House earlier? Why can't we have more than two sessions? Why can't we change the sitting days? One thing I'd like to do – again, these are just ideas. I don't know if they'll happen but one idea is I like the House of Commons system where the session is actually longer because I think they sit two or three weeks and then have a break. They have a constituency week. That's an opportunity for Members to give back.

MS. ROGERS: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Oh, I'm getting to that. I say to the Member for St. John's Centre, she's offering out suggestions which I agree with.

Why don't we have an ability to go back to our constituencies and have that opportunity to talk about legislation or pertinent issues of that day? Why can't we do that?

I know there are some people saying, well, why don't you sit Friday and why don't you sit longer. I would suggest that we are elected to represent our constituencies, and many of us live a long distance away. I don't think there is a cost to that by having a Friday but there's a cost personally and there's a cost to your job, the ability to do your job.

One thing that was brought forward was the Member for St. John's Centre's committees. Do you know what? We're going to make it happen. We are going to make that happen.

Now, I've had some Members say – and I don't appreciate you saying – why don't we have legislative committees. I say we've only been here six months. We do have a four-year mandate, and it will happen. We have to make it happen, but I don't want to rush it and have something that doesn't work.

There's the ability I believe – and I've taken the opportunity to talk to staff, to talk about pilot projects. Let's try something to see if it works. If it doesn't work, let's modify it.

When we talk about this House – and I know this is a bit off the topic of the budget but we are talking about the House and the effect, so I wanted to take an opportunity to speak about that. I may get another opportunity throughout this course to discuss it again. I appreciate the patience of those listening to me.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to get up again. During my time this week I have used the opportunity to speak on a number of different topics. We've had some interesting times in the House in the past week. I always try to find

something of benefit or useful while I'm up to mention. Some people will say it's not useful and many will, but that's to each person's decision if they find it beneficial or something they haven't heard before or something new.

This morning I talked about the impact of oil in other provinces in Canada, in other jurisdictions and how the federal government could use equalization to equalize the level of taxation and services for the people of the country and how some of that could work. I've talked about schools and education.

Yesterday I talked – a couple of times actually – about how the new Paradise High School has been deferred indefinitely. Villanova Junior High extensions, there is phase one and phase two had been planned, both deferred indefinitely; the Paradise new five-to-eight school deferred for two years.

These are very much needed schools, considering last night I talked about how there has been 3,000 new homes built in Paradise from 2009-2015. So in a six-year period, 3,000 new homes built. Right now, there are only elementary schools in Paradise so students, when they move on, if they're in the east end of Paradise they go to Mount Pearl. If they are west end, they go to Conception Bay South through Villanova and Holy Spirit. Villanova is one of the extensions needed because of the demand.

The other problem with Mount Pearl is that Southlands students and growing population now also goes to Mount Pearl for school. That's becoming a crunch area as well because of the growth from Southlands and Paradise converging in Mount Pearl which is geographically, as you drive, in between the two of them. So that impacts on my district and the schools in my district and the families in my district.

Paradise, arguably, is probably the fastest growing area in the province. Today, there continues to be a huge amount of construction ongoing in Paradise. I drove through some new subdivisions last week and was through some of the new streets that were recently developed and opened up this year and so on. To see that activity, even though our economy is where it is, construction activity is still very, very brisk. Yet,

the government has decided to delay the extensions to Villanova, have deferred the Paradise five-to-eight middle school for two years and indefinitely the new high school, when it's a pressure area. In a few years' time, young families come in, they have quite often new families, newly married couples, some seniors and so on, but a lot of these new areas bring in these young families with young students who need a place to go.

The other thing I've talked about as well and it has been talked about in the House here a number of times during the debate is how, when we were in power and we were in government, we'd make – what the governing Liberals like to talk about – tough decision, make hard decisions. I remember how Members opposite would constantly and regularly criticize us for it not being enough, going in the wrong direction.

I remember a couple years back in 2013 – and I never agreed with just laying off mass numbers of people and I don't think it's beneficial for doing so. We did it back then. When I became Premier, I said I wasn't going to do it because I didn't agree with it and we continued with an attrition plan. I remember Members opposite and Members of the Third Party, the Member for St. John's Centre, criticizing us saying we shouldn't lay off people. In a great world, no, you shouldn't. Last year, I decided we wouldn't. We would use an attrition plan.

My point is government would come in and say, no, don't do that. We want you to increase spending and do it often. They stood here, much like we do, bringing in petitions on a regular basis on behalf of people of the province. They've done it as well. Members opposite who are there now, many of them on the front bench in Cabinet ministers, would come and bring petitions to the House saying we want this done. This should be something the government should do.

For example, the current Minister of Finance had brought in a petition in the last couple of years – I have a number of them here over the last session last year and some in the year before – wanted funding for literacy programs. She brought in a petition to make literacy a priority by supporting the development of a robust provincial strategic literacy plan to address the

learning and literacy of individuals from early years through to senior years. We know that the government this year now has put more children in classrooms, they've reduced Intensive Core French opportunities for students and that is going to impact the students, and it's a reduction seen by many. Educators as well, by the way, teachers, families and parents all believe this is a reduction in service.

We saw a number of them bring in a petition, with our without the completion of the work of the electoral boundaries, to make sure that there was an election held in 2015. That took place. Improve the condition of Green's Harbour West Side Road, there was one brought in by the now Minister of Fisheries. He brought in several on roads and on cellphone coverage. He brought in one on work with appropriate agencies to provide adequate cellphone coverage to the entire District of Trinity – Bay de Verde, specific to his own district, to make sure that happened.

Repairs to Main Street East in the Town of Salmon Cove; brought in a petition on eliminating unsafe condition and widening of the shoulders in Heart's Content Barrens. These are good examples because while work was done in his district and roadwork done, they still wanted more, wanted more spent and more work done. Make the necessary roads, the main road in Winterton –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: He brought in a lot of petitions looking for more work and more investments in his own district.

Still, with the current Minister of Fisheries, from his own district, he talked about equal pay for equal work. A good one there; we fully agree with that. Just to be fair, some were done when we were there. Some have been enacted by the current government as well on petitions that some of them had brought forward. Some are left undone or weren't addressed by us or not addressed by the current government.

One that the current Minister of Fisheries brought in, it is interesting, he said, to lobby the

Government of Canada to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador has a recreational cod fishery equal to that of the other Atlantic provinces. As I said the current Minister of Fisheries, it is interesting; he brought that to the floor of the House of Assembly and tabled it. I look forward to see what he continues to do to lobby for an equal recreational cod fishery because we certainly don't have that. We made improvements this year, but it is certainly not equal, what he advocated for.

Madam Chair, you brought in petitions to improve the medical transportation program so that all expenses are covered and reimbursed in a more timely manner. We know they just reduced it by about three-quarters of a million dollars, funding for the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. I don't know if there's been work done to address the concern you brought forward on reimbursement in a more timely manner.

I know that the time I spent in Health and also in Cabinet as an MHA and also in the Premier's office, it was a matter that I addressed and discussed many, many times to find a better way forward because we know it's difficult and challenging for many people. We also know this year there is a three-quarter of a million dollar reduction in funding for the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, which is valuable to people in rural parts of our province who have to travel for medical needs.

Another one brought in was broadband for the communities along the Labrador Coast; immediately allocate resources for Route 510. I think there's some work underway for that. So it looks like there's some progress being made there. Work with appropriate agencies to provide cellphone coverage along the Trans-Labrador Highway and to all communities in coastal Labrador. That was similar, but a little different.

There were a number of other ones you've brought in, many that the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair brought in. You actually had a long list of petitions that were brought forward and addressed by the hon. Member. Reinstate the tax rebate program on tobacco products for businesses and towns adjacent to the Quebec border – that was done

last year – in the Labrador Straits and Labrador West.

Then I see some more here. There's a long list for the current Chair; the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair brought in many petitions. Many of them were brought in repeatedly, and the same petition brought over, which normally happens in the House.

We have a petition here to provide free textbooks to all students who attend any school that follows the requirements of the *Schools Act*, which referenced – I know the private schools, I don't think the current government has introduced anything for that. We know they put taxes on books for the people of the province but as far as providing free books to the private schools, that hasn't happened, even though they lobbied for it last year.

My area where I live in Conception Bay South, but the boundary district next to mine – I live in my district in Topsail – Paradise, but next to me is Conception Bay South. The former Member looked for allocating funds to include brush clearing for Manuels Access Road, and I know Pitts Memorial Drive there was a request for that as well, and a lot of that has been done as well.

He also brought in a petition a number of times to review the level of policing in Conception Bay South, with an objective to increasing policing service and improving public safety for residents. I know that the RNC allotment has been reduced –

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking is expired.

MR. P. DAVIS: Completely ran out of my time, and I have more petitions.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Certainly I appreciate where the Leader of the Opposition is coming from because 10 minutes

does go rather quickly when you're on your feet here in the House and trying to make some logical points about this budget. Just for people listening at home, we're still on Bill 14, which is the bill to introduce the temporary reduction levy that we have already amended in the first month of the budget.

Madam Chair, there are a lot of people out there who support this government and what we are trying to do. I'd just like to share with the House and the people of this province a couple of more emails that we've received as a government and certainly through the Minister of Finance to the Premier who has taken some considerable I guess – the word has left me, but anyway I will read a couple of emails.

I am thinking about you at this time, which has to be very difficult for you and yours. He is referring to yours as your family. I was vexed and saddened when protests to the budget grew to personal insults – and that is where I was trying to go a little earlier because, on many occasions, it has been personal insults to people of this caucus and certainly all the MHAs that are trying to do the best for their province. I know where your heart is; that is certainly in the right place. Be comforted that you have many, many supporters.

Another one goes on to say: Just a short note to say I know how difficult it was with this budget. Tough decisions had to be made. There was very little room for the government at this time. On a personal note, these were the right choices. I am proud of you for standing strong and doing what is right for this province. Madam Chair, it is not all anti-budget, as the Members of the Opposition would like you to believe.

Finally, I'll read this one because I want to have a few words from my previous time that I rose in this House this morning. I'm not the sort to fire off emails to government ministers, but I feel compelled on this occasion. Demonstration after demonstration has been held by people who insist the new revenue measures are unfair. And it must be said that when money was rolling in, there weren't crowds of thousands on the steps of the Confederation Building yelling: What do we want?

This is good. I think this sums it up because this is a great, great statement. For any of the press that are listening, it could be a good sound bite, just saying. It says: Newfoundland is us and the government is us, and us got to pay. I'm going to repeat that: Newfoundland is us – it should be Newfoundland and Labrador, but I'll forgive them for that – Newfoundland and Labrador is us and the government is us, and us got to pay.

I think that sums it up. That's what we've been trying to say for the past 48, 56, 60 hours. I don't know how long it's been, but that's the message we're trying to get out there. It's good to see that it's finally getting through.

I don't like the budget any more than you have said you do, but we elected you and your colleagues to manage and that's what you're doing. I'm okay with that. That's how democracy works. I don't see the Opposition tabling alternative budgets that would be more palatable to the people, which if they were serious, they would do. Isn't that what we've been saying for the past 60 hours?

The personal attacks against you that I haven't seen but have heard about, is a tipping point for me. Sadly, I am writing to you to do my part to counterbalance all the negativity and to simply say: I support you and I support the government. Madam Chair, I think those three emails sums ups – and there's a lot more like that – what we've been trying to say.

Before I sit down, I have to go back to the email I read this morning that was entered into Hansard last night by the Member for Mount Pearl North. It is now 11:56 a.m. That's pretty close to noon, right? I'll say I did that about 3½ hours ago, maybe four even. Time goes fast when you're in here. I have to go back. I will read again what this email says because I think it's worth reading.

I know the Member for Torngat Mountains who this is addressed to and who this attacks, by the way, had his say about it, and I appreciate where he's coming from. Its goes back to what the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said about screening your emails. I appreciate what the Member said. I appreciate that he's screening his emails so that there is nothing derogatory or whatever entered into Hansard

that people are going to be sorry for later. Because I know how people get and I know how emotional people get. People can get really nasty, but this House is no place for that.

I have to say again I was very, very upset when the Member for Mount Pearl North entered this into the House last night because Hansard will show – and as the Minister of Health and Community Services gave us a history lesson on Hansard just a few hours ago, Hansard is history and history is around forever. We can go back to that Hansard and we can get that. Our grandchildren and our grandchildren's children can go back to Hansard and get that when and if they are sitting in this House of Assembly.

It says just because he comes from an area of Labrador where basic services is a luxury, all the more for this Member to listen to his constituents because they will become more worse off than they are now. Madam Chair, I got very upset this morning and I got very emotional – I know that, and I apologize if I lost a little control there. But every time I read this – I just read it again, and it upsets me more. When I entered this this morning into Hansard and read this into the House of Assembly, I asked the Member for Mount Pearl North to get up and apologize for what this is saying, because Hansard will show that they are his words.

That was 3½, four hours ago. I'm still waiting for that apology. The Member for Torngat Mountains is still waiting for that apology because he asked for it too. I will go out on a limb here and, in the absence of his apology; I would ask that his leader apologize on his behalf. Because if he doesn't, that means that his leader is condoning what this is saying. His leader is condoning and his party condones what this is saying. Because once it is entered into Hansard, you are condoning it.

So if the leader of that party is not prepared to do what I asked that the Member for Mount Pearl North should do, then I can only assume and take from that that the Opposition Party who claims they have done so much for Labrador – and they have done some good things. But if he doesn't get up and apologize to my colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains, and the people of Torngat Mountains –

MR. EDMUNDS: All of Labrador.

MR. LETTO: – and all of Labrador that this email addresses, then we can only assume that the party in which the Member for Mount Pearl North is a member, condones what this email says.

Madam Chair, I will take my place and await the apology.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure again to stand here on behalf of the people of the Ferryland District to have some commentary in regard to this bill, as we continue our debate on this bill. Over the past number of days, a lot of thoughts and ideas and alternatives have been expressed in regard to *Budget 2016* and a great opportunity for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to engage in this process.

We've received a lot of inquiries, a lot of information, a lot of things that people want us to bring forward here to be heard in the people's House. I think that is what this is all about. We're bringing those forward. Sometimes we agree with some and sometimes we don't, but the point is people have a venue to express those concerns and have them relayed here in the public. Sometimes we read them out directly; other times, we paraphrase. Whatever is it, it's what the point is all about. It is about articulating what people's views and ideas are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask Members to keep their side conversations down.

Thank you.

MR. HUTCHINGS: A number of hours ago, maybe it was yesterday, I spoke of some items

in the budget and the effect it would have on a call I got from a taxi driver in Colliers. He is a small operator and has a couple of vehicles. He talked about the fact of the gas tax, 16.5 cents, as well as HST going back on insurance and other items and the effect it would have on him. It questioned his ability to be able to function and continue to operate. It was a business, I think he indicated to me, he had started not that long ago and certainly was concerned about it.

Just recently this morning, I had another email, dated June 9, and it was referencing someone else who's in the taxi business. So I want to read that out and give that experience of that operator and some of the challenges he perceives are going to come about because of what was in the budget.

He just says: Good day, I appreciate if one of you could read my letter for the filibuster. He says thanks for the opportunity to be able to have someone express his views here in the people's House. He said, according to Canada Revenue Agency all taxi drivers are technically self-employed. While we work with a company, we do not work for them, as we merely rent out vehicles or spots on the stand. Therefore, like any other small business owner, we, taxi drivers, receive no base pay, no vacation pay, no sick pay, no overtime pay. We get no benefits, other than a measly fraction of revenue left over once our large overhead is paid.

What individual taxi drivers make depends significantly on their hours, their skills and especially the economy. However, it is fair to assume the average taxi driver makes only minimum wage – and he references, we are the working poor. The Liberal budget will drive us further into poverty. It hurts us disproportionately worse than those with typical jobs or other businesses.

He goes on to say – and he talks about the expense and the operations, and obviously this is what's fundamental to this individual in terms of his operations – our biggest expense is obviously gasoline. Last week I burned roughly 199 litres of gas, so, he said, the government took roughly another \$40 in taxes from him. This is a lot of money for someone that he alludes to making roughly minimum wage. The tax grab will get worse when HST goes up, and

even more worse in the winter when I have to idle longer.

He goes on to say, in terms of his discussion, another major expense as he indicated is HST; most people don't realize that the meter rates include HST. So 13 per cent of everything I take in has to go to the government before I get paid myself, before I pay my personal taxes. He said now the government wants an additional 2 per cent off my profit/pay.

He further goes on to talk about taxis pay high insurance rates. So I guess that's applicable to the industry and his overall operations. Currently, he said, it costs in the ballpark of \$4,800 yearly to insure a taxi. His taxi costs \$4,800 a year to insure. When the 15 per cent is applied to this, the government will take another \$720 from taxi drivers. So that's \$720 of additional dollars, net dollars, coming out of his operation that he needs to pay.

While the owners include insurance when they rent their cars, the taxi drivers, there's a fear that owners will jack up the rent to cover this. So obviously this is the trickle-down effect. Like many of these changes that we've seen in the budget, it's not just a line item in terms of you're going to collect a greater fee, you're going to increase insurance. In the commercial world, in the business world, there's a margin there that people need to make, so if you pass on extra costs or extra expense, presumably it's got to be passed on to someone else to generate that.

The taxi industry relies on the strength of the economy, like to many other operations, entrepreneurs, businesses and that sort of thing. As the economy goes, so goes the business and so goes activity, which is so very important. If people have money to drink, to go to restaurants, to travel, obviously taxi drivers do well. Whether it's a convention, whether it's people going out to dinner, want to go out and have a drink or a glass of wine, they want to take a cab, all that activity drives other activity and again, as he says, is a trickle-down effect in terms of activity in the economy.

If people do not have much discretionary spending, it certainly affects taxi drivers. That's what this operator is certainly suggesting. Again it's all about, as we've talked about, how much

do you take from people's pockets, consumers, and do you get to that threshold where it becomes negative to the overall economy because you are taking too much out and people don't have the ability or don't have the discretionary spending to go out and do those extra things they want to do. Additionally, that relates to other activities and drives other activities.

So you're getting to the point where you are shutting down the economy, you're shutting down activity, which is essential obviously. As the economy is bad, taxi drivers are really hurting and struggling to make ends meet. As the economy slows a little bit, obviously these types of operations feel it directly.

Therefore the government is due to collect in the ballpark of \$1,600 more in new taxes from taxi drivers in the city alone. This is an astronomical amount to grab from a small group, even before they pay their private taxis. It goes on to say while meter rates could potentially be raised to recoup some of the losses, there is no consensus among taxi drivers and owners right now. So we get to how you pass that extra cost on because someone has to pay at the end of the day.

He said from an industry point of view, there's fear the increase would either bring in uninsured, unregulated and undercutting uber. Obviously that is something that has gone on in North America and other parts in regard to different types of taxi operations or otherwise keeps people from availing of the service. So we're talking about the disincentive or the negative effect for some of the implications of the budget.

With an increase, we might be shooting ourselves in our only good foot. Then he references the City of St. John's and what they are going to do in regard to looking at the regulatory framework for the industry. He also questions too, on top of this, government will be making an unsafe work environment even worse. With a plethora of businesses and services open 24-7, he references St. John's as certainly a city that never sleeps. There is always somebody on the go and taxis are always in demand, especially in bad weather and when non-professional drivers are hesitant to take their own vehicles.

He referenced the fact that when stopping overnight clearing on the Outer Ring Road, Pitts Memorial and Peacekeepers, it's accidents, he says, that could occur, and a concern too in the industry in regard to safety and what that would mean.

To government, he says: Government must do something to ease the burden it has disproportionately placed on taxi drivers and the industry.

This person provides suggestions. He talks about cancel the gas tax increase, cancel the automotive insurance tax, cancel the HST increase and/or provide a tax break of some sort for those who claim they are self-employed taxi drivers on their annual income tax return. That would be something like a business credit at some point at the end of the year when you file your taxes.

Provide a gas rebate – he references a program the former administration brought in, the Home Heating Rebate – to taxi drivers. So provide some kind of gas rebate similar to the type of industry you are in and recognizing the vast increases in cost. Then that would allow some return back to that individual and some stability to what they have now in regard to running their operations.

It also talks about the reinstatement of snow clearing 24-7 on the Northeast Avalon, because this is where this operator and this individual is actually referring to.

I want to thank that individual for sending along that information, giving the perspective of an entrepreneur, of a business operator in the taxi service and what it means to him. Obviously, he's looked critically at this budget and what *Budget 2016* means to him specifically.

That's the benefit of what we've gone through over the past number of days. What we may do for the next couple of days is that we hear first-hand from people in Newfoundland and Labrador, individuals, business owners, operators. They tell us what their experience was and is on this budget and propose what some changes could be for the benefit of all.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to stand and have a few minutes. I'm going to talk about the process with the budget and the situation we found ourselves in, Madam Chair.

When this government took the reins in December 2015, we were faced with a financial crisis. Madam Chair, if you sat down and asked 100 people what to do, there would be 100 different ways to try to solve a problem.

We had a major problem. I would be the first to admit it, and I understand the situation. I don't want to lay blame too much here today or try to pass the buck. We made the decisions because of what we were faced with. Some people say could you have looked at this, could you have looked at that?

I see Members across the way talk about this \$30 million which we would have to borrow. Madam Chair, by the time the last three or four days were up, we would have spent that about five times. Why didn't you use that bit for the \$30 million which we would have to borrow. Why didn't you spend this on this? Why didn't you spend part of that on this? We're up to about \$120 million, \$130 million now that people were saying.

I understand totally, Madam Chair. These debates, when people get tired and lack of sleep and emotions are running high, things are said sometimes that you wish weren't said. There are situations that arise in this House – and I've been through it. I just want to let people know that sometimes when you see a lot of banter, people are tired, people are emotional. Normally when we all get lots of sleep and emotions aren't running as high, we all do get along. We all do work together, the majority of times, on a lot of this.

Madam Chair, I always said that if you have a disagreement with somebody, you walk up, shake his hand and explain the disagreement. When you get anybody who just won't say, okay, I disagree and just walk away, that adds to the emotion of the debate. Madam Chair, that

happened. I think if someone disagrees, we can respectfully disagree but we have to be men and women, explain why we respectfully disagree and just take it, move on, shake hands and move on and understand that everybody on this side of the House, and I'm sure everybody on the other side of the House, wants the best for Newfoundland and Labrador. Sometimes we may disagree on the approach.

Another thing, Madam Chair, I have to comment on is – and I'm not pointing anybody out – but there were statements made that there are 11 over here upset with the budget. That is totally, absolutely false. There were 29 upset with the budget, because we had to make tough decisions.

Madam Chair, I played sports all my life. I usually relate things back to sports. When someone wants to pick on someone, one or two of the team, that's when the team comes together. People started picking on this one, that one. This one's upset, that one's upset. There are 11 all upset with this. There wasn't a single person in the whole caucus room that was pleased with everything that was in this budget, but everybody – and I'm so proud of the Liberal caucus that we rallied together, and as we worked our way through this worked out. Then we became much stronger as a Liberal caucus.

Madam Chair, I can go off and I can start naming things we wish we didn't have to do, but when you're dealt with a hand, you have to deal with the cards that are in front of you. We made a commitment on the temporary levy that at the first possible opportunity we would start decreasing it, and we did. We were criticized in this hon. House because we should have known back in January that it may be coming so you should've included it. We couldn't do that. We couldn't do that, Madam Chair, but I know for a fact that Tuesday night when the deal was struck, I know that night after the deal was made about not having to repay the equalization, wheels were in motion. As soon as that phone was put down, they were saying let's reduce the temporary levy the best we can, as we committed to.

We made a commitment that if any more funds come up we'll decrease it. We always said it. The gas prices, we said the same thing. An

increase in the gas, Madam Chair, we always said it. So for anybody to go outside and talk about there are 11 over here upset, they're wrong. There are 29 that are upset.

Madam Chair, I have always played sports, and I relate it back to sports again. When someone wants to go and try to pick someone out, that's when you get people to step up and that's when you get the rest of the team to rally around those individuals.

I'm so proud of the Liberal caucus, Madam Chair. I'll say it to the people of the province who are listening, I understand the frustration. Things will get better. I understand it. I've been through it back years ago with Clyde Wells. I've been through it. Things will get better.

In 2004, the Opposition have been through it. Madam Chair, they went through it also. Things will get better. We had to make tough decisions. I feel sometimes for the people who turn around and say, well, you should have did this, you should have did that.

Madam Chair, I heard this \$30 million in the briefing that was on yesterday. I was keeping a little note every time. Well, you should have did this with the \$30 million – which we have to borrow – you should have did that. It was up to \$140 million in spending every time somebody stood in this House and said here's what you should have did with that \$30 million, which we would have to borrow anyway to do it.

Madam Chair, that's what happens to the debate, but there is something that I'm proud of the Liberal caucus for too. I'm so proud of the Liberal caucus. This hasn't been brought up in this House of Assembly. This hasn't been brought up in this hon. House of Assembly, and I'm going to bring it up.

The Minister of Finance – and I understand the pressure she's under with all this. Madam Chair, we put in, I think it was \$74.6 million for the lower income to help with the government Income Supplement which will start coming out in September. It hasn't been brought up in this House. I know I probably shouldn't even be saying this because it may be outside, but I spoke outside the House of Assembly, Madam Chair, outside of a caucus meeting, but when we

cancelled that levy, where anybody who is making \$50,000 taxable income or less, do you know who stood up and said we can't reduce, we cannot and we will not reduce that Guaranteed Income Supplement to our seniors and low income? It was the Minister of Finance.

When we decreased that levy, when people said – some people, and you hear it in the public, were saying, okay, now you've reduced the levy, reduced that \$74.6 million, do you know who stood up? Do you know the biggest voice around our table? It was the Minister of Finance who said no, we made a commitment to the people, who are less fortunate in this province, the seniors in this province.

There are tough decisions in the budget, and it was the Minister of Finance. I don't know if anybody else – they can speak their minds, but I was so proud of the Minister of Finance when she stood up and said no, we made a commitment. I tell you one thing she had a lot of support. Before the decision came up, she was ensuring that this guaranteed \$74.6 million for the low income and for seniors who need the benefits – that's going to offset some of these tax increases like the gas. That is what this is for.

When you do an evaluation, how much income someone has, here is what you made in disposable income, and here is the effect it may have. That is what this was put in for, to offset some of these hardships, Madam Chair. When people are saying they have financial hardships, this is what it's for.

The Opposition hasn't brought it up once. They don't want to bring it up. I'm not being critical now, I don't mean to be critical, but I could not leave this House of Assembly and realize – and I know the pressure the government was under. I understand the pressures we were all under as caucus Members in our own districts, Madam Chair, but I could not leave this House of Assembly.

I'll have another opportunity in the next five or six hours to have a few more speeches but I felt it was necessary for me just to know of how proud I was of the Minister of Finance who was adamant and stood up. The first thing she did was stand up: we're keeping that money in there.

Even though the levy has gone down, those people are going to get extra benefits.

I see my time is closing down. Madam Chair, like I said when people try to divide that's when people come together. I can assure you, Madam Chair, and I know the media is listening, when certain people are saying there are 11 over there upset, there were 29 upset – 29. I was one of them, because some decisions we had to make we wish we didn't have to make.

AN HON. MEMBER: There were 30.

MR. JOYCE: There were 30. Madam Chair, 29 people were upset with it.

To all the caucus Members, thank you for running around. We will work through all this, Madam Chair. I'll get up and speak about some of the real good benefits, but I just want to recognize the Minister of Finance and recognize all the people who are in here.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to stand once again and to speak to Bill 14. As I have said a number of times in this House, budgets are about choices. The minister responsible, our Finance Minister, is one and the same as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. She has made it very clear that she was very much in control of all the decisions of this budget. She reminded us again and again and again that she went line by line by line and invited all her senior officials to go line by line by line under her guidance. The cuts that were made she was fully aware of; the program cuts, the extra fees, the increases in fees, any kind of extra taxes and levies.

I had asked her repeatedly in the House did she apply a gender-analysis tool to the budget. She was quite vague in her answers and so I had to

ATIPP. I ATIPPed, I asked for what was the gender-analysis tool used by the Women's Policy Office. I also asked for any correspondence between the Minister of Finance and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women requesting any kind of gender-analysis tool done with the budget before the budget was completed.

I did receive a response last week about the gender-analysis tool. I have that here, Madam Chair. It is *Guidelines for Gender Inclusive Analysis* provided by the Women's Policy Office here in government. It was released in the year 2003. It's a historical document actually. I assume that the work to prepare for this was probably done in 2002 because it often takes quite a while to be able to do this kind of work, so this is quite outdated.

My request was: Was this gender-analysis tool actually used as government is supposed to do as the government's policy about applying a gender-analysis tool through the Women's Policy Office on all policy, all legislation, all budgets. I just received only an hour ago requests to two other ATIPP requests – reports to two other requests that I had done around this issue.

On May 15, the Women's Policy Office received my request for access to the following records. I asked for all email, written or other correspondence between the Minister of Finance and Deputy Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and the Women's Policy Office concerning applying a gender-analysis tool to Bill 1, An Act to Establish an Independent Appointments Commission, because I had also asked for that, and the response was – I asked the minister again, did she apply a gender-analysis tool against the Independent Appointments Commission.

The response was: Please be advised that the Deputy Minister for the Women's Policy Office has reviewed this request and the Women's Policy Office has no records responsive to your request. The Women's Policy Office has also confirmed with the Minister of Finance that there are no responsive records under this request. So I would assume that there would have been phone calls or emails or letters from the Minister Responsible for the Status of

Women and the Finance Minister asking for a gender analysis applied to Bill 1 about the Independent Appointments Commission.

On May 25, again the Women's Policy Office received my request for access for the following records, all email written or other correspondence between the Minister of Finance and Deputy Minister responsible for the Status of Women and the Women's Policy concerning applying a gender-analysis tool to *Budget 2016*.

The response was: Please be advised that the Deputy Minister for the Women's Policy Office has reviewed this request and the Women's Policy Office has no records responsive to your request. The Women's Policy Office has also confirmed with the Minister of Finance that there are no responsive records under this request.

So it's not even that the minister is saying these are sensitive documents that are only for Cabinet. There is absolutely no paper trail, no telephone trail of any request by the Minister of Finance, who is also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who hinted that she was putting a gender analysis on the budget. In fact, we have no proof of that whatsoever.

I have asked for, as well, any written report as a result of a gender-analysis tool or a gender lens applied in the preparation of the budget or before the budget came to the House. So I assume that work hasn't been done, unless the minister can prove otherwise.

I would like to return to the gender analysis that was done through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives which clearly states, which clearly points out how this budget is disproportionately hurting the women of Newfoundland and Labrador. There are a number of very good points here. It's very detailed. It's a complete gender analysis done of the budget. It's after the fact.

Ideally, this work would have been done through the Women's Policy Office before the budget was completed so that the budget could avoid disproportionate and systemic discrimination and disproportionate burden on the women of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's remember as well, that the women of Newfoundland and

Labrador, our earnings are the lowest of women in the whole country, even during our times of our highest prosperity. That's nothing to be proud of. That's nothing at all to be proud of, Madam Chair.

One would think that the Minister of Finance, who is also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, would be ideally situated to be able to do something about this. She would be ideally situated to ensure that the budget that she was the architect of would not disproportionately hurt the women of Newfoundland and Labrador. You would have thought that she would have had the best interests of the women of Newfoundland and Labrador at hand.

If not her, then who in this government has the best interests of the women of Newfoundland and Labrador. I cannot answer that question because there is no evidence that anybody at this point is at the helm that is looking out for the best interests of the women of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are not looking for special treatment of women; we are looking at ways to address systemic barriers and blocks to the advancement of women, to the equality of women in our province. It's 2016; this is the right thing to do.

Back to the report of the gender analysis of our budget that was done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. This was commissioned by Mary Shortall, the president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour which represents tens of thousands of unionized workers across the province and also in conjunction with the women's centres across the province who are doing incredibly good work.

She has said: "The review revealed that this budget will serve to worsen" – not to at least keep status quo – "gender inequalities through increased taxation and reduced programs. After a decade of successful poverty reduction initiatives, this budget will decrease the income of the most vulnerable women. In addition, the lay-offs from the service cuts will inevitably lead to greater unemployment for women. Cuts to education negatively impact girls, especially the most vulnerable."

If we look just even at the small sector of library closures and the workers in the libraries, those who are public service workers, the closure of those libraries are in effect job losses that are predominantly held by women in rural communities. These are important jobs. These are well-paid jobs. These are jobs with benefits that we would want for all of our people. Those jobs are predominantly held by women in rural communities. Those jobs will be lost.

Another recommendation: “The provincial government must expand their consultation process to include gender sensitive budgeting, taking into account how their current practices are serving only to worsen gender inequalities in the province. Other recommendations include using evidence-based decision making and performance-based techniques for evaluating government services”

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: This is what this government is recommending.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak again and to welcome our visitors to the gallery again. It's good to see people taking interest in what's happening in the House of Assembly.

I listened to what the Member for St. John's Centre had to say. I find it very interesting that she speaks about her concern about women in the province and the impact on the budget. It just so happens that we're implementing a program in September that all parties in the House of Assembly endorsed back in 2014.

In September, 5,000 children will be able to take advantage of full-day kindergarten. All the research that looks at full-day kindergarten, it frequently notes that women who are frequently the primary caregivers of children, in addition to having responsibilities often for taking care of elderly family members and other family

members with disabilities and so on, women disproportionately carry that responsibility in our society, and that's a fact. I'm not endorsing it. That's the way it is.

Five thousand children will take advantage of an additional half day of a full-day program that has been shown to benefit families and enable women to take part in the workforce, because they no longer have to shoulder that responsibility, and the Members of the NDP got up and voted against full-day kindergarten for September. It's like on the one hand this and on the other hand that. I tried to follow the debate and it's just ridden with contradiction.

When it was politically expedient, I say, Madam Chair, first when they hauled the rug out from under 5,000 children who are expecting to benefit from full-day kindergarten in September, with no regard to the impact that would have on families, to say nothing of single moms who, 2½ years ago, were promised that program by all Members in the House of Assembly. I think that is absolutely shameful.

I want to respond to a few things that have been said in the debate here. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands got up and said people have concerns about full-day kindergarten. Well, if you have concerns about it, ask. I've responded to people's questions.

They want to cancel it and save \$13.3 million. There's not a whole lot else they want to do to save us from bankruptcy, this \$2.7 billion deficit. Their solution is to cancel full-day kindergarten for 5,000 children and save basically a paltry \$13.3 million on top of a \$2.7 billion deficit.

If people have questions, they can ask. I actually didn't hear the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands ask any questions specifically about that to me since Monday, and we've sitting around the clock. But I'm still all ears, if he has any interest.

The Member for Topsail – Paradise, he got up and said that we blame boards for implementing certain policies. For example, he said we blame the school district for five school closures. I didn't blame the school district for five school closures. The Opposition blamed me for five

school closures and I advised the House of Assembly that under the *Schools Act, 1997* the school districts have authority, under the legislation, for the administration of primary, elementary and secondary education. They have authority to make decisions on school closures and they have a process for doing that.

Likewise, the Libraries Board has been delegated, through legislation, responsibility for decisions affecting libraries. Likewise, it's not my department, but I understand from the hon. Minister of Natural Resources that the legislation passed by the previous administration provides certain authorities to the board of Nalcor to make decisions independent of government, including the severance package that was okayed by the previous administration.

So we're not blaming those bodies; we're explaining that the legislation provides authority, and none of that legislation was enacted by me. I didn't pass that legislation. That legislation exists. So we're just merely pointing out the existence of the laws of the land are blaming those bodies, and I don't get that.

The Member for Topsail – Paradise, the former premier, the Leader of the Official Opposition, also basically blamed oil for our fiscal woes. Like I said before in the debate, if I can find it here, according to the budget Estimates – you can see I gingerly removed this page from it – you can see that in 2013, our deficit was \$6.7 billion, which is sort of manageable, still big, but sort of manageable. Since then, because of the previous government's fiscal policy in raiding the public Treasury repeatedly – that was 2013 – now this year, just a few short years later, less than a handful of years later, the provincial total public sector debt is almost triple what it was in 2013: \$15.7 billion.

We're told if the situation was allowed to continue to fester, this disease that's been inflicted upon us, it would be \$27 billion in a few short years. We get to learn a lot about what it's like to live in Greece today. It's not sustainable.

Year after year after year, the Auditor General said you can't keep this up. It's the spending that's the problem. He made no overture to admit that spending is also part of the problem,

even though a number of his Members actually admitted in this filibuster that overspending is a problem. I wanted to point that out.

He talked about their attrition program for eliminating public service positions was going to solve the fiscal crisis. The Auditor General has said – we've said it time and time again, but I'll say it just for the sake of seeing if it will get through this time. The Auditor General said that the attrition plan would only address the deficit if it was implemented 19 times over. Not one time, but 19 times over. To say that was going to work is foolhardy. That's not the case.

The other thing that the Member for Cape St. Francis said – and I wish I had more time, but we can stay here all weekend until the Opposition has all their questions answered. That's fine with me. Other Members here are fine to stay as long as possible.

The Member said I was angry. Sure, I wear my emotions on my sleeve; I'm not ashamed of that. I'm not trying to hide anything here. We have certain rules in the House of Assembly that are governed by the books you see on the Table of the House, our Standing Orders and the honour with which we are expected to carry ourselves.

We had one Member in here read out an email that said the Premier was a liar. The Member for Mount Pearl North read out an email that said another Member was a coward. Then they jumped up and they said, oh, I didn't say that. Even though it was unparliamentary language that's not prohibited in this House, we're not allowed to say it, they got up and they said, oh, I didn't say that. It was written in an email. Then they said, oh, I apologize, so as to avoid any further sanction by the Speaker of the House of Assembly.

Then, to top it all off, a Member got up and read out a statement – again, the same Member – that had a message in it which I can only say that is bordering on quasi-racism. He was reading this email – it was like a slur against the people who live in coastal Labrador. It was unbelievable. The people who live in the Member for Torngat Mountains district are mostly people of Aboriginal descent. And to get up and say that about those people, as if they don't have it bad enough, to get up and level that sort of a slur

onto the people of coastal Labrador, well, I don't know, how much patience are you supposed to have, right? I mean, if I got up and I made those sorts of statements – and I assure you, Madam Chair, I would not make those statements in this hon. House, because I follow the rules in here. Despite all my faults, I follow the rules in here, and everyone else is expected to.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, who was the one who read the email out calling the Premier a liar, she's over there laughing about all this – she thinks it's fine. This is a big lark, to take the rules of the House of Assembly and just disregard them, and then laugh about it afterwards. That is no laughing matter at all.

I implore the Speaker of the House of Assembly to bring together the rules committee of this hon. Legislature before we sit again in the fall so that we can reform the Standing Orders so that people are no longer able to come in here and twist the words, allegedly, of others – I don't mind people reading emails in here; that's fine. Bring other people's ideas in here. We need all the ideas we can get, because we're not getting a whole lot of suggestions about how we're going to fix this problem. We can use all the suggestions we can get. But don't come in here using unparliamentary language.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: That can no longer be tolerated in here.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking have expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I certainly thank the Minister of Education for his lecture. Madam Chair, there are a number of issues now that I want to raise and, unfortunately, I'm a little off track after listening

to what the hon. minister had to say. I'm going to try to keep it as I always do: keep it professional and not try to be too provocative here.

Madam Chair, how many times have I spoken in this House of Assembly now about full-day kindergarten? The minister keeps going back. Oh, the only reason they want to do it is to save \$13 million. I have not said that. I can't say what other people said because I'm trying – we're here, we're tired and there are a lot of people speaking, but I have said and what I'm hearing from people, it's not about the \$13 million. Although if it saves \$13 million, that's a separate issue which has to be considered, but the issue is you don't put in full-day kindergarten at a time when we're hearing from people and schools that they're not ready in terms of they don't have the space, they don't have the resources.

There are issues around training. The minister can say there was some training and all that stuff, but that's not what we're hearing. We're hearing, whether it's true or not, from people that some of the training is not adequate.

We know there are issues with space. I can speak personally because I have a school in my district, St. Peter's Primary, where they're going to jam 28 kids and two teachers into a small classroom. It's still up in the air. I'm still trying to deal with the fire department, because they were in. They told them you have to take everything out of the classroom, get rid of the closet and everything to possibly jam it in there. I'm still going to be dealing with them because I'm sending them back in there, actually, myself. I'm requesting they go in there because I'm questioning whether or not that space is adequate.

It's certainly not ideal. I was told that it was a new school, it would have to be twice as much space for this play-based learning. It's definitely not there. It's half of that. It may meet the fire code. I'm not saying it doesn't, but she's pretty close. We'll make sure. It may meet the fire code but that's all it is doing. That's certainly not ideal teaching conditions.

The other issue we're hearing from people is the fact that there have been cuts to resources. We

have class cap issues. We have issues with multigrading. We have issues, we're told, with resources.

We have kids with special needs, Madam Chair, children with special needs, and surely goodness before we start adding something new, which albeit is a good thing – I'm not arguing that it's not a good thing, but we're going to add something new and at the same time we have people, teachers, and school councils telling us they're really concerned because the resources are not adequate to deal with children with special needs. I don't understand what part I'm missing here. To heck with the \$13 million, it's not about – but that said, if there's \$13 million being put into full-day kindergarten, maybe that \$13 million, or a portion of it, needs to go to make sure we have the proper resources for the children that are already there.

We have kids that you have to draw a name out of a hat to do Intensive Core French. Can you imagine? We're drawing names out of a hat. We heard a story about twins over in Paradise, wherever they were to. One twin got her name drawn out of the hat or his name drawn out of the hat and the other one didn't. We're going to break them up, one can do French and one can do English out of the draw of a hat. Is that how we improve our education system? Is that how we help our children? I think not.

For the minister to simply suggest that for me, as one person at least, to stand up and my only suggestion to save money is to cut full-day kindergarten and deprive 5,000 kids of full-day kindergarten, that's not true at all. That is not true. I'm thinking about the kids that are already in the system versus a system that we've never had and we're probably not even ready for.

I would say to the minister, when we reach a point in time, and hopefully we do, where we have the money, the resources, the space and everything else so that the kids that are in the school system have the proper resources, the proper sized classrooms, adequate facilities and everything they need to learn properly, and we can afford to do the full-day kindergarten and that's all properly resourced, and children with special needs are looked after and all those things, go for it. I will support it 100 per cent. If

we're not at that stage, I can't support it. I can't support it in that regard.

I say also to the minister, it's interesting; he talked about the school cuts, the schools that have been shut down. I haven't had that in my district because I have a growing area. At the end of the day, it's amazing how, when a school is being shut down, it's the board's fault but when it comes to decisions to put in full-day kindergarten, that's the minister. When it comes to any photo ops available of any new schools or programs or whatever, funny how the minister, or whoever, can be there for that, but when we're cutting schools, then it's the school board's responsibility, not mine. I would add an unelected school board.

The minister himself, when he was in Opposition, complained about the fact we had unelected school boards making these decisions. Now, we still have an unelected school board making these decisions. I can't say if they're the right decisions or wrong decisions because I don't have all the information. So I can't honestly say that. The point is that you can't have it one way today and tomorrow you have it the other way.

The other thing is you talk about there are no suggestions. I stood here one evening and I provided information to the minister. I told the minister I had received information from a constituent who asked a question about the school system. Maybe we should be looking at other school systems as well.

In Finland, the children go to school, I'm told, three to four hours a day, four days a week, and they're the smartest kids in the world. That's what the information shows. That's different than the model we have here. Now, I'm not saying we're going to switch to that model tomorrow, but I'm just saying there are – we talk about low test scores in math and all these things – other things we could be looking at, other alternatives. In the interim, in the meantime, we can't go implementing something new at the expense of something we already have for our children. That's all I'm saying. That's all I'm saying to the minister. I would ask him to take that into account.

I would also say to the minister, because I've gotten an email – I won't have time to read it – but also the school busing association is very upset. I got a very long email from Mr. Callahan with the school bus operators who was made all kinds of promises until he became the minister. Now all of a sudden all the promises are gone. He's telling me there's going to be a problem come September. The school bus operators, for now, will make sure the kids get through this school year, but come September there could be buses parked because of issues with tendering and having the lowest common denominator in terms of buses and old buses on the road and so on. There are a lot of issues there.

Before the minister starts preaching to me and others about everything, he's got a lot of things to clean up in his department from the sounds of it. I would suggest that he look into those things, Madam Chair.

Now, Madam Chair, I've only got a couple of minutes, so I just want to speak to the levy again for a moment. Of course, I've spoken to the levy many a times, but I want to speak to one aspect of the levy, which I did raise before, I'm going to raise it again, in terms of its fairness. Forget the fact that you got to pay the levy and the cumulative impact it's going to have on people, because that's a huge issue which is still there and still not resolved. But, even if we went with the current levy, if you look at the scale that we were provided, if you're making \$50,000, that's your taxable income, you're paying a \$100 on the levy.

If somebody asked me the question and they said, I'm in this house and I make \$50,000 taxable income. I'm paying \$100. My wife makes \$50,000, she's paying \$100. That's \$200; \$100,000 in the household. One person working in the household at \$100,000 is paying \$700. So how can you argue?

Well, the Member for Virginia Waters is saying it's not true. I hope he gets up and corrects it.

MR. B. DAVIS: I'm just saying (inaudible).

MR. LANE: Taxable. Well, okay, maybe it's \$51,000.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I say to the Member, maybe it is \$51,000. The point is if you're making a taxable income, the bottom line is you have two people working in the house and they're paying a low amount. You got one person working in the house who's making the same amount of money as the two, so the household income is the same. You got one household paying \$200 and you got another household paying \$700, when the amount of money is coming in through the door. Whether there is one person working or two people working, it's the same income coming into the door.

So how can you have two neighbours, this household is making \$100,000, this one is making \$100,000, this one is paying \$200 and this one is paying \$700, just because it's one person versus two people working? They still have the same expenses, so explain that one to me. I would like some clarification from the Minister of Finance how we can justify that particular issue.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll take my seat.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House again this afternoon and talk about – we're debating Bill 14, but in general people are talking about the overall budget. So it's a pleasure for me to stand up and talk about some of those things.

Just to clarify – and I don't want to be adversarial, in all honesty. I know we've gotten heated. We're all very, very tired, but we're trying to do the people's work in this House. I appreciate what my colleagues on this side of the House are doing as they get up and speak, and also Members opposite.

A few points have been made now since the last time I spoke. One of which is trying to bring forward some good ideas that can help fix this fiscal challenge that we have. I do say to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, we have asked, and I have personally – when I am stood

up in this House all through this week – asked for some great ideas. I asked both through social media and I've responded to emails to people, to constituents of mine, as well as constituents of other Members, both from Members opposite as well as Members on this side of the House. I've asked to give us some good ideas that we can consider, because I honestly do believe that we can work together to find some solutions.

This problem is not just ours to fix. I think it's a problem that collectively, as everybody that is living in Newfoundland and Labrador, we need to come together and to fix.

Around the deficit levy – and, of course, we did say when the budget came down in April that if there was an opportunity for us to make some corrective action, that we would do that. Through our friends in Ottawa, we were able to find our way forward and address some of the debt reduction levy issues.

Now, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands talks about two individuals in a household earning \$50,000 – well, I think it's been corrected, so maybe the example of \$51,000. They would pay, I think it would be a hundred bucks, a hundred dollars – I shouldn't say bucks; I'm sorry about that – each of those individuals. Yet, if it's a hundred thousand dollars – now, it is on taxable income.

When those examples have come out – and we've all seen it, we've shared it widely, taxable income, we don't know what people's deductions are. One of the things – and it's an idea that I think we can consider or bring back, what's the overall impact on a household.

I say to the Member opposite that's a good idea for us to bring back and give some consideration to. Those are things that can be discussed, especially as we're moving forward. That's the intent of filibusters like this –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I've given the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: That's the intent of filibusters like this is for us to get ideas that we can bring back and consider.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I've given the floor to the Member for Terra Nova. I ask Members of the House to respect that. There should be lots of time for everyone else to get a turn to speak.

Thank you.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to move on a little bit. We've got a changing demographic in this province. The population of this province is getting older. One of the things that we need to pay attention to, and that we have in this budget, is to look at our seniors.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I guess I've been a little confused by some of the commentary over the last couple of days and certainly today. The Member talks about being concerned about seniors since she's been an MHA, but then to say that – I mean, in this budget we have allocated some money towards a seniors' advocate. I'm confused that – and she found that to be a luxury.

On one breath you're saying that she's been concerned about seniors since becoming an MHA, but when we put in measures that are going to help bring the voice of seniors to government, that's a luxury. I just don't get that; I really don't.

If people do remember, or have been watching now over the last couple of weeks, there are a number of bills that came forward. One of those was around this enhanced Seniors' Benefit. Last night I spoke about it, \$12.7 million to support seniors to enhance the Seniors' Benefit to bring it up to \$1,313 for our seniors.

When we brought it forward, Members opposite actually voted against it. That's confusing to me to see that happen in this House. Being an MHA

who is concerned about seniors ever since she's been elected, but then to vote against a measure that's going to enhance the lives of seniors in this province, I just don't get it.

Then, in the same measure, there were recommendations that came forward from a review panel around judges. One of the things that we brought forward as a government is that we would not give a salary increase to judges. Yet when it came forward to this House, Members opposite said that they – well, they voted against it and wanted us to bring it back on the table in two years' time when they think that we will have more money and we will have fixed some of the long-term debt, hopefully, with some of the measures we have brought forward, and we would bring it forward and pay some of the highest earners in the province.

So won't give money to seniors, want us to revisit and give money to judges. I have been truly confused by some of the commentary by Members opposite. It really takes away from the kind of things that we really need to do. I mean, we have a serious, serious problem here. If we did nothing, our province by 2021 or 2022, we will have a combined debt of almost \$25 billion. We cannot endure that kind of long-term debt. We have to take measures.

I know this has been extremely difficult. It's been extremely difficult on the people in this House trying to bring forward the points of view and the concerns of all our constituents. It's extremely difficult for the people who are living in our province. We definitely don't want to be taking these measures, but we also can't go the way of Greece and Puerto Rico where we will be bankrupt. That is not a legacy that I want to hold on to, or to say that as my term as an MHA and a representative of the District of Terra Nova that's what I want. That's what I want my daughter to know about her father, or my family to know about their family member, that that's what we want.

We have to take control. This budget is difficult. It is not something that I really wanted to be a part of, but we had to do that. The other thing is we brought forward in this budget – and I know it's about the \$30 million legacy fund. Now, there was a bill that came forward a couple of weeks ago and it was about the idea of a legacy

fund. I know in one of my previous capacities there was a piece of policy advice that actually came to the previous administration around the development of a legacy fund. It came to this government – and we get accused of not listening, not paying attention. That piece of advice came forward to the previous administration; they did nothing with it. So we brought it forward as a bill in this House, and I can tell you that also got voted against by the Opposition.

If we had a legacy fund in place in this province, we would not have to take some of the measures that we have been able to take today. What I hear from some of the Members opposite is take money from this \$30 million contingency fund and put it into some of the other debt reduction measures we've put in, in terms of community libraries and school libraries, in terms of taxes on books. Take all of that.

If we didn't take some of these steps, it's just as well to say that we're all in agreement to carry the long-term debt forward. Let's leave things status quo. Let's continue to spend like drunken sailors. We don't really care what the situation of this province is. Let's go bankrupt. Is that really what we want? I don't believe so. I know there are people that are emailing us and they're expressing their concern, and I continue to ask people to do that, but come forward with some really good ideas.

The things we have brought forward are the things that we feel we need to do. We've only been in office six months, and I know people are expecting that we're going to solve every issue in six months. I can tell you that cannot happen. It will take time to do that. We will continue to engage people, to hear good ideas. We will continue to discuss them. We encourage everybody to be part of that solution generation process so that, as the next budgets come forward, we can mitigate some of the things we've had to do.

The situation will get better. I can tell you I honestly believe that there is a brighter future. We campaigned on a stronger tomorrow. We will get to a stronger tomorrow. I am truly confident that will happen. I humbly ask that people continue to reach out to us, to bring

forward their ideas, and we will take those under consideration.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Sometimes it never ceases to astound me, some of the things we hear uttered in this hon. House.

The Member for Mount Scio stood on his feet not too long ago and pontificated, lectured and chastised his colleagues just moments ago about other Members stretching their words. Then, within a few moments later, the Member for Terra Nova gets up and twists my words, Madam Chair, as many Members in this hon. House have been doing.

Let me clearly state for the record, and you can continue to get up and twist my words, and I will continue to get up and set the record straight because what I clearly said about the seniors' advocate is on the one hand you guys are saying there's an overspending problem; on the other hand, you spend \$13 million added, new expenditure, line by line expenditures, year after year, for full-day kindergarten and you add to the bottom line another bureaucrat, another civil servant for \$500,000 for a seniors' advocate.

Now, let me clearly state for the record, I strongly believe in a seniors' advocate. What I don't believe in is that the Liberals will listen to a seniors' advocate. So why are you spending half a million dollars to put something in place that you're not even going to respect, because you're certainly not respecting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There are hundreds of thousands of people who are upset with the Liberal government. You're not listening to them. So you haven't convinced me. You have not convinced me that you will listen to a seniors' advocate. So I question why you add another half a million dollars to the bottom line. Clearly, let the record clearly reflect my words, and you can twist them how you like in

the future, and I will get up and continue to clarify the record, Madam Chair.

Now, I'm going to continue – oh, well, welcome back to the Chair, Mr. Chair, nice to see you again. I was busy looking at my colleagues opposite, shaking my head in astonishment at some of the things I hear here.

Anyway, I am now going, Mr. Chair, to go back to reading for the Members opposite and continuing to live in hope that at some point they will begin to listen. I am becoming less and less convinced of it all the time.

Here is an email from the people you represent. It says: I am writing this morning regarding concerns with the Liberal budget, 2016. First and foremost, I am a parent; a single parent at that. The increase in taxes and levy will make it extremely difficult for me to make ends meet and provide the life my three children deserve without having to penny-pinch. Although it was a good move to not impose the levy on individuals earning less than \$50,000 annually, the Liberal government neglected to look at the whole picture. What about – and this is my hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands who just spoke of this – a two-income household making almost \$100,000 between them. They are freed from the levy, while I make less than that but still have to pay for it. Not fair.

What she's alluding to, of course, is a family with two incomes making just below \$50,000, in the \$49,000-ish range. They would escape the levy, whereas she would still have to pay. So there are lots of arguments to be made about how application of the levy is unfair and how many people do feel it was something that was done without much thought, and without thorough consideration of all the aspects. That's all people are saying, can you take a second look.

This person goes on to say: Secondly, I am an educator. It is beyond frustrating to see the cuts that are happening in our schools and the impact they will have. Implementing combined classes with little to no training for teachers is wrong.

Mr. Chair, this is how the people feel. This person feels it's wrong. Some people may feel it's right. I'm reading into the record the fact

that not everyone does. This person clearly feels it's wrong. If you were to actually do a survey of how people felt about your budget decisions versus a survey of an imaginary link, you just might find the answers to the questions that you're talking about.

I see the Member – his face with a scowl. Let me rephrase that: A link that can't happen at this point in time because we don't have billions of dollars to build it, so you say.

Are we truly prepared for full-day kindergarten? Is the necessary infrastructure in place? Many schools are already busting at the seams. We have extremely dedicated and effective teachers in our province; however, when these changes are made without appropriate planning it increases stress.

Madam Chair – Mr. Chair. Sorry, I keep forgetting you're back in the Chair. We are all tired. The minister is not even listening. These are concerns being expressed about education and the minister is over there laughing and not even paying attention to this email.

This person goes on to say – and I do hope that the Minister of Education begins to listen: Stress on school staffs, stress on students and stress on families. This, in turn, negatively impacts both the learning and working environment. How much does the Liberal government truly value our future? Thank you for your continued support in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Chair, that's why we're still going here in the House of Assembly because there are people out there who are asking us to continue the good fight on their behalf because they feel like they're not being listened to. One has to wonder – really does have to wonder – how they could say on one hand we have a problem with too much spending, we have to rein in the spending, and at the same time you crank it up and you spend more. It doesn't make sense. There's something that's not logical about what's happening here.

Another person goes on to say: So your answer to overspending by the Tories is overtaxing by the Grits. They go on to reference – I don't know if this is okay to read into the record, I think it is, Mr. Chair. This is the email directly

from an individual: Are you rich doctors, entrepreneurs so blind that you can't see that Joe Public is suffering diminished income just like the province. They refer to some people and say you need to come down from your high-income jobs and see what real people are actually living on. You're looking very greedy.

Mr. Chair, that's understandable. From someone who is living on a fixed income or someone who is working two jobs just to make ends meet so they can afford to keep food in their fridge and keep their lights on and keep their old clunker of a vehicle going so they can get back and forth to work, just to make ends meet, they certainly are not going to be able to withstand all the tax increases like those individuals who are more fortunate will be able to do so. So you can understand why they are frustrated. I know I certainly can.

This person goes on to say: I voted Liberal, but I have to say that I'm highly disappointed in the outcome of my vote. I will admit that I am illiterate when it comes to knowing how to run a government; however, I am not stupid. I'm certainly not stupid enough to know that all these cutbacks and taxes are going to hurt the poor and middle-class people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The way I see it is why work anymore? The only way we are going to survive is to be on welfare or to be rich, and we all know the latter isn't going to happen unless we all win the lottery.

Mr. Chair, Members opposite – I know we're all tired and they can get up and throw attacks at us across the way and try to provoke us all to get angry, but that's not what this is about. This is about calmly and rationally trying to bring the voice of the people forward. Trying to get the Liberal government of the day to realize people are not happy with your budget choices. Trying to get the Liberal government of the day to recognize there are better choices that you can make.

You get up and you talk about bankruptcy and you do the fear mongering. My gosh, we've had a debt-to-GDP ratio 20 per cent higher than what it is today all through the '90s. Don't be telling people we are going to go bankrupt and have them all frightened to death. That is exaggerated

on your part. I was very, very thankful to at least hear the Premier acknowledge that's something that's not going to happen. He doesn't have that in his key messaging.

I was proud to hear that, Mr. Chair, because he certainly does indicate that he has confidence in the people of the province, as do all of us on this side of the House. Hopefully, those Members opposite, who actually think we're going bankrupt, should talk to the Premier and find out that is certainly not the case.

With that, Mr. Chair, my speaking time is coming to a close. I look forward to participating more in this debate as the afternoon goes on.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak.

CHAIR (Warr): The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

What I thought I'd talk about in this 10-minute session, it's been a reflection we're seeing – let's use the term manifestation of emotions, sometimes loose slips of the tongue, as we get a little bit tired. Fatigue is one, perhaps, reason why this happens, but also I hear constantly – and I've been very lucky in my career to have worked, frankly, all over the world. I've worked in a lot of tough situations, so as representative in Labrador, as a guy who has been there since 1987, I got to say what I heard this morning, I found very upsetting.

The whole idea that somehow basic services in Labrador are considered a luxury – and I'm not sure even if the author intended to say that, so I'm willing to suggest there's the benefit of the doubt. But the convoluted way in which it was presented by the Member for Mount Pearl North, I just find completely troubling.

As I've said, I've worked in places like Russia, Turkmenistan where, frankly, the ability to even find a glass of water was a challenge. I spent a month once on the Iranian border, with 16 other people, and we had a difficult time finding food and finding water. When you go through an

experience like that, you really understand what Third World is all about. You also understand what the basic services that any human being in society should be able to avail of should be in front of you and we should be able to provide that basic elements of life.

To suggest somehow that basic services on the Coast of Labrador, or frankly anywhere else in our province – and there are other communities that are being very challenged with infrastructure – is somehow a luxury or to even confuse those terms, I find extremely upsetting.

I'm not sure if I'm out of time here.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, you've got 10 minutes.

MR. TRIMPER: Okay (inaudible) I am going to go into another theme, but I don't want to lose the point.

AN HON. MEMBER: We are with you.

MR. TRIMPER: Good.

The fact that this province and areas such as coastal Labrador remain, at this day, still struggling with running water, proper sewage, access to heating, a good, warm home, a community that is safe and so on, we can all see elements of need. But again, I found that reference this morning just extremely troubling, extremely disturbing.

I looked at my two colleagues for Labrador West and for Torngat Mountains and to my other colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and speaking for myself as a non-Labradorian – I was not born in this area. I must say I do everything in my power and am very happy to be here representing Lake Melville and one of the four great districts of Labrador.

We need to get the message out to people to understand why it is – and I have heard people say, why is Labrador always whining? Why is Labrador always complaining? I look at my other colleague from the southwest corner of Newfoundland and some of the communities he represents, why are these people in rural parts of this province always whining and complaining? Well, you know what they are doing, is they are

trying to raise the point to the rest of the province that we have a great indifference –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. TRIMPER: He claims he is not whining. He actually articulates the issues very well.

If we are not speaking out, these situations are not being addressed. I had the good fortune of working on the relocation of Davis Inlet to Natuashish. I often hear reference to the fact that look at all the millions of dollars that were spent on moving that community, what a waste of money, blah, blah, blah and so on. Well, you just had to have spent some time in Davis Inlet. It was called Utshimasits. In Innu-aimun that meant land of the boss. Do you know why they called it that? It is because of one day back in 1967 the school board, Catholic Church and government all pulled in the community and said you guys are moving. We're shipping you up to a lovely little rock crop island and we're going to put you there because we can get our boats in there. It's all going to be good, just trust us.

They didn't know what the heck was going on. They knew they were being told they had no choice. They called it Utshimasits. It wasn't until many years later that I think folks who didn't understand the language understood what they were saying, what they were going through.

I think about all the effort – it frankly took huge human tragedy to get government to react to finally getting that relocation in place. I played a role; I was involved in the environmental assessment. My gosh, it was good that we finally did it. We still are struggling with the mental challenge and support around that, but we did it. I give due credit to the previous administration because they started to get it and understand it.

So what I want to say in this point is that we have to be careful to not slip back. Stupid statements like a dictatorship, like we're living under a dictatorship, and whatever the intent of that was meant, I can tell you I have lived under a dictatorship. At least I've worked in those societies, where I've had colleagues who were afraid to speak out. One fellow that I used to work with – he is now the minister for natural resources in the commie republic. He is a former

employee of mine; his father was killed for speaking out.

He was an environmental activist and he spoke about some of the problems around oil production – I spoke about this last night – the abuses around the oil industry, and he was trying to identify some of the problems that were going on. As the country struggled to get more revenue, he spoke out under a dictatorship and he ended up being killed in a drive-by shooting.

I've seen that kind of activity, and I have to tell you we live in a very good province. We have our struggles and we need to continue to advocate for progress, but we do not have the right to suggest that anywhere in this province we are living under a dictatorship or that we have a Third World situation. I just wanted to put that out there.

I also go to my reference from my colleague for St. John's Centre and she was talking about the role of women. I couldn't agree with her more. I think that there's so much progress to be made. Some of the countries I've worked in, particularly in the Middle East, wow, what struggles. We really have so much to be happy with what we're doing. That doesn't mean we need to take the foot off the accelerator. There is so much opportunity for us to set an example. Some of these societies are very old. They don't do well with change.

We're a relatively new society in North America. So we are evolving constantly; that's what democracy is all about. New ideas come to the floor, we're able to implement legislation and we're able to implement change. When I look at places like UAE, Jordan; Jordan is not so bad but Saudi Arabia – I've not worked there, but I've been there. Boy, oh boy, you'd better be very careful what you say and do, how you dress, how you behave, where your place is in society and do not come outside that threshold, or you are going to find yourself in a lot of trouble.

I wanted to take some time just to talk about we need to be very careful about our references to our situation. Are we in a difficult time right now? Absolutely. Is it as bad as a Third World or living under a dictatorship, or worse?

Absolutely not. We are going to get through this together if we work together.

Another comment that I heard just this morning – and I think I’m going to save some heavy-duty numbers for perhaps another opportunity this afternoon. The comment was made just a few minutes ago about the problems of oil. Well, the problems of oil – the oil and gas industry is very important to this province. It has provided a great deal of wealth to us. It is one of those great resources – and how good a timing. The Minister of Natural Resources just walked in; she’s got a great responsibility there.

This sector does not need our chastising; it needs our support. But as the political aspect of how decisions are being made and how our economy is directed to the future, we need to understand that the revenue from the oil and gas sector is going to provide an opportunity to solve our problems, but it should not be taken carte blanche. The revenues that we receive, we cannot use them to say solve all of our problems. We need to understand how much we’re going to get, when it’s going to be available and then check our spending.

As I said, I think it was around 2 o’clock this morning, I spoke about the fact that back in 2006-2007, had we checked our spending with our revenue at the time when we were at peak oil and peak production, we really could be in a situation – and had we gone forward in our planning and in our budget saying we are not going to spend beyond our means, we are not going to spend beyond the revenues that we are very fortunate to have in our province, today, we would probably be in a situation of actually having a small surplus in our budget.

Instead, we continued to spend – and yes, we spent on a lot of needed thing; no question, we did that. Nevertheless when you go from a have-not province for, frankly, most of our history to now finding ourselves with some affluence and so on, we really needed to have checked our expectations.

In terms of saying that you shouldn’t have done it this way or you shouldn’t have done it that way, I am not going to get into that. I’m not a blame-game kind of guy. What I like to do is point out the fact, though, that we do need an

attitude shift. As we anticipate the revenues that are going to come from our natural resources, from our industry, from our opportunities, from the workforce by the way, which is second to none – this province has a great workforce and these folks are going to pull us out of it, but we need to make sure that as we go forward, the spending is very much in sync with the revenues that we are generating.

A final little thought and it is just another little comment. In Happy Valley-Goose Bay, we had a very difficult time finding a United Church minister. I actually did several sermons myself, called meditations. Perhaps I was practising to become a politician. Anyway when they finally, and mercifully for myself, ended up with a minister and his family – they just showed up in Happy Valley-Goose Bay; they are from Nigeria, of all places. They just arrived in December. They left some plus 30, plus 40 degree temperatures to now probably minus 30, minus 40. I used to see them going down the streets over winter with the whole family. They have three or four children all wearing parkas, just terrified of the cold weather.

The point that he made to me the other day – I asked the reverend: How’s it going? What are some of your impressions? He had just come from the day before – and the Minister of Justice would find this interesting. He had just attended the prison that we have in Goose Bay. He wanted to go and meet with some of the inmates and talk to them. He had heard about some of the issues. Anyway, the comment I’m going to pass on, it’s just another way to check expectations. He came back and he said: My goodness, Minister, they are living in a hotel – they are living in a hotel. He said they are not beaten every day. He said they actually have running water and sewage and they are treated decently and so on. They’re treated like human beings. I found that comment just struck me again of how lucky we are.

Again, I just want to leave with a thought of striking the right balance. We got to keep working as we are, but let’s not describe ourselves as a Third World dictatorship.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise again in debate. The last number of days there has been quite interesting, expressing of ideas and opinions, and certainly hearing from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on a wide range of issues. I want to thank those out there that have sent a lot of information in to us as Opposition Members and MHAs to ask us to get up and present in the people's House related to *Budget 2016* some of the concerns and issues they have with the particulars of the budget; as well, some suggestions and some acknowledgement of some of the things that there are in the budget that they're certainly happy to see.

So it's been a full spectrum of discussion, and I think that's very important. I think that was the intent of this process, to make sure people certainly are heard and the can express their opinions.

I was interested to hear the remarks of the Minister of Environment and Conservation. Some of his commentary he had – we have something in common in regard to a particular project in my district down in Portugal Cove South, the proposed UNESCO designation for Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve. I was glad to see the minister is certainly supportive of that.

I know over the past number of years, through the prior administration, we've invested heavily financially in support and public policy of that application, and a lot of work has gone into it over the past number of years. I am certainly looking forward to the department and the government of the day continuing to support that initiative, because it's extremely important that UNESCO designation be achieved. We had some good feedback the last couple of weeks in that there were five that have been recommended, and Mistaken Point is one of those. I think we get the news in July on the final confirmation – we hope.

MR. TRIMPER: The 17th.

MR. HUTCHINGS: The 17th of July, the minister tells ne, which is pretty exciting, and

looking forward to that UNESCO designation for the province and for Canada just to have another UNESCO designation. Over 600 million-year old fossils, some of them very unique and some haven't even been named yet, in terms of the discovery of them and how they're named. So it's very important for the region as well in terms of not only the conservation and protection of these unique fossils from a world perspective, but as well for the visitation we have to the area and tourism, small business, all of those things that go along with having a site like that and having the visitations that come from that.

I understand the minister had a visit a little while back, took the short ride out, took the 45-minute trail down to Mistaken Point. I certainly encourage any of my colleagues here in the House or anybody that hasn't been there to take it in. Take the trip to Portugal Cove South; stop at our interpretation centre there; great staff that work there, a great facility that's been built over the past number of years.

We look to expand that, look for support for that in the years to come. With the increased numbers we've seen and what we expect to see with UNESCO designation, we're going to need increases in that infrastructure and in the facility.

As well, it's important to recognize all those volunteers in the region that over the past number of years have provided protection to the fossils in that region. We know back many years ago there's been an attempt to take some, to cut them out of the rocks actually. Because of the work of people in the cove and the surrounding areas, they've done tremendous work in terms of the protection and conservation of those fossils. I know in a prior year we had extended the region in regard to the protection zone, taking in a greater area to make sure that all were protected. So it's a pretty exciting opportunity.

We talk about economic development and things we need to see in this budget. I don't think we've seen a lot in regard to the government. We'll wait to see what's to come. I know I'm certainly happy to see the minister supportive of this venture, and would need his help and the government's help as we move forward in regard to building the infrastructure we do around that. I look to see support for that in the

budget and through his department. As I said, it's extremely important for the activity on the Southern Avalon and to drive that economic and social activity. That's so important.

The other thing I wanted to mention too – and from that we had discussions in the last number of days in regard to infrastructure and the importance of that. In this budget, my colleagues on the other side have talked about over half a billion dollars in infrastructure spending. I know in our time, the previous administration spent significantly in regard to infrastructure. I think collectively almost in the range of \$6 billion, which we believe and I believe everybody does believe it was well needed in regard to various aspects of infrastructure. Whether it's hospitals, personal care homes – I'm sorry long-term care homes – schools, road infrastructure, all of those things are so very important – recreation infrastructure; in municipal affairs, everything from municipal buildings, fire equipment, all those things that are needed by the great volunteers in those municipalities.

That was all part of an infrastructure spend to grow our communities, build our communities. Because that builds sustainability when you have what we need in communities where people can live, they can provide those services and they are confident that those services are available to them.

So that was infrastructure that we spent. Some of it was based on the royalties that we received from our offshore; others just through our regular taxation regimes. All of that was about building Newfoundland and Labrador to where we are today. We have heard, as I said, conversations from across the way in regard to what the investment is – I think they say it's a little over \$500 million. I asked the other day and maybe sometime we'll get the numbers on it. Is that all new infrastructure spending, or is some of that tied to prior approvals in prior years from the prior administration?

I would suggest some of it is, maybe not, but certainly it would nice to have some clarity on exactly how that's broken out. No doubt, everybody knows whether you're building a new school, building a new highway, municipal capital works buildings or whatever it is, water and sewer, it takes some time once the approval

is done to get engineering and design work done and other things like that to get it operational. Once operational, it's not often – sometimes you can, but it's not always that you can complete that project within the construction season so it may flow over one or two years, and in some cases maybe into the third depending on the type of project and the size and the scope of that project. That would be interesting to see just where we are to in regard to how that's broken out on actual brand new dollars for infrastructure.

The other thing that we've heard from the federal government is in regard to increase in infrastructure spending and how that equates to this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know in prior Question Periods weeks back, I asked the Premier, based on our fiscal circumstance and the dramatic reduction in oil, what other help are we getting from the federal government. We asked about the equalization piece. We've been through that; very little came out of that.

There was an indication some time ago, the Premier referenced, that in lieu of some help, we would get greater access to infrastructure. But I'm not sure if that means Newfoundland and Labrador is getting anything greater on a per capita basis than any other province in Canada, or are we getting our amount based on the envelope that the federal government has in regard to infrastructure spending on a per capita basis similar to any other province in Canada.

Now, that's fine if we are, but I guess the question was, and we'll continue to ask, what other special assistance is Newfoundland and Labrador getting based on our dramatic drop in oil prices and revenues over the past couple of years from the federal government. Are we getting over and above, through infrastructure, getting some special help, Through the equalization program that's set up, there's a stabilization component. We have very small dollars in that. We've got \$32 million out of the stabilization fund based on the fact I think the formula is that 50 per cent reduction in oil revenues over one year, if you get access, based on a formula, it's \$61 per person on a per capita basis. That is how the calculation is done. That number came up many years ago, so it's not

even relevant, I don't think, to today's cost based on individual population.

So, with that, we've asked again, through infrastructure, will we get additional dollars over and above a per capita ratio. I don't think we have. So these are some of the things, the concerns, obviously to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We look at investments we're getting, dealing with this current situation we have and what help and other help we expect to get from the federal government.

We have other areas in the fishery. The prime minister – prior to being elected – had indicated he would honour the fisheries fund that was negotiated. To date, we certainly haven't seen anything regarding that, but we certainly look forward to that and getting some good news from the federal government through the partnership hopefully with this current government.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly, it's a pleasure for me to stand again. I wanted to stand because it's soon going to be my time for a shift change. I've been here now so long, overnight, that if my speech is somewhat slurred, it's because of lack of sleep and nothing else, I can assure you.

I just wanted to make a few comments, Mr. Chair. Since the shift change this morning at 8:30, I must say that I have really, really enjoyed this discussion. I have the utmost respect for the former premier and the House Leader. I sit and I listen because every time they speak – I know that my good friend for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune is saying recognize her too, but right now I can't put you in the same category, sorry. I must say I sit here and when these two gentlemen get up, they make a lot of sense and I really respect the information they give. I think they are so genuine about what they're talking about. Before I get a chance to sit down, I wanted to recognize that because I think it's important. We have had some good discussions.

The House Leader talked about infrastructure. I think it's very important that we talk about infrastructure because right now, Mr. Chair, I don't know how often it has happened in the past because I'm new to this House and I'm new to this portfolio, but since I became minister in December, I have met with my colleague in Ottawa, Minister Sohi, on three occasions. That's three occasions within five months. I think that speaks volumes for itself.

If all of us looked at the federal budget and we looked at the initiatives the federal government is looking at, they have been very clear that they are going to be making extra money available for capital spending. In fact, I think there are several billions of dollars that are now put into green energy, waste water.

One of the other things, Mr. Chair, I was able to work with my colleague, Minister Sohi, under the original Building Canada Fund there were significant restrictions that prevented Newfoundland and Labrador in accessing the new Building Canada Fund. So I can appreciate and understand some of the frustrations that the former administration must have had in trying to deal with that, because some of the restrictions really prevented, outside of St. John's, a lot of the rural areas from being able to participate in the new Building Canada Fund.

It was important for me as minister, and certainly the Minister of Municipal Affairs as well, it was important for us to make that a top priority. Because we felt that if there is federal funding that's available, and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador being geographically as large as it is, and the fact that many of our communities could not qualify under the existing regulations, it was important for us to lobby on behalf of the people and communities to make sure that we would be included in that.

Mr. Chair, I must say, we had a lot of success. As a matter of fact, my good colleague, Minister Sohi, is going to come down to St. John's very shortly and we're going to have another meeting and follow up on that.

What we've been able to do is we've been able to re-profile some of the requests we had that previously did not qualify under the existing

criteria that was there. We're able to re-profile some of these infrastructure requests out of the Building Canada Fund. Some of them, like the waste water piece, now could go into the Green Fund and so on and so forth, as a result of that and the removal of some of the restrictions.

For example, one of the biggest restrictions was when we looked at some of our roads where we needed 10,000 vehicles. Well, Mr. Chair, an average of 10,000 vehicles a day, there are not many areas in the province that that would fit. So a lot of our smaller communities didn't qualify.

In conversation with the minister, and discussions with the minister, we lobbied hard on that. They came back and said, yeah, we understand, we get it. We're going to be in a position to reduce from 10,000 to 1,000. That one elimination of that criteria, just one, enabled us to access more funding. What will happen now is a lot of the reprofiling that we've done in the waste water management area under Transportation and Works will now give us an ability to leverage more money into our roads, and some of the smaller communities that would not have qualified will now be able to access that.

For the Member opposite, I think that's a good move. I think the House Leader last night also talked about it, because we do have somewhere about \$570 million that's been allocated for infrastructure funding this year. The House Leader last night was wondering about what percentage of that might have come from last year, and year over year. I think, if my memory serves me right, it's somewhere around 30 per cent that we were able to look at and move through. So we're working on some of the projects that actually came through from the previous administration, and we're working through that.

One of the other areas that I made sure, the previous government committed about \$18 million in roadwork from last fall. When it came to my desk – and these were tenders that were out – one of the first things I said was that's not going to stop. All of these projects are going to continue. We're going to honour what the previous government had committed to. So that was one of the first things.

As a matter of fact, I was able to make that announcement in the early part of March, that we will be continuing these projects. I think there was somewhere close to \$18 million in that block of funding, and then we added another \$10 million in that block of funding. Then subsequent to that, we, in April, were able to get the other block of funding out. So we're now in the vicinity of over \$60 million in roadwork.

These are significant commitments that I think are important. I think they're important. Just because we had a new government, just because we had a new administration coming in here, does not mean, or should not mean that everything the previous government had committed, that we would drop it. Certainly, from my department, that was a commitment I made and that was a commitment I wanted to continue. I think, Mr. Chair, that's a way in which we can work in co-operation and to make sure that we're not politicizing some of the decisions that are made.

The other decision I wanted to make, particularly in the roadwork – and it was new for me in the department and as a new minister. I wanted to really get a feel for how things were going. One of the things I said first and foremost is that any decisions that I want to make when it comes to roads – because I do have 1,500 requests. I've got \$1 billion I need.

One of the first things I asked my department to do was to bring in all of our regional directors. Let's forget about what political districts are out there. One of the first things I want to do, I want to make my decisions that are evidence based, that are based on merit, that are based on going through a criteria, and that's how we categorized what roads we did. No politics on this piece at all this time around, Mr. Chair, and hopefully not in the future either, because I believe we should not depend on that.

The time is gone for us to do a kilometre in this district and a kilometre in another district and a kilometre in another district. The time for that has gone. It's more important for us to do three kilometres in one district, and the other two districts – well, if they're not ranking up there, maybe year two and year three.

This summer I made a commitment, Mr. Chair, that we will continue that, and we are going to put together a five-year plan. Part of that five-year plan is another analysis through consultation within the districts; all districts, Liberal districts, NDP districts, PC districts. We will do consultations with the regional directors on how we're going to go through that process and work through that. We're looking forward to that, Mr. Chair, and certainly have some results in the fall.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to (inaudible).

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise behind the hon. Minister of Transportation and Works who did state that we'll be working in co-operation. I'm sure somewhere along the way I must have said something that rubbed a nerve; but anyway, that's fine.

We will ask the minister now – I have been posed a question, actually. The residents of Hermitage, Seal Cove, Gaultois and McCallum are quite concerned about the decline in their health care services. They have established a new committee that intends to increase its efforts with respect to its advocating for a return of these services. They have a question, and this question is for the Minister of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: Mr. Chair, can I have some silence, please? It's a bit hard to hear.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MS. PERRY: This question is for the Minister of Transportation. We have been trying for several days to get an answer. I'm hoping the minister can stand up again, in 10 minutes behind me, and provide us with an answer, because we don't know the answer to this question. So he can hopefully clarify this for us.

The residents of Hermitage, one of their grave concerns with having to travel to Harbour Breton is they are hearing that there will be a new policy implemented by Transportation and Works – we don't know if this is true, and that's what we would like to hear from you – that it's going to require now six centimetres of snow before the plows are going to be allowed to be called out. We don't know the answer and when I conclude my speech, if you could get up and answer that for us, we would be absolutely delighted to know the answer. They do have a meeting –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. PERRY: Mr. Chair, again, I can't hear myself speak. Certainly when I sit down, if you could stand up and answer that question, we would be very happy to hear that.

As well, Mr. Chair, I have here before me an email that was sent – and I think we're going to be here for all of summer to get through all the emails that are coming in. This one is from a constituent of the Minister of Transportation and Works. He's wrote us a letter. He's forwarded, I guess, us an email that he sent with this question as well – or not a question; he wants to talk about the impact of *Budget 2016* on his circumstance:

Good morning, I just wanted to write you and thank you for forcing decisions on me that are not in the best interest of my business, a business that I have worked so hard to build for all of my life. I own a daycare. You're new all-day kindergarten will kill six full-time spaces for me. The new rule of no more subsidies for two-year-olds chop me off at the knees on that end, and is the nail in the coffin.

To take away transportation for the parents who have no way to get their children to my daycare – I have a single mom who works at a fish plant an hour away from here. Her daughter was to get dropped off to her elderly aunt until my daycare opened, and then the taxi was to pick her up and bring her here until the end of the day. That can't happen because the taxi was cut. Thanks.

I employ a single mom of three boys. This is her only income. I employ another mom of two boys and I have a private driver that is paid for by

Central Health. The money she gets is used to put her daughter through university.

Lastly, I employ another single mom of two boys who works for me part-time and at a Shoppers Drug Mart. Why two jobs? Well, she got off social services to better herself, but now she can't afford the medication her son needs for his bad heart. He's being placed on the heart transplant list because the valve that they put in during open heart surgery in Toronto last year didn't work. It's drying up.

So thank you so much for having a part in destroying my business. I have two step kids of my own. I guess instead of volunteering at the soup kitchen, I'll be a guest. I hope your day is well. Mine, not so much.

Mr. Chair, that's the kind of impact *Budget 2016* is having on life after life after life after life of citizens in this province. I recognize Members opposite don't like to hear it, but it's a reality. It's the reason why we're in this filibuster. It's the reason why the people of this province have expressed their dissatisfaction with budget 2013-2014 – sorry, 2016-17. My, I am tired as well. Like the Minister of Transportation, no, it's not due to drinking; it's certainly sleep deprivation. Now that it's a bit quieter here I might be able to hear the Minister of Transportation.

With respect to that five centimetres of snow – because these people are having a meeting tonight and this is a grave concern. Would that be accurate that it will be six centimetres of snow on the ground before the plows are called out? Is that a policy change or do people not have that to worry about in addition to everything else? We certainly look forward to hearing the minister's answer on that, Mr. Chair.

I also have here – and I have to scroll down because the emails are, as I said, still coming fast and furious. This one speaks to the role of women in politics. It was sent to us by a man. His question that he has that he would like answered by Members opposite: Can someone please explain to me how the very rare late-night or overnight sitting of the House discourages women from running in politics, but does not discourage them from the female-dominated nursing profession where 12-hour overnight shifts are regular and expected?

It's a very valid point this gentleman raises. I would put forth, Mr. Chair, as a woman, in my opinion, it's perhaps more of the language and the bullying that is a deterrent. I know my very first time in the House I came and I sat –and I was trying to recover, actually, from a very serious car accident on my way to the House for the very first sitting. I made it as far as Butterpot Park and we had to swerve to avoid what we thought was a sack of potatoes and I ended up with a C7 facet joint fracture, and very lucky that I'm not paralyzed from the neck down and don't get caught up about petty things these days because I appreciate the greater things in life.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: I thank God every day for the fact that I'm okay.

When I first got here, the person who is in a higher position here in the House today, I spoke to him and I said My God, all the heckling. There has to be a calmer way. This person explained to me that some of that was normal and a part of politics and, in some ways, people expected some theatre in politics. So I accepted that and, as time went on, I became a heckler myself. That's what happens after nine years in politics, I guess, I must confess.

Anyway, Mr. Chair, I do have two minutes on the clock so I'd like to leave it for the Minister of Transportation, if he could get up and explain to us about the policy about the snow clearing that would be greatly appreciated.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased to advise the Member opposite that the Minister of Transportation and Works has just come and advised me that there is no policy change to the area that the Member is talking about. The policy on that snow clearing is exactly the same as it was when the Members opposite were sitting over here on the government side last fall. So that's what the minister has advised me and there's the answer to your question.

I wanted to follow up on some questions. The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands suggested that somebody had contacted him and said that we could save money by adopting Finland's model of education because only in Finland, which has arguably the best system of education in the world, they only go to school three days a week. So we could save money because they go to school three days a week. Well, the question that immediately comes to mind is: Where do the children go the two days of the week, assuming moms and dads, or mom or dad, whoever is their caregiver, works five days a week? Where do they go the other two days of the week, because right now children go to school five days a week?

I'd just like to advise the Member – you can tell the person this and I'm happy to provide the research on this or point them in the right direction – Finland has free full-day kindergarten and also free universal child care. So if we were to adopt the model that Finland has, we would have universal child care for children at four years old, three years old, two years old and one year old; and let's just say – I'll use a conservative figure – \$25 million a year, so there is \$100 million right there to adopt the universal Finland model of child care and still we have the added cost of full-day kindergarten. Let's just cut it off, let's say it is three-fifths of what we are now, so we're over \$100 million. So that is not a cost-saving measure and I just wanted to provide that feedback.

Other things – one of the Members got up and said is the infrastructure going to be ready for full-day kindergarten for September. The answer is yes. There's been significant investments in full-day kindergarten. Four major extensions to schools have been carried out; 16 modular classrooms have been added; there have been some 100 renovations to classrooms done; 14 tractor trailer loads of supplies and equipment for full-day kindergarten. Contrary to what somebody said about teachers not being ready, I'm not hearing that from teachers. There have been 2½ days of professional development provided for full-day kindergarten, which is a lot of professional development when it comes to that area.

Yes, we could do a lot more in the way of professional development but, as professional development goes for teachers, that's quite good. The new teachers, there'll be 143 positions for full-day kindergarten and the new teachers who are coming into the system will get professional development in the fall.

As I pointed out the other day, despite all the accusations that there are no opportunities for teachers in the province, as I said, since mid-May there have been 400 job opportunities advertised by the English School District – since mid-May, 400 job opportunities advertised by the English School District, positions of varying durations.

This suggestion that because of the net reduction of 73 teaching units in this year's budget that there are mass layoffs of teachers is not true. It is not true. There are opportunities for teachers. As I said to the graduating class of teachers at the NLTA teachers induction ceremony just last week, there are plenty of opportunities in education and if I get my way, there'll be plenty of opportunities more but we just have to manage our way through the hump.

Also, the Member said we have problems with special education needs already, so why are we implementing full-day kindergarten. I will say two things. This year there was supposed to be 32 teaching units removed from the system, according to our policy, because of declining enrolment. One of the biggest problems we have right now is our declining enrolment in schools.

I insisted to my colleagues in Cabinet that we keep some of those positions. So of the 32 that were supposed to go due to declining enrolment, I convinced my colleagues that we keep 27 of them for inclusive education purposes, for special education teachers. So we have 27 additional special education teachers. The budget does not cut any special services and there are no reductions to any specialist teaching positions, unlike a couple of years ago when there was 160 positions cut – and that was a net reduction.

There's also 115 additional hours of student assistant time every single day to support full-day kindergarten. But the point I'd really like to get through is that all the research on early

learning and care shows that if children are in a regulated child care setting or full-day kindergarten or in a primary school setting at an early age, we are able to identify their special needs early. About 50 per cent of the special needs in Newfoundland and Labrador are behavioural or speech language. Those two special needs, if arrested at an early age, we can not only help that child be more successful in life, we can save ourselves a ton of money by not having to do later interventions which are less successful than the early interventions.

So if you think about Ontario, which has full-day kindergarten for four-year-olds as well – I mean, we're just talking about moving for five-year-olds – they are more easily able to intervene and provide the sorts of support services to children with special education needs so they're more successful in life and we don't have pay later for the lack of identification early.

Now, the other things that have been talked about, Intensive Core French – I understand that people are upset. There are 179 students in the province who are affected by the change in the policy in Intensive Core French. As I've said before, while it's not something that I was happy to do, this is an optional program that the vast majority of Newfoundland and Labrador students do not have access to. If we had the money we would expand the program, but the simple fact is that we don't and through the Government Renewal Initiative, this was something that was identified as an area where we could find efficiencies. It's as simple that, and I've said that time and again.

The combined grades – this is another thing – change affects 628 students largely in urban areas of the province. Yes, we have not seen multigrading in those areas of the province in some time. Although in Corner Brook there were combined grades at some point, and people have said that was a great program. There are other examples of the province.

The research literature overwhelmingly shows that there is no disadvantage when it comes to student achievement, when it comes to combined grade classes, which are in place in downtown Vancouver, downtown Toronto, downtown Edmonton, suburban Moncton, you name it. Across the country, this is the norm. It

has been implemented as an efficiency measure to make the teacher allocation formula more efficient. I have said that and I have acknowledged that this also puts additional responsibilities on teachers. My wife is a teacher and so I get it – I get it – but 628 students are affected by this.

And, by the way, including the fact that the research literature shows that there's no detrimental effect on student achievement we are providing professional development for those teachers before the end of this school year. The person who is providing that professional development is the person whose full-time job in the Government of Ontario is to train people on how to do combined grades teaching. The person whose full-time job in Ontario, with the Government of Ontario, to do PD on combined grades is coming down here to give PD to all the teachers who are going to be doing combined grades to the 628 students in the province this fall.

The other thing was the school closures. There are approximately 200 students affected by school closures. One of those schools had one student. Now that student is moving to a different school. Another one of those schools had three students. So those 200 students, they're still going to get to school, and they're going to have to travel to school.

When I was a child I was bused to school and there are a great many children in this province who are bused to school. Is it ideal? You can argue that, no doubt, but they'll still get education.

The other thing I just want to say again: 5,000 students are going to benefit from full-day kindergarten in the fall – 5,000. There are about 1,000 students that are affected by the Intensive Core French change, the combined grades change, which I am confident which will work, then the school closures. There are about 1,000 students.

There are about 5,000 families that were promised full-day kindergarten 2½ years ago by the previous administration. We all stood up here in the House of Assembly and said that was a good thing. I continue to think it's a good thing. We have endorsed it. I know the other

side wants to cancel it now because they have reservations. We'll see what happens. We're confident it's going to work.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

When I was up last, I was running through a list and discussing some examples of petitions that had been presented by the Opposition when we were in government, when we were on the other side in government and they were in the Opposition. I talked about how when we came to the House we made reductions –the Minister of Education just talked about some of them – and how the Opposition would continue to come in and ask for more, and would advocate for more, and would speak against reductions, or cuts, as they were, and look for more funding.

Another petition I came across here that was delivered several times by the former Member for Conception Bay South, MHA Rex Hillier, and I think it was several times that it was brought in. It was to review the level of policing in Conception Bay South with an objective of increasing police services and improving public safety for residents. That was a petition – I remember well him bringing that many times into the House.

What's really interesting, because I mentioned earlier that some of the petitions that Members opposite brought in when they were in Opposition have been acted upon. Some were acted upon by us when we were in power, and some have been acted upon by their government while they were in power. And good for them for doing so, but there are others here as well as this one, reviewing the level of policing in Conception Bay South with an objective of increasing police services and improving public safety, was one that the former Member, MHA Rex Hillier, had brought in several times.

It's really interesting to point out, because in this budget this year, this government has decided, actually, to reduce policing resources. They have

reduced policing resources, putting greater pressure on policing and the needs of policing. We know we live in a time when there's an increased concern about the amount of crime, violent crime, drug-related crime, property crimes. As well, I know the investigators who work property crimes are carrying heavy caseloads these days and had some significant break and enters.

A friend of mine recently had his house broken into. It was a house under construction that he'd been building, essentially himself with some sub-trades, but himself. He's been building it for two years. He lost approximately \$80,000 of brand new equipment and materials from a break and entry in his house. He knows the investigators are quite busy. He had all new – TVs, and they bought furniture. They had some stuff brought in and so on; a nice house they built. It's in my district. He's been a long time working on this home, and a dream home for this family and lost so much. He's been able to get some of it recovered himself, but the far majority of it is not being recovered and most likely won't be. He has expressed to me his own experience through all this process is how busy and how taxed current investigators are when this government is reducing policing.

Now I should explain when I say they're reducing policing services. We had made a commitment a few years back to increase the complement of RNC officers by 20 officers, and 10 of those have been implemented. There had been an increase of 10 and there was another 10 to be added this year. There are four vacancies, which the positions have been eliminated. They're not going to fill those four vacancies, and there are 10 they're not going to fill.

What is most interesting and most concerning from my perspective, is that currently there are about 400 – the Minister is across the way, maybe he can confirm the number. I think there are about 420 officers in the RNC, roughly. I'm not sure if I'm going to get an answer there, but 420 officers currently in the RNC. The last count I heard was – when I asked him in Question Period after we went through Estimates, I think the number he said was 126 officers today who are eligible to walk out the door and retire.

There are approximately 400, or a little more than 400 officers that are in the RNC today. There's roughly 125 – there's one who just retired in the last couple of weeks, so we'll call it 125 that are eligible. Now my numbers might be off slightly because I haven't seen the updates, but that's my understanding, about 400 officers; about 125 that are eligible to retire today.

I know from talking to police officers myself, they are concerned about what action the government may take in the fall. If there's going to be any implications on them that may negatively impact their earnings or their living or their careers. They are cognizant of that. I know, I've talked to some myself directly, who have said I will wait to see what happens but I just might take my time and say I've had a good career and move on. If that happens, we're going to see a reduction in police officers.

Back in the '90s, Mr. Chair, there were reductions that occurred in policing. I talked about this here in the House before. I joined in the '80s, and I was one of a number of classes that trained at the Police Academy. The same as you were, I say with upmost respect to the Chair. He was one of those as well. You joined ahead of me.

There was a group of officers from the '80s that began to be trained and hired. Because in the '90s, the RNC lost about 100 police officers through the difficult years of the decades of the '90s and had gone down to about – 296, 297 officers was about the lowest they went. There was an effort then to rebuild them. So here we had these officers going through their career with nobody coming behind them.

Then in 2003-2004, the Memorial University RNC training program began and there has been constant recruiting every year ever since. I know it's challenging to recruit police officers today, as it is for many careers. It's challenging to recruit police officers today but an ongoing effort has been happening. We have a group going through that are now at the end of their career. There is very little middle in the RNC, and then there's a group now that have 10 or 11 years and less coming behind.

I know certainly we don't want to see history repeat itself through the public service or with the RNC of having no middle, because that corporate knowledge, once that's gone through the door it's gone. Once that corporate and experience is gone it's gone, and it's like many scenarios.

I know the Minister of Health is over listening to me today. I'm sure he'd speak to his own career, that it takes many, many years – and a very different career. A very technical, and a matter from his former career, but it takes a long time to develop those skills and to hone those skills. I think the minister would probably agree that as time goes on you continue to get better and better and better at what it is you do. You get more experience and more expertise. You develop that and you share that then with younger – in his case, younger doctors, younger surgeons. You share that expertise and work them through. That's what's happening in the RNC. When these folks are ready to go out the door, what you have left then is a group with like 11 years' experience and less.

I hope the government – I know they're still doing recruiting and there is going to be another class this year, but I think it's important to point out because it takes a long time to turn that around. I hope they continue to recruit and hire new police officers because it takes a long time for a police officer to learn their job. I believe it does. It takes a long time to fully learn your career. As time goes on you get a few years, several years' experience, then it's reflected on your abilities as you gain that experience.

To reduce those 10 positions, they are not going to fill four vacant positions, that's 14. Plus, you look at the fact that there are 125 or so ready, or eligible to retire. Hopefully, they all won't leave. Hopefully, they'll stay and continue to do the work, and also inspire and help younger officers. So we want to see that happen.

The point that brought all of this around was that former Liberal MHA for Conception Bay South, MHA Hillier, had actually come to the House on several occasions bringing forward a petition to increase policing resources, not to decrease them. He felt his hometown, the area he represented, Conception Bay South needed that.

The former MHA, Mr. Jim Bennett, also brought forward a number of petitions. Actually, there's one here he brought – I started counting them – I think it was around 26 or 27 times, the same petition, which is not unusual for Members to bring the same petition and talk about them on various days. This one was to partner with the private sector to extend cellphone coverage through Gros Morne National Park and the community of Trout River. He brought this up many times.

Again, this may be one of the areas I think the current government may have been making some progress on, and if they have, good for them. I'm glad to see they're making progress on it. There's been significant progress on increasing cellphone coverage around the province in recent years, continuing to partner with business. The government in past has and I know the current government is as well, to increase broadband and cellphone services, to move more accessible digital coverage and communications for our citizens who live in the more rural areas of the province. I expect that will continue, but I'm sure they understand as well that it takes time. You can knock them off one by one and make progress with them as time goes on.

Mr. Chair, I had several more and lots of pages of examples of petitions that I could go to a little later if I get time – I got about 30 seconds left, so I'm not going to enter into another one. But, Members opposite, as we have done in this past sitting of the House, on a daily basis brought forward petitions, and it was interesting from my perspective to look at what were priorities for Members back when they were Opposition and the progress they made today.

I know they're still new – six months in – they haven't been in very long, still six months in, and lots of time to address the many needs and topics that have been addressed through the delivery of petitions by Members opposite, and I'm sure they'll continue to focus to make progress on them.

As I said, some of them were progressed when we were there, some have made progress already since the new Liberal government has taken over, and I'm sure others, they'll continue to work on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

I am happy to stand here again and speak to this filibuster where we're discussing budgetary decisions, a number of things. Again, I appreciate the indulgence of my colleagues on this side. There are a number of them eager to speak, but when I heard the former premier stand up and speak about policing and justice issues, I felt it was imperative that I reply and to ensure that the correct information is on the record.

So I'm going to hit this point by point, Mr. Chair. I have some stats here when we talk about the pressures. Well, police reported crime rate for both St. John's and the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador decreased in 2014; the national crime rate decreased 3 per cent from 2013; St. John's, overall, decreased 10 per cent; and the province's decreased 6 per cent from 2013.

The St. John's crime severity index rate fell 5 per cent in 2014. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador actually did see a decrease by 9 per cent. Violent crime rate decreased by 13 per cent; the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador decreased 8 per cent the year before. St. John's saw a 12 per cent decrease in the violent CSI; Newfoundland and Labrador showed 11 per cent decrease. So the fact is that crime rates are down. That's the first thing I want to put out there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Now, not saying – again, you have a wide classification. There are some that may have gone up a little, but overall in the crime severity, the violent crimes are down. Do you know who we have to thank for that? The women and men of our policing forces, and I'm not just talking about the officers on the street.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: I want to put a special recognition out to the civilian forces that are

within there. They do a lot of the behind the scenes work. I know you know that, Mr. Chair, having your experience. They do great work behind the scenes. They don't always get the recognition, so I want to make sure they get it. We are lucky in this province to have the RNC, the RCMP and, in fact, yesterday I met with the head of the RCMP in this country, the Minister of Public Safety, the hon. Ralph Goodale. We talked about the RCMP. One of the things we talk about, the RCMP and the pressures, I've heard from communities saying we want increased service.

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor, again – he's for Grand Falls-Windsor, and he does a good job representing them. He came with his community to me and said we want 24/7; we need it. I met with the RCMP and the RCMP did it. They got it done with the existing resources.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: Do you know what? Here's the amazing thing, Mr. Chair; they saved money. They are actually saving money through this shift change. So they're providing 24/7 and there are more pilot projects coming. That's the kind of collaboration we have with our police forces. I'm happy to continue to do that.

We talk about the pressures, again, they may be there but when I'm working with my police force, the fact is that Members opposite should know because I spent four hours in this room, right here in this seat answering every single question – and the Member for St. John's Centre will verify that. I answered every single question that came to me. Do you know what the first one was? What is the decrease? And I said there is not a decrease in boots on the ground in this province. No decrease, so the Member opposite is wrong. He is wrong. There's no way around it. There's no decrease.

I think it's imperative that the truth be out there, and the truth is there are no less boots on the ground in this province. Now, do we face financial pressures? You'd better believe we do. The fact is that our police forces have seen a significant increase in funding, thanks to the administration over there. Do you know what? They did put a significant increase in funding. They did have \$25 billion in oil revenue in

which to do it, and I'm glad they used that for the men and women in our policing forces.

I'm glad they did, but the fact is there are things that we can do. We still have police forces that are lacking in terms of certain equipment. In fact, last year they had funding in order to go out and get cars, but they didn't spend it. They didn't do it. They didn't get it done, so it was left to us and we're getting it done. We are going to get that done because they deserve it and because the people of this province deserve it.

I want to hit a few more statistics and bits of information. Actually, I got to put this one out there, Mr. Chair. I tried to answer this one day in the House of Assembly. As anybody knows when petitions come into this House of Assembly the Opposition stands up, reads their petition and has three minutes to speak to it, to read the preamble and talk about it. One that the Member for CBS and that the former premier just referenced is about policing in CBS. I'm glad I'm going to get a chance to answer that because I actually stood up one day – even though the Standing Orders do not allow it, I stood up and asked for leave to talk to the Member who raised the petition. I said can I speak to you about the petition that you just put in this House, and they said no. They said no.

AN HON. MEMBER: Really?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now, that's fine – that was there, that is verified, that is in Hansard. I stood up and asked in this House – they didn't have to give me leave. I don't have that right, per se, but I asked for it. And I've actually seen it in the past. Actually, former Premier Marshall and the current Minister of Municipal Affairs had a very good back and forth one day that led from a petition about Corner Brook hospital. It was actually one of the best debates I've seen in this House because both Members got up, passionate about the subject and allowed each other to talk back and forth. It was excellent. I thought I could do the same (inaudible).

So I am going to talk now, though, about it. I hear about policing in CBS being an issue, so we call up the mayor of CBS. We said, look, here's a petition coming in and we want to talk about it. So we talked to the mayor. He finds the RNC accessible and said he has a great relationship

with the chief on down. They are satisfied with the responses.

He said they used to have two patrol cars assigned and now they have three. So there's actually been an increase. Now, he said, obviously we would love more – who doesn't want more? We all want an increased presence. But the fact is that the community of Conception Bay South is satisfied with their current resources. They have four to five municipal enforcement officers focusing on the municipal bylaws and they extended an invitation for us to come out and talk to them about law enforcement, which we will take them up on at some time.

I came into a department with great staff and between my staff and I, we're going to make sure – because that's what we've been doing is reaching out to speak to communities, to the groups within Justice, to the divisions and to people. But the fact is that a petition came in here – and they have every right in which to put the petition in, but the fact is now I'm having an opportunity to speak to the petition and show that it's not exactly accurate.

I'm not going to speak about any other petition but now that I get a chance to, I'm speaking to the individual that was elected by the citizens of that community who says we've actually had an increase and we're very satisfied with because we have a great relationship with the RNC. So I have to put that bit of truth out there too.

Now, I'm going to continue on. In my six months, seven months on the job in this position, I've actually been down to the RNC headquarters on multiple, multiple occasions. I've gone down to meet with cadets. I've gone down to meet with the chief. I've gone down to meet the people in the middle. I've gone down to take part in their training. I've gone down on a number of occasions. Actually, I've been told that I'm the first minister to come down and meet with them in decades. I've gone down because I want to hear.

The Member for St. John's Centre, she is the Justice critic and I know she's passionate about this as well, she goes down and that's good. We should all have the opportunity. I know yesterday in the House of Commons when I

attended, the Liberal federal government has changed the previous Conservative policy that barred MPs from getting on military bases and learning about it. They were barred unless they had personal approval from the minister. The current Liberal federal government has removed that so that all MPs, regardless of stripe, can get in and learn about those forces and the men and women.

I say we need to make sure the same is done here. If the Member for St. John's Centre, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, if they want to go out and talk to our police forces then they should be allowed. They should have every opportunity to speak to them and learn about that. You'll never see me get in the way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: The fact is, one of the things that I've had said to me by officers – because they're under huge pressure, huge pressure. Do you know what? It's been a tough few months with some of the stuff going on in the news, tough few months. A lot of them, I've had contact with parents of RNC and RCMP officers. They've called me, and the fact is that due to situations and circumstances, they all feel the pressure and get looked on.

If something bad happens to one, it affects them all. I guess you could say that with most professions. If something bad happens to one, we all feel the brunt. When we talked about the fact that we are going to bring in a civilian-led independent team to investigate, to have police oversight, they said, we want it. We are happy to get scrutinized for actions, because it's going to show – and I agree with this wholeheartedly, Mr. Chair – that we have great police forces here. They welcome scrutiny; they welcome attention paid to their activities. The fact is when it's investigated and done properly it will show that their actions stand up, and that the actions of a few should not cloud the actions of the rest.

We're going to bring in that civilian-led oversight team. We are going to make that happen. We've had meetings already nationally talking about the model that we need here in this province. Hopefully that will remove a pressure that we deal with. I'm dealing with it on a

constant basis about investigations being done blue-on-blue, and the fact is it doesn't benefit anybody and there's a lot of research to show that it's not the best move. The police forces, they back that.

Mr. Chair, my time is running out, but I'm glad to stand up here anytime and correct misinformation about the Department of Justice and Public Safety, and to thank the members of our police forces for the great work they do and we'll continue to support them wholeheartedly.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to rise once again and speak to these budget bills. I just want to say, Mr. Chair, first off, I do want to thank the Minister of Justice for that very informative information, and to the Minister of Education. I mean that very seriously and very sincerely. What I've seen here over the last three days or four days, whatever we've been here, there's been an awful lot of – and I'll say on all sides – rhetoric and attacking character and blaming people back and forth and so on, and how refreshing it is to actually have people ask questions and have ministers stand up and actually give answers.

Now, I may not necessarily agree with all of the answers. I say to the Minister of Education, I still have concerns, but at least I respect the fact that you got up and you gave the answer, you were truthful, you gave your opinion and you were respectful while you were doing it. I think that's great. I think that's what democracy is supposed to be all about instead of all this nastiness that happens from time to time. It does people no good, I can tell you that. So that's good.

I just want to say to the Minister of Education, on that issue there, the Finland issue that the gentleman raised, just for the record, he didn't say that it was going to save money. He just said that it was the best system that he could see in the world and that the results were there to show

it. I don't know if that's actually true or not. He told me it was and he wanted to raise it and said it's a model that we should be looking at. Now, if it's not feasible or whether it is or not, he's just saying it's something that should be explored. So I thank you for the answer there.

Speaking of answering questions, I have a question for the Minister of Finance and I'd like for the Minister of Finance to be able to answer the question in the same manner as the other two ministers answered the question –

AN HON. MEMBER: Now, now, now.

MR. LANE: Someone is started already with the now, nows. I was just after talking about we were going to try to be responsible and respectful and now we're starting with heckling.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: See, there you go.

Anyway, I'm going to say to the Minister of Finance, when she gets the opportunity to answer – she doesn't have to get up right now and answer, but I would like an answer. On the 75 per cent, this was an email sent to me, or a Facebook message, whatever it was, it said: Here is a thought; 75 per cent of the people don't have to pay the levy. If you rejig that stat, only 25 per cent of the people in the province make at least \$50,000. That seems out of whack. Now, that was the comment that the person made.

So I kind of thought that myself, to some degree, so I'd just like some clarification. When we're doing these stats –

MS. COADY: After taxes.

MR. LANE: Yes, I understand. Thank you, Minister Coady – sorry, the Minister of Natural Resources, after tax; I get that. But when we look at the stats, I'm just wondering because you can make stats look whatever way you want – so my daughter, she's a university student and she works at Staples one day a week. So she's not paying a levy, obviously. When you're doing the stats, are we talking about actual working family stats – or if you throw all those people into the mix, obviously the numbers are going to look

differently if you are throwing in university kids and kids at home that might be 17 years old or something and they're working up at a fast-food place or whatever. The stats could be shifted if you are including those numbers as opposed to families who are actually trying to provide for their family. So I just throw that out there as to how you got those stats.

The other question or the issue I raised before, and I would like an answer to this one – and I will say it again, is that under the current levy system, it's done on an individual; it's not done on a household. So again – and I don't think anyone can dispute this. If they can, fine. Mr. Chair, \$51,000 taxable income and you're paying \$100 to the levy. If you have a husband and wife or two partners and they're each making that amount, they're paying \$200 in the levy. But if you have a one-person income – so the husband or the wife is making \$102,000, for example; they're paying \$700.

You've got the same household, husband and wife – let's throw in a couple of kids. Husband, wife, two kids here; next door, husband, the wife, two kids here; same size house, same mortgage; they each got a car. One family is paying only \$200, and the other family is paying \$700. Now, that is not fair. I would challenge anybody to stand up in this House and say that is fair and equitable. So I'd like an answer on that one.

I've got about five minutes left, so I have an email I was asked to read. This is an issue a person had. According to the Canada Revenue Agency, all taxi drivers are technically self-employed. While we work with a company, we do not work for them, as we merely rent our vehicles or spots on the stand. Therefore, like any other small business owner, we taxi drivers receive no base pay, no vacation pay, no sick pay and no overtime pay. We get no benefits other than the measly fraction of revenue left over once our large overhead is paid. What individual taxi drivers make depends significantly on their hours, their skills and especially the economy. However, it is fair to assume that the average taxi driver makes only about minimum wage – we are the working poor.

The Liberal budget will drive us further into poverty. It hurts us disproportionately worse than those with typical jobs or businesses. Our biggest expense is obviously gasoline. Last week I burned 198.65 litres of gas. So the government took an additional \$37.04 in taxes from me. That is a lot of money for someone making minimum wage. The tax grab will get worse when HST goes up, and even more worse in the winter when I have to idle longer.

Another major expense is HST. Most people don't realize that the meter rates include HST. So 13 per cent of everything I take has to go to the government before I get paid myself, and before I pay my personal taxes. Now the government wants an additional 2 per cent of my profit or pay. This is cruel. Taxis pay insurance rates. Currently it costs in the ballpark of \$4,800 a year to insure a taxi. When 15 per cent tax is applied to this, the government will be taking an additional \$720 from poor taxi drivers.

While the owners include insurance when they rent their cars to taxi drivers, there is a fear that the owners will jack up the rent to cover this. The taxi industry relies on the strength of the economy. If people have more money to drink and travel, taxi drivers do well. If people do not have much discretionary spending, taxi drivers do poorly.

As the economy is bad, taxi drivers are already hurting, struggling to make ends meet. There are many shifts in which many taxi drivers now fill to make minimum wage, on top of taking at least an additional \$3,000 yearly from taxi drivers through the above taxes.

The government is making business conditions worse by limiting people's discretionary spending. Oh, and don't forget the increased cost to register a vehicle and renew your licence. There are 374 taxis in St. John's. Many of them have two drivers. Therefore, government is due to collect in the ballpark of \$16,000 or more in new taxes from taxi drivers in the city alone.

I'm starting to run out of time here. This is an astronomical amount to grab from a small group of minimum wage earners before they even pay their private taxes. While meter rates could potentially be raised to recoup some of the losses, there is no consensus among taxi drivers

and owners right now. The industry fears any increase will either bring in uninsured, unregulated and undercutting Uber and/or keep people from availing of our service – I guess Uber is illegal drivers.

With an increase, we might be shooting ourselves in our only good foot. As well, the City of St. John's is hesitant to do anything with the industry. On top of all this, government will be making an unsafe work environment even worse. With the plethora of business and services open 24-7, St. John's is a city that never sleeps. There is always somebody on the go. Taxis are always in demand, especially in bad weather when non-professional drivers are hesitant to take their own vehicles.

When government stops overnight snow clearing on the Outer Ring and Peacekeepers, road accidents will occur. Taxi drivers will get hurt or killed on the job. Government must do something to ease the burden it's disproportionately placed on taxi drivers. It must – and then it says cancel all these taxes, which I don't think anyone would say would be reasonable, and/or provide a tax break of some sort for those who claim that they are self-employed taxi drivers on their annual income return and provide a gas rebate, much like the old home heating rebate to taxi drivers. The government must also reinstate nighttime snow clearing on the Northeast Avalon.

So what this person is saying, which is quite clear, is that taxi drivers are going to be hit big with all these increases. It's their livelihood. I even said rates would go up in the meters which would impact lower-income people using them. This person is saying it's not as easy as just raising the meters. So they have to suck up all this extra cost.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: I throw that out there to the government as well.

Thank you.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

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

MR. FINN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It's great to be back after just a short few hour break continuing well past the 70-hour mark, I guess, now. Are we? Are we close to there? Does anybody have –?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. FINN: Yeah, I'm not sure if we're even sure. It's great to rise and speak.

We are speaking about Bill 14, and I'll certainly come to that, but I just want to talk a minute about the great experience that I've had and that this exercise has provided me an opportunity to learn and to grow. Being new to politics of course, and something that's always been my passion, I found it quite interesting coming into this House. In fact, having watched the former administration for years on television, watching the House of Assembly proceedings and watching some of the actions, measures they take, I have no trouble admitting it was a bit intimidating at first – certainly a bit intimidating.

I remember the first day I crossed the Leader of the Opposition, the former premier, on the way to the elevator. We're not allowed to say names here in the House of Assembly, but I addressed him. I said: Good day Mr. So-and-So – we know his last name. He said: Don't be so foolish, call me – first name. That was my reaction because to me, it was just like I'm new here and this is the former premier. It just felt so invigorating to be here and to know that I'm now part of this process.

Over the last few months I've had the great opportunity to speak to various pieces of legislation. I've taken every opportunity to learn, to research and to speak to various pieces of legislation and some good pieces of legislation that the Opposition and the former administration have co-operated with us on.

I've also, over the course of the last 70 hours or more while I've been here, learned a great deal about some of the investments they've made. I believe if you reflect back to some of the

references I've made here in the House, I've applauded them for their investments.

The Member for Ferryland spoke last evening and early hours of this morning about Municipal Capital Works infrastructure. Some of the water infrastructure and the sewer and some of the projects they've been working on. Some great investments, I have tremendous respect for that.

It is troubling to find ourselves in the deficit that we're in – very troubling. Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, which is our temporary Deficit Reduction Levy, exists solely because of the deficit and the problem we're facing. We're trying to find measures to get us out of this deficit.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development spoke last night and again this morning, and more recently just an hour ago. He pointed to the fact that just three years ago in 2013 the total public sector debt was some-\$6 billion. In a short three-year window, it's now grown to \$15-plus billion. That's a very significant jump. I don't think I need to explain that to anybody. A deficit that ballooned some-\$9 billion, close to \$10 billion almost over that short window is quite troubling to comprehend and it's put us in this position now.

When you're in a position such as this deficit, you only have a couple of options. You only really have a couple of options when you're looking at addressing a deficit. The former premier has stated as well, and exactly this. There are three options – he was referring to last year's budget – you can reduce services, you can increase your borrowing, or you can increase your revenue.

Right now we're not in a great position to borrow. We just borrowed some-\$3.4 billion last week; the most our province has ever borrowed. We just borrowed this exorbitant amount of money.

In terms of increasing our revenues; I've implored Members opposite, throughout the course of this debate, to offer something of substance with respect to name a measure you would have used to increase revenue. I've continued to do that. I have no problem

respecting the fact that they've been reading emails from constituents and so on and so forth.

The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands is shaking his head. I'm sure you'll have an opportunity to speak. I've been listening intently to the things you've had to offer. I'll say to the Member more specifically, his continued reference of all-day kindergarten. I'll leave that to the Minister of Education because I feel he has articulated that quite well. I've implored the Members opposite to offer a revenue measure that they would have taken differently and I've also implored them to find an efficiency that we didn't take. I haven't heard one yet, but I continue to hear about some of the investments they made. Again, I applaud them for their investments.

One of the great things this has provided me to do over the last number of hours I've been here, into the wee hours of the morning, I've combed through several Auditor General reports. I know my time is getting short but I want to quote one or two of them before I finish with respect to the levy. This also provided me a great opportunity to have a conversation with some of the ministers last evening.

I spoke with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills last evening about an Auditor General's report that was released at the end of 2014 with respect to inefficiencies. Since 2004, the number of employees at the university grew by 23 per cent while the growth and student enrolment was 5 per cent. Provincial government operational funding doubled some 113 per cent – more than doubled – over the past nine years. That's just the university with respect to opportunities. This was pointed out as measures, and I understand they're taking some measures to address that.

One of the other Auditor General findings; I had a great conversation with the Minister of Transportation and Works last night. We were combing through the use of government vehicles and some of the inefficiencies there. I'm just going to quote one or two of them. The Auditor General only picks so many instances to look at. He doesn't do an entire – it's more of a statistical piece, a snapshot if you will. There are 33 instances where the amount of fuel purchased for government vehicles exceeded the fuel

capacity of the vehicle, sometimes by more than twice that capacity.

We have purchases of fuel that exceed the capacity of vehicles. For example, some 499 litres of fuel was purchased for a vehicle with a gas tank that only had a capacity of 128 litres. We're not even sure where the cost has gone there. We can't even pinpoint. Some of the recommendations with respect to that was to provide proper measures for accounting for kilometres and mileage. We haven't seen that either.

Use of external consultants from the Auditor General reports. In 50 of 71 consultant contracts for other services, the department failed to obtain Treasury Board approval for payments that were in excess of 110 per cent of the aggregate of the approved original contract amount. The total value of those payments exceed \$3.2 million.

With respect to consultants, government vehicles, Memorial University, the Auditor General has pointed out a number of areas where we need to be more efficient. We're in the process of doing that now. Some of these recommendations have actually be actualized.

I'm just pointing all of this out because the former administration had significant time to address this. I'm sure they tried their hardest. I know there was a rotating seat there at the Premier's chair here, and that probably led to some confusion. Ministers changed portfolios on a number of occasions. That perhaps led to confusion. I'm sure they tried their best, but when we're given opportunities, as pointed out by the Auditor General, we need to try harder. We really need to try harder.

It brings us back to where we are today. We're trying hard. Again, your opportunities to tackle the deficit is to borrow more money, increase your revenue or reduce services. We're in the process. We've done a combination of all three, some of which we are not happy to have done.

With respect to some of the reading into the records and potential suggestions and those from the public, I'm just curious. If we could have one of the Members opposite read into the record the reply they've given to these

constituents, particularly any of those who have emailed you and said they're upset with the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. Again, a levy that is a measure because we're in a position to tackle a surmounting deficit.

MS. ROGERS: (Inaudible.)

MR. FINN: I can hear the Member for St. John's Centre now, you'll get your opportunity. I'd love to hear some of your responses to these emails, I really would, because I'd love to know if any of you are pointing out to people who are inquiring about the levy that some 74 per cent of people in this province won't pay the levy.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

MR. FINN: I say to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, you can get up and talk about the levy for as long as you want now in a moment.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: All I'm asking you to do is read a response to one of these emails. I'd love to know how you reply to them because I don't think some people are becoming aware. This venue, this filibuster has given us an opportunity to get our message out and to let people know that people aren't paying.

MR. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. FINN: We've made a significant change to the levy, a very significant change, to the point which someone making \$51,000 a year taxable income, equivalent to \$28 an hour, is now going to pay \$100 over a one-year period. That's \$3.85 a paycheque. It's not something we want to do. It's just putting it in perspective. I'd love to hear some of the responses.

With that, Mr. Chair, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm happy once again to stand and to speak to Bill 14. The last few times I spoke I've been talking about gender analysis of the budget and, unfortunately, I got reports from our ATIPP request. In fact, it appears there's absolutely no indication that a gender-analysis tool was applied in consultation around the budget, in preparation for the budget, and before the budget was delivered to the House, and I think that's unfortunate.

Also, I'd like to indicate that I did receive a document that is a gender-analysis tool. It's called: *Guidelines for Gender Inclusive Analysis* from the Women's Policy Office. That was published in the year 2003. I can only assume that the work to get to the publication was probably done in 2002, and here we are in 2016. So it's a bit of a historic document. It's 14 years ago, or 13 years ago since it was published.

I started to take us through the gender analysis of the budget that was done after the budget was released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It was done by Cyndi Brannen at the request of Mary Shortall, who is the President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour. They have found that absolutely, without a doubt, it is documented that this budget disproportionately has negative effects on women.

We can stand here and say what a missed opportunity, and a missed opportunity it is. Not only is it a missed opportunity because our Minister of Finance is also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. What an incredible opportunity she had to ensure that the budget would be able to address the systemic barriers and blocks and challenges to the women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would like to say this was all precipitated last night by the Member who is the Minister of Adult Education. He said that having evening sessions, night sessions is hard for women in politics, but I would like to say that we have women who do lots of night work. We have women who are doctors, nurses, pilots, sea captains, home care workers, first responders, fishery workers, corrections officers, police

officers, oil rig workers, politicians, mothers caring for children or senior parents. Women do nightshift work.

What we need to do here in our House of Assembly is ensure that we have family-friendly hours so that people can plan their lives and do really effective work once we are here in the House, and we need schedules so we know when we will be in this House.

The Minister of Finance, also the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, has missed an opportunity to take corrective measures in terms of how the budget and the current economic situation that we have negatively impacts on women. I would like to offer opportunities to the minister. There are two very clear opportunities in my mind.

Since the gender-analysis tool does not appear to have been applied to the budgetary process, because if it had been there are certainly measures in this budget that she would never have approved on, considering the negative effects and the unfair burden on women and children in our province. I'm sure that's not her intent, but by not using a gender-analysis tool that is the result of this budget.

She has an opportunity now to evaluate the rollout effects of this budget on women and children. She has the opportunity to ensure that she follows her own policy, because the policy is that any piece of legislation, any policy renewals or any programs, that the gender lens be applied to those before they are passed, and that it's done by the Women's Policy Office. I believe she has skipped that step. So she has an opportunity now to look at and evaluate what are the impacts.

The budget has been passed. She needs to look at how the budget is impacting the lives of women negatively, or positively. Maybe there are some very positive actions here in the budget and measures in the budget. I haven't really found a whole lot, particularly in the area of women who are more vulnerable in terms of economics. Women in Newfoundland and Labrador earn the least amount of money of any women in all of Canada. Also, women in Newfoundland and Labrador earn \$4 less a medium income than their male counterparts.

The other opportunity we have is that the minister should, it's her duty and her obligation, apply a gender lens analysis, a specific gender lens tool. I would suggest that perhaps she look at the current one, which is very old. She may be able to instruct the Women's Policy Office to search out anything that is more current, that might be more effective in terms of analyzing any policy or legislation that comes out of any department in government, that she do that exercise before she sets her budget in the fall.

We know that particularly women who make up the majority of workers in the public service have been put on alert that this government is looking at the public service for the budget in the fall. Again, it may be women – women who are the majority workers in the public service – who may be most affected by potential job losses or by any action that will minimize our public sector worker's wages or the number of jobs.

This is an opportunity for the Minister of Finance and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women to take corrective actions. I would implore her and ask her to apply a specific gender-analysis tool to the fall budget to ensure that any measures, any policies, any legislation that comes out of that era – that she make sure there isn't an unfair burden and that she mitigates any unfair burden that would be directed towards women and children. I believe that this is, again, an opportunity that the minister can take. I believe that she owes it to the women of Newfoundland and Labrador because I do not believe that she actually did the thorough, comprehensive gender analysis on her budget before it was released. This would be a corrective thing and I would hope, again, that the Minister of Finance and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women would do that.

Since I have about two minutes left, I would like to thank all the women's centres all over the province who have been working so hard on the issue of improving the status of women across the province. But not only that, they've also been working really hard trying to assist women who are negatively affected by the impact of this budget and some of the rollbacks from the previous administration.

We know that up until five years ago, all the women's centres across the province received a 5 per cent increase in their core budgets. That was to ensure that they were able to pay their rising rent costs, their rising heating costs – the cost of living. They have not received that increase in five years now. That was the previous administration that didn't come forward and follow through on their commitment to do that, and we also see that with the current administration. So the women's centres are doing the incredible work of helping women cope with the unfair burden, the negative effects of this budget on the women and children of the province.

There are some very clear opportunities that government missed in this budgetary process. Again, when we look at the increase in the HST and what that means for women who have a much lower capacity for expendable funds once they pay for all the necessities of life – and I would encourage all Members of this House to download a copy of this analysis. It's called *Through a Gender Lens: The 2016-2017 Newfoundland and Labrador Budget's Impacts on Women*. It's available on the website of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. I think it would be quite interesting for Members to really see how the budget is affecting women.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time is expired.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think we're well past 70 hours. It's interesting, actually, being completely new to this. The one thing I am familiar with, as I'm sure people on both sides of the House are, kind of the effects of fatigue. The training of physicians has undergone a significant change over the years. Back in the day, as they say, it was more of an

apprenticeship and subject to some level of, perhaps, human rights abuse in the process.

One of the things it did do is it did give you an appreciation of the individual effects of fatigue on your body and, more importantly, your mind. It's a truism out there that if you are on your feet for more than 17 hours, your capacity to function is the same as if you would fail a breathalyzer basically. Certainly we've seen the mood in the House cycle through sort of depression all the way through to euphoria when the pizza arrived at 4 in the morning.

The consequences of that, people are not always sensitive to the signals from others who may also be equally fatigued. There is a tension that arises simply because we're not in a normal situation. Some of the courtesy and civility wears off – a couple of hours off your feet, a shower, a good breakfast and the civility returns for a while and then it ebbs and flows. It's unfortunate because then, towards the end of the day, the atmosphere that's left is simply that of the irritation and the frustration when really and honestly, as my colleague for Lake Melville said, this place is a wonderful example, not perfect, but a wonderful example of a process that a lot of countries would struggle for and would gladly have.

This isn't a dictatorship. And some of the phrases that we've used over the course of the last little while, and may well get round to using again, I think simply reflects a little bit of emotion rather than the realities. Because it isn't a dictatorship.

I had some notes here and, as is often the case, the subject matter that's been brought up since I wrote them has kind of steered me off course a little bit. I think that's the Westminster tradition passed on to this body where it's to try and encourage spontaneity and let the conversation move in whatever direction the circumstances will.

One of the things that I have a comment about is the hon. the Leader of the Opposition mentioned about the time it takes to acquire skills and certainly the career that he referenced, which you share, and I would suggest the one I came through is one where there is significant time

delay between going in and coming out the other end with a sort of usable safety, if you like.

There is literature, and I think some of it is a bit hypocritical; it says \$10,000 hours are what it takes. I think it's a number that's got a life of its own but essentially that equates to anywhere between eight to 10 years of full-time work. Here I'm the new guy. I have nothing like that to compare with, but I approach these sessions as a learning exercise.

One of the comments that were made referenced an area we haven't really talked about today in the context, or recently in terms of health care, and that is the relationship and the co-operation between ourselves at the provincial level and our federal counterparts. There is a new era of communication there. Having come from a different environment related on the federal side, there was a distinct chill, if not an absolute ice wall between the provinces and the federal government.

Having gone early on in my mandate to meet with the federal minister of health and my provincial and territorial counterparts, it's certainly a completely different atmosphere there of openness and co-operation. If you think about it, illness knows no geographical boundaries. Diseases do not reflect, or respect rather, physical lines on a map.

So the conversation at the federal level is now, again, around money and resources. And while there is a lot of detail to be worked out, there is certainly a significant willingness for the federal government to inject money into the health care system at the provincial and territorial level, which hasn't been there before. Whether or not that comes with strings and how we organize it in terms of is it capitation or is it a weighted formula are issues to be negotiated.

Certainly, the view of this province and my Atlantic cousins is that we should strive to have a formula or a method of dispersing this money that recognizes the fact we have an older population than some, and we also have a significant burden of chronic disease. I think that if that's the case, then some of the money that is out there will flow here in larger amounts.

The areas they are interested in are – originally it was said to be home care but now they've emphasized palliative care in there as well. There is a debate as to whether or not that palliative care area will be in addition to the money they mentioned, and the sum was \$3 billion over four years, which is a significant amount of money and will certainly help this province.

Palliative care is topical at the amount because of the issues around medical aid in dying, which is rather overtaking matters and isn't the reason that some people would think. It's a separate issue but related. It actually applies to a very small subset of palliative care patients.

There is this error of co-operation there, and I would encourage people to provide input and to use whatever forum they wish. One may argue about the utility of this filibuster approach but certainly I think at the end of it, I don't think there's any way you can claim that we aren't informed about the opinions of the constituents from the Opposition and the independent MHA who've done a very thorough job of presenting their constituent's views. We've had some discussions a little bit about process.

Equally, I think the gallery and those out in TV land have had an opportunity to hear, in a lot more detail and with a lot more explication, the details of a budget which was not out there in the way that I think was a comprehensive package.

We talked a little bit about the emails earlier on and about – judgement came up. I think one of the things to take away at a high level is this budget has been about judgement. It's been the judgement of government caucus, the judgement of Cabinet, and fed into that has been this widespread consultation which now goes back well into the winter.

Are there elements there that people are unanimously agreed on? No, but it's one of those things I think where the sum is greater than the individual parts added up. I would suggest that this debate, which will go on as long as it goes on, has been an education for me.

Rather than present any more factoids about money, I just wanted to kind of throw that out

there, that however long this lasts, as long as I can get a couple of hours sleep, the fact it's still Tuesday and I'm now three days younger is something I'm really hanging on to.

With that, I'll take my seat, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand again and speak to the budget and these couple of bills related to the budget.

Mr. Chair, the last time I spoke, I said how encouraged I was by the fact that it seemed like we were finally getting somewhere. We were asking some questions, a couple of ministers got up and answered them. They did so in a professional manner and everything was going good.

Now the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port stands to his feet and now he's going to start provoking things again. I just want to respond to a couple of things he said. First of all, I just want to say to him – when we were receiving these emails he wanted to know what the response was that we gave to the emails. Well, I would say to the Member for Port au Port, and all the other Members, they're your constituents, so you should answer the emails.

When I respond to the emails, if people ask me, would you present these emails on my behalf, this is what I want to say. I said absolutely, I will, but many of these constituents are not my constituents. They are constituents from people all over this province. So I suggest the Member for Port au Port answer his own emails, represent his own people, and then he wouldn't have to worry about the answer. He can answer it himself for his constituents.

Now, Mr. Chair, the Member also talked about the fact that there were no suggestions whatsoever offered, none, only full-day kindergarten. That was the only thing that was thrown out there he said. I'm going to have to remind the Member for Port au Port again, there

were a number of things that were thrown out there.

We talked about the \$30 million contingency. I'm going to say it again, the \$30 million contingency. It's not a bad idea to have a \$30 million contingency, but we've never had one before. Probably we should have had one before but we didn't have one before. Now we have one, and at the same time we're going to tax people into oblivion. We're going to start taxing books; we're going to start cutting non-prescription drugs to our seniors. All these things that we're doing, all the harm we're going to do to people.

I just read an email there a little while ago about a taxi driver. How he's going to try to struggle to survive, and we got \$30 million in a contingency fund. We're putting \$750,000 into a Labrador link. Again, I would like to see a Labrador link if it could be done, if it was possible, but at the end of the day, even if we did the study this year and they came back and said it's a good idea and it's feasible, where are we going to get the money to build a Labrador link anytime soon, based on we'll have no surplus in seven years? Where's the money coming from?

The study will sit on the shelf for at least seven to 10 years or whatever, and by that time technology will change, cost will change and everything. We'll have to do another study. So from that regard, that was another suggestion.

I've talked about the 16½ cents that's gone on gasoline. The HST on that, part of that is federal tax. Part of that 15 per cent on the extra 16½ cents is federal tax. So do the calculation and go talk to Ottawa about where they're going to be capitalizing on our austerity measures and let's get that money into the kitty. Maybe we can save a few libraries with that, I say, Mr. Chair.

We have the Auditor General now looking at the severance package at Nalcor. While we're at it, why not send the Auditor General into Nalcor. Let's do a value for money there. Let's call Mr. Marshall at Nalcor and ask him to sharpen his pencil the same way we've asked the deputy ministers to sharpen their pencils in every department and save 30 per cent. Let's look at Nalcor.

Let's look at Memorial University. MUN is a great institution, no doubt about it, but when is the last time anybody outside, externally went in and looked at the value for money on all the programs and all the money that's being spent there? That's somewhere we should be looking as well.

Let's talk about the economy for a second. What happened to diversifying the economy? It sounds great in an election: We're going to diversify the economy. That's a great buzzword. What are we going to do to diversify the economy? What are we going to do?

Do you know what we're going to do with the economy right now? We're going to drive the economy down into the toilet. That's what we're going to do, because we're going to tax everybody to death. If the economy goes down, where do you think you're getting the money to pay the taxes? Have you put that in your little calculation about the taxes that are going to be lost when businesses go under and people lose their jobs? Are you adding on the extra costs that you're going to have to pay in social programs for people who don't have a job? Have you factored any of that into your equation? I never heard it, but I'd like to know is it there.

Mr. Chair, I think the Minister of Health was talking about how you get – sometimes there's sleep deprivation and you get wound up and everything. So I apologize if I'm a little more animated than usual. I don't mean to be, but it just got my goat when we were actually starting to make some progress. I thought we were starting to make some progress at least. Then you have someone over there who's going to start poking, poking, poking, poking and trying to turn this into political rhetoric all over again.

I would say this as well to the Member for Port au Port, I was very glad when the federal government announced in their joint announcement that they were going to come up with some money so we could raise that cap on that levy – going to raise that cap on that levy to \$50,000. That was a good thing, and I acknowledge that. I thought that was a great thing.

I also said how good it was that the government put in the measure for the low-income seniors

that seniors would do even better. I've acknowledged the good things; I've talked about the good things in the budget. I would remind the Member for Port au Port, that even prior to that federal money coming down and raising that cap so that supposedly 75 per cent of the people are now taken care of – prior to that happening, he stood in that House and he supported that budget. He was prepared for all the people under \$50,000 to have to pay that levy. Now luckily for him there was a deal worked out and they got something, but before that deal happened he stood up in this House and he was prepared for all those people to be hit with that levy. I would remind him of that as well.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to take the last couple of minutes now just to reiterate a few more points as it relates to the levy or to the budget in general. We have numerous people who have contacted us, who have emailed us, sent us Facebook messages, who've sent us messages on Twitter, texted us, phoned us – they've done all of these things, Mr. Chair. They've told us about the concerns they have. They've told us their stories about the cumulative impact of all of this taxation on them and on their families. We've continued and continued and continued to raise it over and over and over again.

I know the Member opposite talked about the terminology was used, as a dictatorship. That was used, and that we're not in a dictatorship – and I agree, I agree. When we talk about that, we're not living in a dictatorship in that sense of the word. It got kind of twisted to think about what a dictatorship is, to paint the worst possible picture.

The point that was being made, that I was making, is we elect a government under our system for four years. Once you're elected, you're elected for four years. Then they have the majority, and no matter what piece of legislation comes before the House, because we don't use all-party committees, we don't seek input from MHAs on some of these decisions, we just ram it on through. The government holds the power. They've got the big stick, and they can ram it through every single time.

There's a problem with our democratic process when we can't have meaningful change. When there's no mechanism in place for all Members

to have input in these things, and for us to have meaningful change. Many people would argue that it's a futile exercise to stand up in this House time after time after time and bring forth the suggestions of people, bring forth your own suggestions, point out things that we think are not correct – like the levy on an individual versus a household, which is a real injustice. No one's going to convince me otherwise on that one.

At the end of the day we hear you. We're listening to what you're saying. We'll work with you, but we're going to vote for it anyway. We're going to vote for it anyway. If they were really interested in listening and recognize some changes, they'd go back in – this levy bill, as an example – and make an amendment if what we're saying is right, or tell us what we're saying is wrong. This is not democracy. This is not democracy if all we're doing is just shouting back and forth and at the end of the day all those in favour, aye, and everything goes through as is. Everybody toes the line and that's the end of the story.

I'm not blaming that on this government. I'm blaming it on the system, but I think it points to the fact that we need reform in this House of Assembly. We really need reform. We need reform by the way we do things. We need reform in terms of the use of all-party committees, input by Members, recall legislation, the whole works. I think we really need reform in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

MR. TRIMPER: I'd like to give my colleague across the way a little break there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think I'm going to respond, first of all, to some of the commentary we just heard. Then I'm going to talk about something really crazy in this debate, this financial debate, I'm going to talk about money.

I'm going to start by, first of all, just a response on the whole aspect of a contingency fund and what is this intended for. I'm going to draw reference. I think it's important when we get complicated topics to talk about everyday examples.

I'm going to talk about my father-in-law; he's a Chinese immigrant. He came here back in the '50s. He worked at Bell Island. He built himself up to, eventually, a very successful restaurateur. He's retired; still living here in the community. He's done well. He had a couple of basic values from Chinese society brought here. The most important thing, he's always told me, is look for quality and never buy anything unless you can afford it.

The man had a credit card – he has a credit card. He almost never uses it. It is there only in the event of an emergency. He never buys anything. He never goes out and does anything in terms of requiring it unless he has the money in his pocket, unless he can write a cheque that doesn't bounce, and go forward.

I'm just thinking of that example, that value, as I listened to the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands talk about a contingency fund and why would we do this. Why wouldn't we just dip into it and do a whole bunch of things with it. The fact of the matter is we all just went through an exercise called preparing the budget for 2016. What you do in that is you take hopefully the money that's available to you, you look at all of your various services, your line departments, the obligations we have as a government to this great province and we allocate so much money, such that in the event of a sudden emergency, something that's not anticipated, you need to be able to respond.

As my father-in-law did in the past, that's what the credit card was for. As we're proposing to do and as has been lobbied in the past, the whole idea of a legacy fund, and now a contingency fund which is certainly much less than we're going to need in the future but for now this is what we've decided to do. Because there are going to be unforeseen – so they're going to appear, and that is what that is for.

If you have a house and you finally got it in action, and all of a sudden your roof starts to

leak and you're just squeaking by, well, how are you going to fix those shingles? How are you going to stop that leak? You need to be able to draw on something. As my father-in-law did with his credit card, as we will do with this contingency fund.

I have to say another aspect that I just heard that really got me thinking was this idea, he referenced – we've been back and forth for a little bit on the idea of dictatorship. I was describing it literally in terms of what it really means. He was describing it in terms of ramming it through, not listening, being oblivious to the emails, the commentary, the reaction that has been the last month or so since the budget was released.

Well, I can assure everyone, that in terms of ramming it through, the ears are wide open and we are listening. There's quite a difference between listening carefully and closely, responding and taking the new actions or the new suggestions into account into this budget. That's the awkward part of it. In terms of listening and responding, I can tell you that is happening every day. It keeps us up day and night as we think about the commentary, because do you know what? There are a lot of good suggestions.

I must say over the last four days, even though I'm a little bit tired, I have found the debate actually quite informative. As we've said time and again, it's been a great way for government to get our points out. Opposition have done the same. I feel the folks that are paying attention, whether they be in the audience or at home, they're able to make a decision and actually start to understand the rationale behind the thinking behind this budget. I think they will come up with a much more informed opinion than they've had in the past.

In terms of ramming it through, it really has been an opportunity to – we understand what you're saying, and as soon as we can get ourselves back on a stronger fiscal footing we'll do that. I referenced now just some two weeks ago – I think it's approximately that time frame. The last four days it feels like two weeks, but just recently – and we have the support of our friends in the federal government – we were able to restructure the levy. We were able to

radically, I would suggest, a change, the structure such that now only some-26 per cent of tax filers will be captured by this very important and very necessary revenue generating mechanism that we availed of, a very transparent levy that was directed specifically to the deficit.

I heard another comment yesterday, folks were saying, well, other people aren't doing this and so on, but do you know what they do in Ontario, for example? They call it a health surtax. Speaking about transparency, I'm not going to get into a strong criticism of the Ontario provincial government, but they call it a health surtax. Regardless, the intent is still the same; it's to address the deficit.

Now as I said, I've got less than five minutes, I did want to talk about dollars. I think that another role that the various emails that are being read by primarily – well, no, everybody has been doing it; we've all been reading commentary. I guess the reason why we're doing that is because, if you like, it's a third-party endorsement of whoever's perspective, so you go looking and so on.

I would suggest that when you're looking at the fiscal responsibility and fiscal management and the options available to a provincial government, you might want to go to, as well, something like – let's just call it the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, this handy little document here that I think folks might have had a chance to look at.

Some very interesting quotes in here, I'll just read a few from here just for some guidance: Newfoundland and Labrador's government expects a deficit of some \$1.8 billion in 2016-2017, with an interim plan that it foresees a balanced budget by 2021-2022. A very important reference to the fact that they're saying we're moving too much too fast. I hear it a lot from the Member who sits now over in the corner as to the digressive nature of what we're doing here. We know we have to get this House in order, but we know we don't have to do it in such a way that we drive everyone over the edge. In fact, it's very much of a thought-out process; it will take seven years.

The budget's \$1.1 billion in fiscal measures go roughly halfway to eliminating the total shortfall

and continued deficits are forecast over the medium term. The government also plans a supplementary budget later in 2016 and further measures –

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. TRIMPER: Oh, nice to hear from you. Okay.

This year's budget contains medium-term targets that imply a return to balance, like I said, by 2021. Here's a key phrase that I've referenced in the last couple of days: "On a per capita basis, Newfoundland and Labrador is the most heavily indebted province, and will remain so."

I spoke about my trip to Beachy Cove Elementary on Monday and the fact that – in looking at those youth, I'm still struck by the fact that some 10 years from now without the kinds of action, without the attitude adjustment and without the profound shift that this document says that this province is undergoing, we would be saddling those young people, some 10 years from now, with \$50,000-plus per capita as they become eligible to start filing income tax.

That's just something that I don't want to do. I want to be able to look in the mirror and say that we're caring about the future; we'll take care of our own problem now. Unfortunately it's going to mean some pain, but we're going to fix it so the future generations don't have to say, wow, those guys had a chance to help us out and instead they left us in this state.

I'd like to go to a very strong conclusion here that comes from this document from the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council. The Newfoundland and Labrador 2016-2017 budget is a profound shift and needed from a fiscal sustainability perspective. The province faces significant risk of being overwhelmed by debt. Fiscal retrenchment is much needed in Newfoundland and Labrador. Future measures will need to more thoroughly address program spending and, in particular, provincial public payroll.

So there's some good, clear direction from an authority, I would suggest, Mr. Chair, as to how provincial governments need to respond to their fiscal house. It's interesting, there are all their examples for the other provinces; I had a look at them but, of course, what's relevant here today is how does the levy apply to the situation we're in, what is it's role, and why do we need to, again, immediately adjust our attitude shift.

I'd like to thank the Members for an opportunity to speak here, especially back in my own District of Lake Melville. Unfortunately, I have to get on a plane in a few minutes, so I'm very glad to have to speak one more time.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It's a privilege for me to rise in this hon. House yet again today. First, before I say anything else, I'm going to talk about how marvelous social media is. When I last got up to speak, I read a letter into the record that was written to the Minister of Transportation and Works from one of his constituents. After reading it into the record, she sent a message thanking me for it and she wanted me to indicate her name, her company business, and as well to read out, in addition to the email she sent, the reply from the MHA.

So I will certainly do that as she's requested, because I do believe in listening to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and doing what I can to help. The lady wrote us a very concerning letter about the impact this budget will have on her business as well as on all of her employees. She talked about how she has six spaces. She says I own a daycare in Bishop's Falls. Your new all-day kindergarten will kill six full-time spaces for me. So she clearly indicated in her letter that she has six kindergarteners. She went on to talk about all of the single mothers who work for her and people are trying really hard to make ends meet, one of whom has two jobs just to be able to do that.

The letter was sent to Minister Hawkins by Brenda Wootton. Brenda is the owner-operator of Little Stepping Stones, which is a fabulous facility in Bishop's Falls, and one that the children who avail of her services really enjoy. Because of full-day kindergarten, her business is in jeopardy, in addition with all the tax fees and hikes.

The reply she received, which she did want read into the record as well, from the Minister of Transportation and Works, was this: I will check for you, but I'm not aware of any cuts in that area. How many kindergarten children do you have?

Now, her Member is the Minister of Transportation and Works, but the business is in the community of Bishop's Falls. So she also received a reply she wanted read into the record from the Member for Exploits, who replied: Good morning, Brenda. Please be assured that I am not passing the buck on this. Both the minister and I have spoken on this. As well, I have made my feelings and frustrations known to other government officials on the negative direct and indirect impacts some of these decisions will have on numerous individuals. The Minister of Transportation and Works, being the minister associated with the oversight, is following up, along with me, on yours and many other concerns being expressed throughout this unfortunate exercise we have been left to deal with.

She then goes on to write, and she wanted me to finish reading the entire email she sent to us to read: I just don't think they get it. Children are in centres from Child Youth and Family Services, fostering homes and so on. It isn't that all parents are staying home doing nothing all day long. Most of mine work for minimum wage and now will have to most likely quit their jobs because the transportation is being taken away and they have no means to pay a babysitter. Read this loud and clear: Minister of Transportation, if you are not aware of any cuts in that department, make yourself aware.

We thank you, Brenda, for sending this in and certainly honoured to read this into the record on your behalf. I certainly hope that your Member does get back to you with a satisfactory response and a solution to your dilemma.

Now in the remaining nearly six minutes that I have left, Mr. Chair, I want to talk a little bit about tax cuts. We are debating, of course, now the last two motions of the budget, one being the levy and the other being the increase of 15 per cent HST on income tax. I certainly don't want to incite frustration and anger when everyone seems to have been calming down, but there are still some points left to be made. We've heard over the course of this debate, perhaps when people are more frustrated, the word used by Members opposite "galling." We heard it a couple of times, particularly in the nighttime debate.

One of the things that I wanted to have some input into, that I personally have found incredibly galling, is when Members opposite say when you had the oil revenues coming in, why did you reduce taxes. That's one of the questions they've posed: Why in world would we reduce taxes?

Well, Mr. Chair, our minister of Finance at the time, Minister Tom Marshall – who I would put forth perhaps the best minister of Finance this province has ever had – he was very astute, very intelligent and a very learned man. He realized and recognized what was required to generate and stimulate economic growth. He certainly weathered us through a very rough storm when there the rest of the world was in a time of recession.

We were among the most heavily taxed people in Canada and, unfortunately, as a result of *Budget 2016* we are right back there again. Taxation – and he recognized this. He had the wisdom and the foresight to recognize that taxation was strangling our economy.

I just want to explain to Members opposite what happened when we reduced the taxes, what happened when we left that money in the people's pockets. Do you know what it was? The people spent it. They spent it right here in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. They spent it at the building supply stores in Corner Brook and Stephenville, Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander, Labrador City, Wabush, Goose Bay, St. Alban's, Harbour Breton, Trepassey – can't list all the 500 communities, but they spent it right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

They spent it at the local department stores and malls to buy home appliances and furniture, at local retail stores, on local service shops. They spent it buying clothing for their families, buying vehicles, travelling around our province. What was the impact of that spending? It sustained our businesses. It created jobs in our rural communities and in our urban communities.

It allowed businesses to expand and hire more people. It spread the wealth around our local communities because people spending money is what drives our local economies. The Liberals don't seem to understand that, Mr. Chair, and that's why they don't understand why these two pieces of legislation and all the other measures they've introduced in *Budget 2016* will stymie that spending, stymie that local economic activity, cost us jobs and cost consumer and employer and investor confidence.

Mr. Chair, the 1990s taught us that this kind of thinking simply does not work. You do not and cannot cut and tax your way to growth. You cut and tax your way to decline. The government's own budget numbers predict that steep decline is precisely what these measures will create. How is that a good thing? How is that a better tomorrow? That's not even liberalism, and I guess it's no wonder that Liberals feel betrayed, as we see evidence today.

They voted Liberal and ended up with a cross between the Reform Party and the US Republicans and the Margaret Thatcher Conservatives is how one person put it to me. You've got people really thinking, and you've got people really frustrated in the province. It's quite incredible, actually, and unprecedented – I believe someone said that even the a former Liberal premier was after stating, just this afternoon, that this type of drop in support by the electorate and loss of trust is unprecedented.

That's why we continue to debate here, Mr. Chair, because we truly hope the spell will be broken and that Members opposite will realize the implications of the things they are doing and stop it before it's too late. It's not too late yet. We still have the vote to take place. When the vote on these two motions does occur here in this hon. House, it's your last chance to stand up and vote with your constituents.

So we have read into the record the emails your constituents are sending us, the emails our constituents are sending us, and we truly hope that you avail of the opportunity to rethink the budget, make the changes the people are asking for, and do what we can to ensure growth in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and reverse the stymying impact that you have created through *Budget 2016*.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always a pleasure any time I get to stand on my feet and represent the good people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. This sitting, since we've been in the House since March, I've not stood as many times as I have in previous years and spoke on behalf of the district because I took on a new role of being Deputy Speaker and I joined the presiding Officers in the House.

I say that to say why I'm dressed like I am because it was a couple of nights ago that I stood and spoke and I saw someone on Twitter – we've been talking a lot about social media – saying what's the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair wearing and why is she dressed like that. Well, I would love to be dressed like some of my female colleagues, but I'm dressed like you, Mr. Chair, and there's a reason, because we play an important role here in the House. That's been interesting as well, but even though I may not have been on my feet as much as I have in the past couple of years, it certainly doesn't mean that I am advocating any less for my district.

Mr. Chair, we've had a long week. I think we're into our fourth day now. It's been great. I've heard a lot about filibusters in the past. We've heard about Bill 29 and government, at that time, invoking enclosure. Then we had the Muskrat Falls debate. Both of those, I believe, happened in 2012, one in June and one in December. That one was closed by a little different method, something that we call the previous question, and I won't get into that to confuse people that might be watching today.

It's the first time that I have participated in a filibuster. No matter who is in government, it's the democracy that we live under and if somebody is unhappy with things, it's a right that they have to extend the proceedings in the House and keep the Legislature open and debate. I think that it's been positive for both sides because it gave the Opposition and the Third Party an opportunity to talk about the things they're not happy with. And I think that it gave the government Members a chance to identify positive things that were in the budget.

After four days of talking about nothing only the budget, I don't really need to go in and rehash that. It was a difficult budget. We're borrowing up to \$3.4 billion and we're just 527,000 people, and changes were needed. Mr. Chair, I've always been an optimistic person. I love surrounding myself with optimistic people and I have every hope that we're going to turn this around.

Even in this difficult time, Mr. Chair, when I think about my District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair – many, many challenges, it starts on the Quebec border and it goes north as far as Cartwright and I have three unconnected communities – I'm optimistic. In this budget 10 per cent of the provincial infrastructure budget came to Labrador; \$63.7 million being spent on the Trans-Labrador Highway. I got to see a lot of the province over the last couple of years as I assisted, like many of my colleagues, in seven by-elections. It always amazed me, no matter how small the town, no matter how far up the back alleys, we would be on pavement, and here we are in Labrador – you come off the Strait of Belle Isle ferry, which I've spoken of many times in the House. It moves about 100,000 people a year, Mr. Chair.

We have two super ferries over in Port aux Basques that move about 300,000, and we have this old ship that is still running smooth, doing her thing, and we move about 100,000. That main artery that comes in from Quebec across the border into L'Anse au Clair goes all the way now to Goose Bay and to Lab West, and then you can go out through Fermont. Much of that is still not paved and we're working on it.

I'm so pleased that I am a part of a government that is committed, provincially the Liberal

government, and federally through a federal/provincial partnership, we will continue on with that road until the whole thing is paved. That will be a blessing I believe for people from all over the province and beyond, as tourists come, especially to my area.

My area is what my grandfather, Ben Powell, used to call Canada's last frontier. We're certainly off the beaten path up where I live. There are many beautiful places in my district, right from when you start. We've got the second tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada. We've got Red Bay with World Heritage UNESCO status. We've got Battle Harbour, a little island in the middle of the ocean, a step back in time to when cod was king. We've got the Mealy Mountains Park. Now Cartwright, in my northern end, is going to be a gateway to that park. We're going to see millions and millions of dollars federally going into that, and there will be provincial money going in.

I believe that in my district when one area is benefiting financially it benefits the whole region, and it entices tourists to come. We have the Wonderstrands, about 50 kilometres of sandy beaches right in Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. You don't have to go south, I say to the Member for Fogo – Cape Freels. I've got it all in my district, but we have a ways to go with infrastructure. So roadwork will be continuing. There will be some announcements coming. We're starting the work on the pavement in the Labrador Straits, that's so desperately needed.

Mr. Chair, I have a lot of communities that are still looking for water and sewer money, drinking water, wells, and some communities that are looking for roadwork. I have been able to work closely with my colleague, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and feeling very optimistic that over the next few weeks the residents of my district will be pleased with a good number of announcements made by Capital Works. We will have some wonderful announcements by road.

Mr. Chair, one of the biggest issues plaguing my district right now as well is broadband, and especially where I live. I have a large district geographically. I guess Labrador, there's a reason we call it the Big Land. You could take the three Atlantic provinces and put it down into Labrador and still have space left over. I have

about a seven-hour drive from one end to the other when I do that. Half of the district in Southeast Labrador, in my home area, we are really, really crippled and held back by broadband.

I've put a significant amount of energy into looking to secure funds for that. It's a fairly big proposal. It's one that would require a federal/provincial cost-shared agreement. I'm very optimistic that within the next year we're going to move that forward and we're going to – since I've been elected, I was very involved in us continuing with the fibre down through the Labrador Straits. We linked in Pinware, which was not on, and we got the fibre as far as Red Bay, which was very important. I think Red Bay right now is seeing 8,000 to 10,000 tourists a year and we plan on building on that.

As the pavement moves beyond Red Bay North, it's certainly going to benefit Battle Harbour. I want to say to the residents, don't throw out your laptop or computer. It's frustrating. A lot of times now they have to log on between midnight and 5 a.m. to check their email or to do their e-commerce or whatever they're doing, transferring money and things like that. We're working on it and it will come. So that's two or three of the priority things.

My district, I think they know, Mr. Chair, that I'm going to continue to work very hard for them. I spent the last couple of years in Opposition. I presented many petitions, brought them to the floor advocating on the people's behalf. Now I'm sitting – it's the first time for my district to have an elected Member that's sitting on the government side in about 18 or 20 years. Sometimes what that means is they're not hearing you on *Open Line* raising the issues.

Mr. Chair, it's simply because now I'm able to go. I'm able to go over to the Minister of Health and sit in his office and discuss important issues like medical services in Black Tickle. I'm able to go and sit with my colleague, Minister Joyce, and talk about Capital Works priorities in my district. I don't need to take to *Open Line*. I have a great rapport and I have a lot of respect for these individuals that are working very hard on behalf of the people of the province and I will continue to do that.

All 40 of us, no matter what party you're with, it's a great privilege. It's a high honour to come in to what my old colleague used to call the people's House and to be a voice. Not everybody can have a voice here on the floor of the Legislature, but it's a position that if we want to be in it very long that we have to take very seriously. It's a responsible position. It's not about what we want. It's about staying engaged with your constituents, showing up at events, being at the doors and finding out what their priorities are, and then advocating and lobbying for your constituents.

I just have a few seconds left. I want to mention, Mr. Chair, another privilege I've had over the last two or three years is that I represent the province on a National Steering Committee called the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. That's a national group that's all about supporting women in leadership roles. In February, I got to travel to the UK. I was the only parliamentarian there from Canada. I sat with people from 14 other countries, 42 parliamentarians, a fantastic experience. We are hosting this year in July. I just want to put that out there, and I'll be in the media talking a little bit about that.

We heard this week about the importance of encouraging more women to get involved in politics. So I'm pleased to be able to play a little role in encouraging and supporting more women in what can be a very rewarding career, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise again to speak to this particular bill; two pieces of enabling legislation that are still on the books and haven't passed through the House, which are required, I assume, because we're here debating these bills

to be part of the overall budget. With any budget there are requirements to other legislation that is enabling, which is required to confirm the direction the budget wants to take. So we continue to debate these two bills.

It is certainly a pleasure to be here and a pleasure to stand, too, on behalf of the people of Ferryland district and represent them here in the House of Assembly.

I heard the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair just speak, my colleague, in regard to infrastructure and the importance to her district, as all districts here in the province. She spoke about having a relationship with various ministers sitting on the government side.

In my past experience with being privileged enough to serve in the Cabinet, I always thought – and my colleagues were in Cabinet – we had a good relationship with Members on the other side as well. We were accessible and open and had to have chats on issues important to them in their district. If there was a problem that arose we could always speak to it; no matter what district it was or what colour it was it didn't matter. We always tried to solve problems and issues, recognize what the issue was and work with them collectively to make sure we could resolve issues for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, because that's the role we play.

My colleague just mentioned about being 40 Members. It is a unique privilege to be one of those 40 Members now in this House of Assembly to serve a particular district in this province and to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Indeed it is, and we should never forget that. It is, indeed, a privilege that we come here and people elect us to be their representative and speak for them in the people's House.

My colleagues also mentioned broadband; in particular, I think she mentioned high-speed Internet. I mentioned the other day the investments we've made over the past administration in regard to significant investments into high speed to get the connectivity levels to a significant degree across the province. I think we hit somewhere in the high 90s in connectivity levels for high speed,

which is extremely important in all aspects of life.

I know she referenced a particular project in Labrador, and I think this year in the budget there's a small amount for the broadband initiative – maybe a million bucks or somewhere in that range, but at least it's something. While this is a federally regulated through the CRTC function, telecommunications, maybe there's some work to be done through the federal government to access additional or matching funds. I know in the past, Industry Canada has played a role in regard to various programs. A program some years ago – I know Industry Canada put significant dollars into partnering with various provinces in terms of the Rural Broadband Initiative.

Again, hopefully through agencies like ACOA – I know they've partnered before in matching dollars for the building of broadband. Hopefully, the government can work with them to develop that as well, and to continue to grow all broadband right across Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I said, Industry Canada, the whole regulatory framework is through the federal government but, in the past, we certainly partnered with the private sector to try and drive coverage and drive connectivity. In a lot of cases, the business case from the private sector point of view wasn't there, and they wanted, often, dollars to partner to do that.

We had partnered in the past to build that infrastructure and partnered with them to put that infrastructure in. When we did, that allowed them to deliver the service at a reasonable rate. That was always a condition of the partnership of putting in public money that the charge at the end of the day went to infrastructure, and we partnered with them to build it, that the consumer out there would be charged a reasonable rate and wouldn't be overcharged. So that was a condition of being involved.

We weren't forced to get involved. It wasn't something we needed to get involved in, but, as a province and as a government and public policy, the importance to us was significant. That's why we agreed and had a strategy to invest public dollars in increasing the level of

broadband as well. So that was very important as well.

Mr. Chair, I wanted to go back – and I know through the last number of days we've been referencing information that's been forwarded to us from all over the province. I know the Minister of Health and Community Services was up and I think he referenced the process as well, and referenced the fact that us on this side were speaking and repeating or reading out emails and letters from people from our district. Indeed we are, but we're also representing people from all over the province. We're getting information not only from our particular constituencies, which we're speaking to and letting people know what they're saying, but from all over the province and from various districts around the province. That provides a discussion a broad-based discussion on certainly a number of issues.

One issue in my particular district that's been pretty significantly hit by the budget is an issue related to education. I've talked before about infrastructure, certainly changes in caps to particular classes, and as well, a busing issue that is significant for parents and families in my region. I have an email here from a person from the Goulds region – and I've met with a group from Goulds and from the other area in my district that have concerns in regard to the new busing changes and the reduction in this budget related to savings or proposed savings in upcoming new busing contracts and what's going to happen there.

This is just some of the concerns that were raised to me when the information went out after the budget, went out to the English School District and then it was diverted down to the administration in various areas. After it was done and letters were sent out to parents there was a lot of concern in regard to the lack of consultation, the lack of details, the lack of abilities to communicate and see if alternatives could be found or what exactly this was all about and what the results would be.

So this person said it was brought to her attention the past week the full impact on her family of full-day kindergarten, and felt, at that point, it should be delayed to a later date because it may have effects on other things in the educational system. She talks about the fact

she lives in Goulds in the Ferryland District. She talked about the change for her son – he has to go to school early; her son starts Grade 1 in the fall. It talks about the difficulty in handling a different time, earlier time. She lives within one kilometre of the school, but she has to get the bus now at 7 a.m. and talks about getting that in dark winter mornings, and certainly feels it's very unfair and oftentimes unsafe to have those small kids on the roads walking to a bus stop in the dark.

She had concerns in regard to elementary students getting out earlier than the high school students. She mentioned the fact it didn't really click in for her to understand when she was asked what she would do with her son for daycare in the fall when school starts. She referenced in the area there's a program at Goulds recreation centre, and she thought she'd be finally free of daycare and he could avail of the recreational program. But with the busing issue and how that unfolded and the changes, there are concerns in terms of who is going to run the program and whether the high school students who used to get off a little earlier would run that program; but now, with the conflation in terms of the changes in the busing, that may not be possible.

So this person now has to look at the downloading of daycare costs based on this busing change. She's not sure what it could be. Several hundred dollars a week, calculated into a monthly rate, is pretty significant coming right out of a middle-class family that didn't expect to have that cost and now all of a sudden they are incurring that cost.

So they are just very frustrated in regard to this. Again, it talks about four- to six-year-olds waiting for the bus in the dark, increased child cost, talks of multigrading, the issue of kindergarten and going forward with it, very concerned about these changes. I guess this is what this is about the past number of days, talking about individuals and families in Newfoundland and Labrador and how they are specifically affected by some of the things in this budget. Again, with this here, the consultation and the discussion if there were other alternatives or other things that could be done to alleviate some of the concerns here in this particular case.

I certainly continue to work with the parents and the groups with the Eastern School District to see if we can come to some conclusion that will alleviate some of this concern in regard to the changes in the busing contracts that are coming up. I am looking forward to continuing to work with them, this group in the Gould area, Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove, as well as the area from Bay Bulls to Bauline related to St. Bernard's and Mobile High in regard to some of the changes that are coming.

So I look forward to having further discussions in the debate on issues of importance, and I thank you for your time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber.

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's good to rise again in this debate here to add a few words to the comments that are being made here today. We're into, I guess, a little bit of an unusual situation here in the House. We're into a filibuster where we were discussing two finance bills. Just for the purposes of people who may be watching from the outside, we're at the Committee stage, the Committee of the Whole House, and we're examining the bill related to the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy. This is one of the implementation bills related to this year's budget.

So that's what we're talking about. Usually when we go into Committee, we go through the bills clause by clause. One of the aspects of the House is that usually, in clause 1, we allow for a wide-ranging debate. That's the tradition of our House; we have that wide-ranging debate about the general issue that is up for discussion.

The fact that this is a finance bill allows us to have that general type of discussion about pretty well any issues that come up. Members have been taking opportunities to read emails from their constituents. That is very informative, very enlightening in a lot of cases. It's very interesting to see what people have to say and to bring that right to the floor of the House. It's interesting from several points, the contents, but also the process of opening up democracy and allowing people to have their views presented right here in the House. That's a very interesting

change that's happening in our society and happening here in our House and happening in democracy as well.

Also another interesting thing about Committee of the Whole is usually, in debates, we go back and forth for 20 minutes and you're only allowed to speak one time on a bill. In Committee of the Whole, you can speak as many times as you like. Last night, I was up three times speaking on this bill. Other people were up more speaking back and forth. So you have more opportunities for back and forth, productive engagement. I've very encouraged that we had that sort of exchange here in this filibuster, this debate, on these bills. It's been productive in many ways.

Other ways, it's a little bit disruptive, I guess. The Minister of Health noted the effects of sleep deprivation sometimes – we're into our fourth day, going around the clock, and I noticed a lot of people, myself included, our minds, our bodies, are getting a little bit weary and the debate may not be at the high quality that we would like it to be at as we present. I wasn't talking about anyone in particular, but generally.

One of the things that also happens here is that because we're into this around the clock sort of debate, today we didn't have a Question Period. We didn't have the regular Orders of the Day. We didn't have an opportunity to have a Question Period, to have Statements by Ministers, Statements by Members and we didn't have an opportunity to present petitions.

One of the things I had planned to do this week was to present a petition from the people of Stephenville Crossing. They had given me a petition when I was back in the district last weekend and they asked me to present it here in the House and I told them that I would. I may or may not get a chance to present that petition, but I just want to talk about it a bit, just to keep that bargain that I made with the people who gave me the petition.

The petition that the people in St. George's gave me has about close to 500 names on it. It's similar to a petition that I presented in this House related to the library in St. George's. When I heard that there was a possibility that libraries might close, one of the first things I

wanted to do was talk to people who are involved in the library systems at the local level, to see exactly what things they were doing at these libraries. So I met with the people at the library in Stephenville Crossing. We met right in the library. I'd passed by the library many times, but it's the first time that I had been in that library.

I went in the library and one of the things I noticed there was a picture of a lady who had served as a volunteer in that library and how she was being honoured by the people in the community for her service to the library. Many of the libraries we have, have been built on that type of community involvement and that type of volunteer activity.

As I settled down and we had the meeting, I learned more about some of the things that are happening at these libraries. I quickly learned that it's much more than a place where people go to check out books. Although that's an important function as well, and the collections they have there sort of reflect the interest of the people in the communities: the folks on local history and the books about the area.

Also, it was interesting to see there were many books there for children. You could see that the library was set up to provide a learning space and play space for young children. And one of the things – it wasn't a surprise after I looked at space – they do there is they have homework time and literacy programs for young children. So that's one of the things I learned was happening there that was very important.

Also, what was – I guess – very encouraging about that library in particular was the number of partnerships they had made with outside groups. They were working with groups like the RMCP. You might not think that the RCMP would be a group that would be involved in a library, but they had safety programs for children that were offered from the library, Madam Chair.

Those were some of the things that were happening at the library. Also, the Qalipu were offering some cultural programs, drumming circles and things like that were happening at this library during the off hours that the library

was closed. So those are some sorts of things that were happening there.

I'm encouraged as I brought these issues back to caucus, brought it back to various Cabinet ministers, had discussions with them about the importance of libraries, and this library in particular. I was encouraged by the fact that we have some time to work on a possible solution to the situation facing this library and the library in St. George's. There are four libraries in my district that are slated for possible closure. This one in Stephenville Crossing, the one in St. George's, which I presented a petition about last week, a library in McKay's at the school and a library in the Codroy Valley at the school there.

I'm going to work with the people in these communities, work to see that these libraries stay open. I was also interested to find out that there is community support for these libraries in the town halls. The spaces for these libraries are donated by the town. Not only the space, but the heat and light are paid for by the town. The snow clearing in the winter is paid for by the town. So, in many ways, towns are already contributing to these libraries.

Also, it's been noted, and when I've done a little bit of research, that municipalities in other provinces often contribute in constructive ways to keeping libraries open in other jurisdictions in other provinces. Sometimes it's noted that in Newfoundland municipalities don't participate. But when I looked at it, I found that, indeed, municipalities do contribute to the operation of libraries in this province in a very significant way. I sense that there's a willingness to continue to do that, and a willingness to continue to work with other groups to keep these libraries open.

So I'm very encouraged by that, very encouraged by the response that I've had from people within my own caucus and from the minister and other ministers in the government as well. I am still hopeful that we can find solutions that will see these libraries open. That really is the prayer of the petition that the people in Stephenville Crossing gave me, and I support them in their efforts.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR (Dempster): The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am very happy once again to stand and speak to Bill 14 on the levy. Madam Chair, this budget – as we all know, and as we have been speaking about for days now – is all about choices; choices embedded with an envision for the province, choices embedded within a political philosophy or ideology that has been applied to the budget.

One of the issues I've constantly addressed is I keep asking, what is government's vision for the province. We know the Minister of Finance has said that her goal is to reach surplus by the year 2020 – or seven years from now, so by the year 2023. That may seem like an admirable goal, but we have to look at, once again, the trickle-down effect of the budget on the people of the province.

We know we are in tough economic times and we know that government's role is to help strengthen our people, strengthen our communities, strengthen our economy, strengthen those who help keep our economy going, strengthen our public services and strengthen our private sector so that we can weather this storm. There are different ways of doing that.

I have some concerns with some of the very specific measures that have been undertaken by this government in the budget and I have concerns about what it means for people already living in poverty and also the possibility of some of the very specific measures, whether they be increased fees, additional fees, cutting of programs, like the Home Heating Rebate program, like the Adult Dental Program, like the over-the-counter drug program. What does that mean for people who are teetering on the edge of poverty? Is this budget actually tipping some of our people into poverty? We don't know. That analysis hasn't been done.

As I spoke earlier today, I believe it was imperative upon government, particularly the Minister of Finance and the Minister who is also Responsible for the Status of Women, to have

applied a gender lens and to do a complete analysis of the budget before it was finalized to see how the measures would impact on the lives of women and children, but specifically women who are much more economically vulnerable in our province than their male counterparts.

I do believe there are some good aspects of this budget. For instance, the idea of the Income Supplement as a piece of policy is a good piece of policy. It is the shining light in the budget that shows that this government does consider people living in poverty as they make their decisions, and that's important because poverty is expensive. Poverty is not only hard, not only difficult, not only disempowering for those who live in poverty but it's costly as well to our whole population. It is costly in the additional services that are needed.

We know the Canadian Medical Association, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has so clearly identified social determinants of health. One of them, particularly, or two of them, is poverty and the state of homelessness, and how that costs our medical system extraordinarily. There are very clear preventative measures that can be undertaken that are far more cost effective and they also alleviate suffering. If the Income Supplement that was proposed by this budget, if it were set at a rate that was adequate and reflective of a meaningful poverty measure, the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement could have had a drastic positive impact on people currently living in poverty.

In my District of St. John's Centre, I have a large number of people living in poverty. I meet them in their places where they live. There are people who have had conflict with the law. There are people who are living with chronic and persistent mental health issues. There are people who are living with physical disabilities who are unable to work. Although, there are many people with physical disabilities who can contribute to society and have valid jobs and can contribute regardless. Many people in our society can contribute in a valid way to our society whether or not they have paid employment.

We have to look at, are some of these measures pushing more people into poverty? The Income

Supplement is not, in fact, offsetting the cost to people in their lives of some of the fee increases, the additional fees, the additional taxes, and we don't have a clear strategy to end homelessness in the province.

I have phone calls daily in my office, people looking for rent subs or looking for social housing and part of our social housing strategy are rent subs. We have more and more people teetering on poverty. More and more people who are paying 50, 60, sometimes 70 per cent of their income on just mere shelter. A lot of them are seniors and, in particular, single women.

We have the highest percentage of seniors in the whole country in receipt of OAS, GIS; meaning people who are living on \$1,100 a month. Often their rent is \$700 or \$800 a month, which leaves them next to nothing to live on once they also have to pay their heat and light, their cable and their phone. We have a lot of people living in poverty for various reasons.

The Income Supplement doesn't cover what people are losing in this budget. Instead, what we see is that the fees and taxes drastically outweigh the benefit received under the Income Supplement and, as a result, this budget will push more people into poverty. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador have not been given the information on how many people will be pushed into poverty because of this budget.

I know it is not the intention of this government to push additional people into poverty. I know that and I believe that, but there hasn't been a poverty lens put on this budget, an analysis of what the trickle down effects of this budget are on the daily lives of people in the province, particularly those who are more economically vulnerable.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador both log the increases in the Income Support in the past years as a success, because we have seen some increases. Between 2006 and 2013, we saw an 18.6 per cent increase in income support; however, the inflation has gone much more beyond that. People, their earning power or their income has diminished as the price and cost of living has increased. So we are seeing more people in poverty.

The World Economic Forum reported that inequality is one of the key challenges of our time, and we are seeing it in our provinces. We are seeing increased homelessness. We are seeing it more and more difficult for minimum wage earners to make a go of it.

Just today, the Newfoundland and Labrador food banks are asking the mainland of Canada to provide food. That the food banks in Newfoundland and Labrador are running out of food. I don't think any of us in this House would have expected that to happen. As a province, and culturally, we have been people who have been generous, who have cared for one another, who've watched out for one another.

Bridges to Hope is a food bank or a food pantry in my district, the District of St. John's Centre. In the past few months alone, they have seen an increase of people coming to their food bank, three times an increase of what usually would come.

This is an amazing statistic – and they are keeping the statistics at their food bank. In the past month alone, the month of May, they saw an increase of people coming to their food bank for food of 80 per cent. The Gathering Place has increased. The Gathering Place that provides food and support for people living in poverty has grown from 300 people coming for help to 700 people coming for help. They expect it will double to over 1,500 people before the year-end.

This is before we even see the concrete, trickle-down effects of this budget on people. There is an opportunity here for government to truly look at the trickle-down effects of this budget –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – on the poor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

MS. ROGERS: I ask government to please do that.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to just spend a few minutes speaking on this budget and the whole budget process itself. Madam Chair, we all know that it's an exercise that we go through in this House of Assembly about the budget process and how the process works. Sometimes we agree; sometimes we disagree on ways. But, Madam Chair, even the Member for St. John's Centre, no matter what you got in this budget, there is nothing good enough. I just find it astonishing.

I have to say this about Black Tickle, Madam Chair. I know she read a note from Black Tickle last night and not once was I contacted by the Member for St. John's Centre about Black Tickle – not once. I know she stood up talking about the slush fund, that so-called slush fund, which doesn't exist. The slush fund just doesn't exist, Madam Chair. It is part of the funds we're using to leverage federal money. I offered the Member for St. John's Centre a briefing on it to show what types of funds and what types of programs we are leveraging federal funding –

MS. ROGERS: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I know it's hard for her to take; I know. But here are some of the projects that we're setting up: \$140 million; that's going to be for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. That's going to be for St. John's. It is going for every town, every district in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, every electoral district.

Are there things you feel we can differ? Yes. Do you feel we did a great job? That's your opinion. But we did the best with what we had, Madam Chair, and we're trying to create prosperity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. We're trying to put in the services so that they can move ahead. We're trying to give them water and sewer. We're trying to improve the road system.

Madam Chair, I heard the Official Opposition standing up on many occasions and talking about the money they spent on capital works.

You'll never hear me say that money shouldn't be spent for infrastructure in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I know some of the projects the Members opposite were talking about great projects, just great projects. Do I think that okay, there are sometimes that they could have done things differently? Of course. Do they think there are things that we could do differently? Of course. That's just a difference of opinion.

I know the Members opposite were saying that they spent a lot of money in capital works. They did. I'll give them credit, absolutely. Do you know one of the people who were asking them for funds? Me. But I also stood in my place on many occasions and I also said you can't do everything for everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because of their needs. I said that. But did I appreciate sitting down with the Member for Ferryland? Yes. I remember sitting down with the member that used to be the former Member for Gander, Kevin O'Brien – yes. There are a lot of ministers we all deal with – and we're still doing it today on a regular basis.

I know there were some comments about the levy, and then the temporary levy that we've got in this province. I know there were some comments made that once the levy was decreased to \$50,000 taxable income some people were saying, well, it's not good enough at a certain level because most of my constituents are a bit higher.

Well, Madam Chair, I can tell you one thing, and I've been in politics a long while. Some people may say that, okay, I'm a lucky politician; I keep getting in somehow. Some people may say I'm a good constituent guy and I get in somehow. Some people may say I go on party coattails; however they want to say it. But I can tell you one thing, when I took the oath here to become a Minister of the Crown, or a Member of the government, I took an oath to represent all people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not a certain income of people. If we got to put money in, which we did do, the \$74.6 million in as a Newfoundland Income Supplement to help out the low income, we'll do it. Once we got some funds to get rid of the levy, we did it – we did it.

Are there are some things in this budget you can say we could make a different choice? Yes, we could have. Some people say is it right or is it wrong – who knows? Some people may say there is a different way we could approach it. But, Madam Chair, I have to tell you one thing and I can honestly say this – and please God, with the help of the federal government, I've said this on many occasions here – this summer there is going to a lot of infrastructure funding spent just in capital works from Municipal Affairs in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Is that going to create jobs? Yes, Sir. Is that going to create prosperity in the communities in the long run? Yes, Sir. Is that going to help out a lot of people who haven't got proper drinking water, which Members opposite have brought up on many occasions? Yes, it will, Madam Chair.

In my closing, in my last three or four minutes that I have – and I may rise again; I may not. Who knows? I just want to thank the people of Humber – Bay of Islands. I know there were some difficult times with the budget and I know some people were asking questions and some people expressed their views to me, and I enjoy it. I take the opportunity to listen to their views, good or bad. Sometimes, where they know you so well, they may be a bit more vocal than they would if they didn't know you, but I appreciate that.

I say to the people of Humber – Bay of Islands, thank you for the number of years that I have represented you. There were times when we had to make tough decisions and I know things will get better in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, as I went through the district the other night, I just looked at some of the great improvements. I know this year also, if things work out, and I know in consultation with all the councils, there is going to be a lot of great work done in the Humber – Bay of Islands. I'm not here to cast any stones at anybody whatsoever, I'm just saying to all the town councils, fire departments, all the volunteer groups in the Humber – Bay of Islands, thank you very much for sticking with me. Thank you very much. This will pass. When you get out in rural Newfoundland when you talk about the levy, it

is not talked about as much because a lot of people understand.

The gas tax, as we said, is temporary. It will decrease as soon as we can decrease it, Madam Chair. When I speak to the town councils, they want proper drinking water. They want water and sewer. They want basic infrastructure in their towns. They want a nice road to drive over so they can promote tourism.

That's the kind of things that we had to balance out from the budget side and the wants of the municipalities. Madam Chair, there's a lot of good things happening and I know, in our sustainable plan, we went to town councils all across the province and a lot have taken us up on it, that there are Crown lands within their boundaries, they can freeze the Crown land up to 10 years. They can have economic development in their town.

Many times that was stifled, because if you bought Crown land you had to buy it at a certain price. You had to pay for it up front. Now we can negotiate a price and a payment, so they can start economic development and not have that \$200,000, \$300,000 or \$400,000 burden wrapped around their neck, them or a business, for the Crown lands for economic development. That is one of the initiatives we're taking here to expand the economy.

Also, I know the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development and the Minister of Environment; we have met for farm land. It's a big issue. We met to free up some land in Crown land for farming. Hopefully, five to seven years, Madam Chair, we will become sustainable in farming. That is the goal. Am I going to stand here and make that commitment? No, I can't, but that is the goal; that we start on that path. We can't start on that path until we take the basic step of giving land to the farmers, new farmers and the experienced ones that are in the field now, to give them the opportunity.

Madam Chair, I can see my time is slowing down. On a personal note, I've been through these filibusters several times. At times the Member for Cape St. Francis, a good friend of mine, we argue back and forth but everybody is for the right reason in the House. To all the people who have participated in the debate, we

all have differences of opinions. We all get tired sometimes. We all say things we wish we never said, Madam Chair, in the heat of the moment.

I welcome everybody for having their comments, having their say. I say if we disagree, let's do it respectfully. Let's do it respectfully. Let's do it in such a way, Madam Chair, no matter if we – just because we don't do what you think, it's not saying we're not listening. We are listening. I'll say to Members opposite the same thing, just because we say it, you may not agree but I know you are listening.

Everybody who participated in the debate, let's walk out of this Legislature and say we all had a fine battle. We all brought our views ahead for the constituents, but let's remember, we're all here to represent the people of the whole Newfoundland and Labrador for the right reasons, and we're all doing it together.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just want to say to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I do appreciate those comments. He's absolutely right; we're all here to represent our districts. We're all here to represent our districts, Madam Chair. I've said before, I know it's a tough situation. I know there are tough decisions that had to be made. I guess we'll agree to disagree on some of the measures that have been taken. That's what it comes down to at the end of the day, but I do appreciate that.

As I said earlier, the Minister of Justice was up and gave some good explanations to some questions that were asked. The Minister of Education was up and gave some explanations on some of the questions he was asked. So things were going pretty good.

I say to the Member for Port au Port, I know I went off on a little bit of a rant the last time I

spoke, but as the Minister of Health said, you're here a long time. I'm after punching in an awful lot of hours. I'm tired, crooked as sin. I'm the first to admit it, but I've tried my best to keep this totally respectful. If I raise my voice a little bit, I apologize for that.

Anyway, I just wanted to thank the Minister of Finance. I did ask some questions. The Minister of Natural Resources, to her credit, wrote down the questions that had been asked and the Minister of Finance went to her officials and she provided some answers on it. I just want to speak to those three issues again now that I have the answers.

First of all, one of the questions that was asked was we're saying that 75 per cent of tax filers won't pay the levy, which means 25 per cent will. Also, that 25 per cent are making \$50,000 or more. Because if 75 per cent are making \$50,000 or less, that would mean, conversely, that there's only 25 per cent that are making more than \$50,000. A person said to me that seemed very odd. That number seemed very low. When I thought about it, I said, yeah, do you know what. That does sound pretty low. So I asked the Minister of Finance, where did you get the numbers? Basically, the response to that, it's based on the 2014 income tax filings.

The point to note here is just to get the facts on the table. That's not being critical – so that we understand the facts, that's all. If we're talking about the income tax filings, that means – and I'll give you an example. My daughter is a university student. She works at Staples in Mount Pearl like a day a week; just for a bit of pocket money. She has to file income tax. So you take all the students that are in school and what have you, they're all filing their income tax. That inflates the number.

When you're talking about – you can't look at that and say only 25 per cent of the working families are not paying the levy. Because if you were to eliminate the kids that are working at the fast food restaurants and at the movies and all those things, if you took them out of the equation I don't think it would be a 75-25 ratio. It would be a much higher percentage of working people, that are working to support themselves, that are paying the levy. I think that's an important point to make. I'm not being

critical of it but that's the thing about statistics. You can make statistics – depending on where you get the details of them – you can make it sound whatever way you want. That's just putting out the information.

The other point was the individual versus a family levy. I raise that issue because, once again for the record, if someone is making \$51,000 taxable income, they're paying \$100 on the levy. If someone is making \$100,000 they're paying \$700. So in one household you have house A, the husband and wife are both working and they're making \$51,000 each, and they're paying \$200. House B, right next door, only one of the spouses are working, the other one is staying home for argument's sake, making \$100,000. The same income in the home and they're paying \$700. No matter what way you slice it, \$200 versus \$700 with the same family income, the same bills, the same mortgage, the same car payment and everything else. There's definitely an inequity there.

The answer I got here is that generally income tax payable is an individual calculation. Taxes are individual calculations while certain credits are dealt with on the family, but it's based on the income tax. So no matter what way you look at it, it's not equal. That's the point I'm making. I'm just putting it out there.

The third one is the taxi drivers. I had a person who is a taxi driver and they were putting out the impact it's going to have on them. That example has been given before. If someone has a taxi, they're now going to pay – every time that car goes in the garage for repairs or they buy parts, because brakes are going all the time and windshield wipers and all that stuff, sometimes big jobs. Every time they put that car in the garage or they go and buy windshield wash or anything they're doing, it's going to cost them 2 per cent more on the HST. Then on top of that, it's going to cost them more for gasoline. Then on top of that, it's going to cost them 15 per cent more on their insurance, and taxi drivers pay much higher insurance than a regular person would on their car.

The point is that if you're a taxi driver – and that was what the email was basically saying – you have all these increased costs. Now, I raised that before, and I made the jump or the assumption,

well, what's going to happen there is the taxi driver is going to just pass that on to the customer, because they'll just raise the meters. There's no doubt that can happen at some point in time, but the point that was in the email is it's not as simple as the taxi driver was saying that I've got all these expenses; let's just raise the meter. They have to go apply through the City of St. John's, and then there's the issue the taxi industry is saying, well, if we raise the meters too high then people won't use the taxis and then there's the regulatory things, the City of St. John's, or the municipalities

So there's a whole bunch of hurdles and it's not as simple as just saying it cost me more, so I'm going to raise my meter to cover the costs. It's not as simple as that. The other point that was made there is that if we should do damage to the economy because you're taking away expendable income from people, so now they're not going down on George Street or out to a restaurant somewhere and having a couple of glasses of wine because they don't have the money to do it, then that's going to cut back on the taxi business. So that's going to cut back on their revenue.

Of course, what the person was saying is that as a taxi driver they're only making like minimum wages, by the time you add – they don't make a lot of money. They're barely surviving anyway. So you're going to take away from their income significantly just on the business or on their income their making and after you reduce their income significantly, then you're going to hit them with all these taxes. All these things for the business is reducing their income, but then their income itself is going to be taxed and they're going to have to pay for gas for maybe their own car or insurance on their own house and all that stuff.

The point that was being made is that if you're a taxi driver – and there are a lot of them in the city, and in Mount Pearl and throughout the province, for that matter – then this is going to have a very significant negative impact on the taxi industry. I think it's important to point that out as well.

With that said, I do thank the Minister of Finance again for providing me with the answers. At least we ask the questions, we'll get

the information back, we can put the facts out there and we all understand what the facts are. At the end of the day, whether we agree with the facts or we don't agree with the facts that's a different story. In a democratic system, of course, we have the right to agree to disagree. That's the beauty of democracy; we have the right to agree to disagree.

I would say that when it comes to *Budget 2016*, while I acknowledge that there are some good things in there: the enhanced seniors' supplement, a good thing; a lot of money being put in capital works and so on; water and sewer for people. That is all good stuff. Granted, it's our tax money. That's something you have to bear too. It's not like we're writing personal cheques and paying for this. Our taxes are paying for this, but it's still good expenditures of stuff that needs to be done. I'm glad people are getting the things they need. But, at the end of the day, I still cannot support *Budget 2016* or any of the bills associated to it.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Five minutes? Yes, no problem at all.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I rise today in this hon. House on behalf of the constituents of Exploits, which I'm certainly proud to do so. Last Friday, I received from the good people of the Town of Bishop's Falls a petition expressing concern over the announced closure of the town library. Due to our ongoing filibuster and routine proceedings being deferred for same, I will be presenting the petition to Minister Kirby later this afternoon.

The Bishop's Falls library is on the eve of their 50th anniversary and is indeed a valued asset to the people of Bishop's Falls. The minister has committed to a meeting with the mayor and library board as soon as possible to explore all options for retaining what is a much beloved and valued service for the people in Bishop's Falls.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It is nice to be back after a little break. I went home, lay down, had an hour's sleep and when I woke up, I turned on the TV again to see the proceedings here in the House of Assembly. The Minister of Education was on at the time and he had a real nice tone in his voice of how he was saying things. Then, I said oh my God, how long was I asleep because this morning it was different.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Then, I really got worried because I was afraid that I was dreaming about the Minister of Education. That was the scary part of the whole lot of it. So it was definitely a nightmare.

It's good to be back and it's good to be up here again expressing – and as people know, we're involved in a filibuster. I really do believe that we're after making a lot of progress. I really do believe it. I just heard a Member opposite get up about a petition about a library in his district. I did that four times last night for my district, the library in Pouch Cove. I heard another Member from – I'm going to get it now because I'm going to get it right this time – St. George's – Humber and he basically presented a petition also, and I believe that government will listen. What we've done here for the last number of days if 54 libraries in the province can be saved from what we've done, I think this was a great, great exercise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I really do believe that government is going to do the right thing. I really do. I know we'll find money. There's money to be found. We talked about it through the last number of days about a million dollars. I think through the whole exercise with this budget, and I have to be honest, I've learned more about libraries in Newfoundland and Labrador than I knew before the budget started. I'm not a person that uses the library a lot, but I realized there is a lot of constituents out there and a lot of people in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and in communities like I have that's not that rural – I know you are going to say he doesn't live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but the crowd from Pouch Cove, Torbay and Flatrock will never be called townies. They always want to be called that they're from rural Newfoundland; that's the way they are.

That's something that I believe is a success that we're having. I think we are going to get it because I'm hoping that government is going to listen. I really am. I'm hoping that the exercise that we've done over the last couple of days – I applaud everybody here for being respectful. I know when I get up I try to be respectful for everybody over across the way. Like the Minister of Municipal Affairs said earlier, we may not all agree –and I tell you we don't all agree – but I respect your opinion and I hope you respect the opinion of the people on this side of the House.

Madam Chair, I really want to get back and just talk about education for a bit. Like I said over the last number of days, we're after presenting cases when it came to the levy increase – the levy is the bill we are actually debating right now, Bill 14, but also we still have the one with the income tax.

The cost of what we're talking about – I believe that everybody is on the one page. That everybody here agrees that education is such an important role that we have to play as people in the House of Assembly to make sure that our education system is the best in all of Canada and best in all the world because our children and the opportunities that they have in their future is based on what they get in the early stages of education.

I just want to go back. I have a nice email this morning from people at Mary Queen of Peace and they thanked me. A couple of them heard this morning that I was on and expressed my concerns about education in that one school. I picked Mary Queen of Peace but it's happening in a lot of schools. People are hoping that government will listen.

I know the Minister of Education – I heard him up earlier and he gave what he thought about education, but that's his opinion. I know he's got his opinion, but I'm just hoping that you're going to listen to parents, to educators, school councils and other people that are involved. Our education is too important to let go and to make things that are going to go backwards.

I believe that in classroom cap size is somewhere where we should not change because – I said this the other night when we were talking about education. I said the less number of students in a class – ideally, for them it would probably be around 20, I would imagine, or something like that. What happens when you reduce cap size is there are two or three kids in that class who probably really do need that extra attention. Most of them in the class won't need the attention. Some of them probably don't even need a teacher at all. The majority just in, but it's the couple that will fall through.

I know going through school and everything else when I did, we were like with 30 and 40 in a class. The attention that the teacher needs to spend on students is important. Increasing cap size and doing combined classes, I feel really is a step backwards when it comes to our education system. So it's important that – and I'm hoping this filibuster, what I've been doing the last number of days and all my colleagues over here, is we've been expressing – I know I haven't read many emails. I think I read two the whole week.

I talk about all the emails that I have because I prefer to get up and talk directly to the people across the way. I'll express what the people are telling me, this and everything else, but I do believe you got to listen to everybody out there. That's a part of governing. I think there are opinions – just like I said earlier about the libraries. I applaud the people across the way that got up and gave out petitions and talking about their libraries. I really do believe that the

libraries will be fixed. I believe government will listen to their own Members, hopefully they'll listen to us and they'll listen to all the petitions to them.

That's the same thing we can do with education. There are a lot of things in education. We may disagree over if we should have full-day kindergarten. We may disagree over what we're going to do when it comes to education. All I'm asking is government to go back to the school councils, go back to the teachers' association, talk to people and let's get the best possible education that we can for our children, because I believe that's what we're all here for. I believe we're here for the results. When it comes to a dollar figure on education, we can debate what it is, whatever it is, but at the end of the day I'm sure everybody here wants to make sure that education is priority number one.

Now, Madam Chair, I want to talk a little bit about – I look at the investments that are done through Municipal Affairs. I am a critic for Municipal Affairs. I said to the minister when we were in Estimates – and now it seems like a long, long while ago – that I was happy, and I'm going to give government praise. I was happy with what they did. I was a little bit nervous.

Municipalities were telling me they were nervous about the ratios, if they were going to be changed, because everyone was told this was going to be such a bad budget. They were told the operating grants may change. That stuff didn't change. I heard the minister earlier today get up and he was basically saying it's not true. It's not true about all these major costs that municipalities are going to incur because of this budget.

I know as a municipal leader, and I know in the towns that I represent, that there's going to be a major increase in cost. Now I'm hoping it will be offset by other monies coming to the towns, but when you look at municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, once they set their budget that's it. Their budget has to be a break-even budget. They can't run deficits. They cannot do that.

What's happened, and speaking to municipal leaders in my area, is that the price of gas going up, alone, is going to be such a major problem

for the towns, because they have to come up with this extra money. Like I said, municipalities run on an even keel. You might think in a small municipality, probably like Flatrock, their gas bill will probably go up \$10,000 or \$15,000. But when you run a budget, that's \$10,000 or \$15,000 they didn't have. They did their budgets last year. This is why municipalities do have a problem with this budget, and it's the reason why they're very concerned.

The reason why I'm bringing that up; I spoke to municipal leaders yesterday evening in Torbay and they're concerned about the second budget. They're wondering what's going to happen in the second budget. I don't know what's going to happen in the second budget. There is a fear out there that some municipalities are looking at probably things being downloaded on them. I really hope that's not going to be the case. The libraries that are in municipalities, I hope government can come up with added extra funding to help keep these libraries and that will be a way of saving them.

I just want to make a point to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that municipalities are doing well. They're happy with what happened with different things, but they don't want to see any downloading of services or anything.

Again, there are some costs that municipalities –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Municipalities are worried about the cost.

You didn't hear what I said, Minister.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I haven't spoken in debate in a while, so I thought I'd rise for a few minutes and once again contribute to the debate.

I just want to once again thank people of Newfoundland and Labrador who have contributed so much to the discussion over the last number of days. I'm continuing to receive emails and Facebook posts and tweets. It's encouraging that there's so much support for bringing people's voices to the House of Assembly.

I'm grateful for the level of engagement that has occurred as part of this debate. We all recognize that everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador has been touched by this budget in some form or another. It has hit the pocketbooks of virtually everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador. So it's critical that we bring those voices to the House of Assembly. I'm proud to have an opportunity to do so.

I don't know how many opportunities I'll get to continue to bring concerns of citizens to the House of Assembly but what I can assure people is that regardless of whether we are here a day or a week or a month or the rest of 2016, as an Opposition, we will continue, whether we're in the House of Assembly, whether we're outside the House of Assembly, we're going to do everything we can to continue to bring the voices of people to this House and make sure that those voices are heard in Newfoundland and Labrador, and make sure that government is listening.

As people may have noticed, for the last couple of hours I haven't had a chance to rise. I tried to sleep; that didn't work very well. So I just want to let people know I'm back. I'd like to say I'm bright-eyed and bushy-tailed but that would be a misrepresentation, Madam Chair. I'm happy to still stand in this House, happy to keep contributing to the debate, happy to be bringing concerns of people in Newfoundland and Labrador to the House of Assembly. I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue to do so.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I will now ask the Clerk to call the vote.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

CHAIR: Division.

Division

CHAIR: All those in favour of the resolution, please stand.

Pardon me, I didn't ask if the Whips were ready, but I do see most of them are in their chair. It's been a long week.

CLERK (Ms. Barnes): Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Warr, Mr. Browne, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Ms. Parsley.

CHAIR: All those against, please stand.

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

Madam Chair, the ayes: 24; the nays: nine.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The resolution is carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2." (Bill 14)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 and 3.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 and 3 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 and 3 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 14 carried without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Division has been called.

Division

CHAIR: Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Warr, Mr. Browne, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Ms. Parsley.

CHAIR: All those against, please stand.

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

Madam Chair, the ayes: 24; the nays: nine.

CHAIR: The motion is carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise, report the resolution and Bill 14 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report the resolution and Bill 14 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise and report Bill 14 carried without amendment, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of a temporary deficit reduction levy on taxable income.”

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of a

temporary deficit reduction levy on taxable income.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, Bill 14, 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 Bill 14, and that the said bill shall now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2,” carried. (Bill 14)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 14)

On motion, Bill 14 read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 14 be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Government House Leader that Bill 14 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 14)

On motion, Bill 14 read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 14 be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 14 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Warr, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Ms. Parsley.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against the motion, please rise.

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

Mr. Speaker, ayes: 25; the nays: 9.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 14)

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 Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 14)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into the Committee to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums, Bill 19.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Ways and Means and that I do now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 19, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

Resolution

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This obviously will be the last time now that we get to speak to this resolution, which is part of the bigger budget package, for lack of a better terminology.

I just want to take this opportunity, as the Member for Mount Pearl North did, to thank all the people who participated in this debate. I've said it a couple of times during the night in the last couple of days, I have never seen the level of public engagement than I have seen in this particular debate on the budget. People had their say, there's no doubt about it. I'm glad to be able to say that everybody on this side did their part in making sure the people's message got out loud and clear.

I would certainly hope that government has listened, not just heard, but listened to what the people had to say. I'm disappointed, quite frankly, that we haven't seen any changes to the

budget. I'm disappointed we haven't seen any changes to either of these two bills that we've been debating for the last couple of days. I think there was room there to make some changes.

I believe the cumulative impact of all the taxation that we're going to impose on people is going to have a detrimental impact on people. I appreciate, as I said before, that the government did put in a measure for low-income seniors. I applaud that move. That was a very positive move.

I'm very glad the federal government, under Minister Foote and her colleagues, did step in to be able to raise the levy to \$50,000. That was a positive thing, and it helped a lot of people. I'm glad it helped a lot of people. I would say, from a taxation point of view, that the levy and all these other taxes are going to have a detrimental impact on a lot of people in this province, and they are going to affect people in different ways.

Some people will be able to absorb it, there's no doubt. There are going to be other people who will not be able to absorb it. There are people who have contacted me and contacted other Members. They have told us categorically that this is going to put them over the tipping point and it's going to have a detrimental impact on their families.

For those who are able to absorb the actual taxation, they're not going to have the expendable income to be able to put into the community to support business, to support economic development in our communities. It's going to have a negative impact. There's going to be a trickle-down effect beyond all the taxes because businesses are going to have to suck up all these taxes when it relates to fuel expenses and insurance expenses. They're going to pass that all on to the consumer. So that's kind of like another hidden tax that's there.

I believe there are other opportunities to make some changes, which was suggested. Unfortunately, none of it was done. I would also be remiss if I didn't speak once again to the education system. I have a lot of people in my district, and I know people in other areas as well, who have concerns about the education system in our province. People believe that other choices could have been made that were not.

So with that said, I do want to certainly thank all Members of the House of Assembly for participating in the democratic process. Unfortunately, we had to agree to disagree. I guess as a result of that I'm sitting over here. So be it, that's democracy as well. That's the way the system works.

I have no regrets for voting against this budget. I have no regrets against voting against these particular bills. I wish all Members nothing but the very best. It's not personal. It's certainly not personal with me. It's just simply doing what I felt was right for the people who I represent and I have no regrets.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 19)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 8 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 8 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 8 inclusive carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. KENT: Division, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Division has been called.

Division

CHAIR: Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour, please stand.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Warr, Mr. Browne, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Ms. Parsley.

CHAIR: All those against, please stand.

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

Madam Chair, the ayes 24; the nays nine.

CHAIR: The enacting clause is carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 19, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, that the Committee report having passed a resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 19 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report the resolution and Bill 19 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred, and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution 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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: "That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a second 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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: "That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on insurance premiums."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and

President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, Bill 19, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 19 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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2", carried. (Bill 19)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 19)

On motion, Bill 19 read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 19 be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a second 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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 19)

On motion, Bill 19 read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 19 be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 19 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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Warr, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King, Ms. Parsley.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against the motion, please rise.

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

Mr. Speaker, the ayes, 25; the nays, nine.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 19)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 19)

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

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

I would ask, at this time, leave from my colleagues opposite to – given that it is Tuesday, if I could call certain motions to do third reading.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

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

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

Thank you to my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would call from the Order Paper, Order 4, third reading of Bill 17.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 17, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5. (Bill 17)

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 Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 17)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 5, third reading of Bill 34.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 34, An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In the Province, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The Province. (Bill 34)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In the Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 34)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would call Order 6, third reading of Bill 37.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that Bill 37, An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act. (Bill 37)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time, 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 Income And Employment Support Act And The

Student Financial Assistance Act,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 37)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 7, third reading of Bill 38.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that Bill 38, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been 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.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997. (Bill 38)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill is now 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 Schools Act, 1997,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 38)

MR. SPEAKER: It’s my understanding that we have leave of the House for the hon. the Minister of Finance to read the final 40 names for Honour 100.

Do we have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

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

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

MS. C. BENNETT: I will now read into the record the final 41 names of those who lost their lives in the First World War, in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve, the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine or the Newfoundland Forestry Corp. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: William Whittle, Frederick Wicks, Arthur Wight, Charles Wighton, Frederick Wilcox, Alexander Williams, Hugh Williams, James Williams, Levi Bragg Williams, Raymond Victor Williams, Robert John Williams, Clarence Wills, Herbert Wills, Andrew Wilson Jr., Andrew Wilson Sr., Augustus Winsor, Edgar Winsor, George Winsor, Edward Rozier Winter, Randolph Milligan Winter, Adolphus Wiseman, Herbert Wiseman, Marcus Stanley Wiseman, Eric Gordon Woodford, Francis Patrick Woodford, Patrick Joseph Woodford, Kenneth Berkley Woodman, William Mark Wooldridge, Louis Woolfrey, James Robert Woolridge, Arthur Wyatt, Clement Yetman, James Yetman, Michael Yetman, George Youden, Thomas Youden, Arthur Harold Young, Edward Young, Henry Leslie Young, John Bertram Young, Wallace Young.

(Moment of silence.)

(Ode to Newfoundland sung.)

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to thank all Members who read out the names of over 1,600 people from the Dominion of Newfoundland who lost their lives. It’s gotten quite a bit of attention. Even *Maclean’s*, for their July 1 edition, are covering this. We’ve had people travel from as far away as Labrador and Grand Falls, so I think it was appreciated by the people of the province.

Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

This is a point in the afternoon where each of us as leaders will have an opportunity to address the House. Mr. Speaker, just to take a few minutes, first of all, to thank you, the Clerk, our Table Officers, Pages, and all staff of the House of Assembly for their work and working through – especially this past week – very long hours and long days that we've been here with each other. The House continued to operate and function around the clock during that time, but also during the entire session this spring.

I also want to thank those behind the scenes, including the rest of the House of Assembly staff who are not directly involved with the operations here, the other staff, and also Hansard. The staff in Hansard work every day away from the House of Assembly preparing the Hansard transcripts, as has been a tradition in the House of Assembly. Also, the Broadcast Centre, who ensures the broadcast is available to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and people everywhere who want to tune in, watch and follow the activities of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take a moment, if I may, to thank employees in our own elected offices: our Opposition staff, executive assistants and constituency assistants for all MHAs, our policy and research and support teams that have also assisted us through this session; their work is invaluable to what we do here in the House. Without them we would not be able to come in prepared to do the work of the people here in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a moment to thank all public servants in Newfoundland and Labrador – from all departments, branches, agencies, boards and commissions – for the work they do on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're very important to our province. I have great pride and great respect for the hard-working public servants of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also want to thank all three House Leaders for their work, and their work together as House Leaders in order to ensure a smooth and working House of Assembly that's productive and worthwhile. I thank my own, the Government

House Leader and as well, that of the Third Party for their work.

Party Whips are also an integral part of the work we do. We all get restrained by the Whip sometimes, but they do their work to make sure that we're here and we attend where we are supposed to be and do the work as well.

We have House of Assembly Committees that work after hours – before the House in the morning, quite often, and also after hours in the evening – and also Committees that will work while the session is closed for the summer.

I also wanted to take a moment to acknowledge all the Members of the House of Assembly on both sides of the House. Thank you for the work you've done here in the House: my own caucus Members opposite, NDP, and the new Independent Member of House as well. We're here to work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We do the work for the people, we're elected by the people and we're here to do that.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I want to thank the people of our province who elected us, put us in office to do the work on their behalf, to run the government, to grow our province and to develop a future for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and for the generation to follow. We'll continue to do our work to the best of our ability on behalf of them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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.

On behalf of our House Leader, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, who was not able to be here with us during the last few days because of having to attend to a medical situation during this very intense period of our budget-related debate – she may not have been here with us physically, but I can guarantee you she certainly was here with us in spirit.

I'd like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your very gentle, but deliberate guidance as we worked together during this session. I thank you for your particular efforts to bring a different type of decorum here to the House.

I'd like to thank the Table Officers who also guide us with a steady hand, with expertise, with knowledge, with passion and with compassion; the Sergeant-at-Arms and your Pages who have done such a great job to make sure we are organized, that we have the tools we need in order to do the work on behalf of the people and who keep us well watered.

I'd like to thank also the security staff, including the Commissionaires, who at times have had to rearrange their personal lives at the last minute to accommodate us. My father was a Commissionaire so I so very proudly thank you for your work.

The RNC, who are here sometimes late into the night to ensure that we are able to do the work that we need to do on behalf of the people; the cleaning staff, particularly during this time of our filibuster when the demands are a little bit greater. I'd like to thank the Broadcast staff who have worked so hard throughout this session, particularly during the filibuster. Some may have even tried to make us look good. The people in Hansard, who work with such precise attention to detail, and having to listen so closely to what we say, sometimes more than once and sometimes once is certainly hard enough. I imagine that it's not always easy.

I would like to take the time, Mr. Speaker, to thank our leader, Earle McCurdy, who has given us great support. I'd like to thank our team in our caucus office who serve our caucus and the people of our Districts of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, the people of St. John's Centre and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with such great passion, with such great compassion and with such great generosity.

I would like to congratulate the Premier, his House Leader, his Cabinet and his caucus for this session, for the incredible work they have had to do under very difficult circumstances in our province. I would like to thank you for that. I know you have had the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in all the

work that you do. I would hope that you would continue to that as you do further deliberations and as you exercise your governance on behalf of the people of the province.

I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition, his House Leader and his caucus. What a pleasure and an honour it has been to work with you. Each session we all learn so much from one another. We also learn from the people who work with us and support us.

I would like to thank the Independent Member for St. John's South. It has been a pleasure in the past little while to be able to work with him.

AN HON. MEMBER: Mount Pearl –

MS. ROGERS: Mount Pearl, pardon me.

AN HON. MEMBER: – Southlands

MS. ROGERS: Mount Pearl – Southlands. Thank you very much. I

It has been a rewarding experience to work with all of you. I would particularly like to thank the people of the province who have pushed us in incredible ways to make sure that any of the work we do truly reflects the well-being and the best that we can possibly do on behalf of the people of the province.

I believe that what we have seen in the past few weeks as we have debated the budget is how important it is for the people of our province to be active, to speak with us, and how important it is for us to listen and to hear – to really listen with the intent of hearing. It's been an honour to serve in this session.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to stand for a few minutes to recognize the hard work of the many Members of this House of Assembly – in particular, the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus, the Third Party and, of course, our newly

Independent Member back there – who have worked so hard over this budget debate, in particular, and put in many countless hours. I want to thank them for their commitment to the province and, indeed, to the people that elected them to serve.

I also want to take a few minutes to thank all those that supported us. There's a tremendous effort that goes into supporting those sessions of the House of Assembly. As a Speaker, you are fully aware as you run the proceedings here in this House. I want to reach out and say thank you for the job that you have done and your staff.

The Table Officers; every year we sit on this floor and do our debating and these people sit in the middle of all of this and listen to what we have to say and do their job gracefully. I really want to recognize the hard work that you continue to do on behalf of us.

The Sergeant-at-Arms and the Commissionaires, as have already been mentioned, and the security – RNC officers – as have been mentioned: you sit there and watch the proceedings day in and day out as this all occurs. You do this with a degree of professionalism that we are all so proud of.

We've seen some new faces this year with some new Pages. I know we're not supposed to speak to people in the gallery, but I'm going to take the opportunity to reach out. We do have one of our former Pages in the gallery today and some new faces here with us on the floor. It's appreciated, the work that you do, not just as you provide the water, but you do it so cheerfully, always with a smile on your face.

I hope that working on this floor you'll get the learning experience. As I've reached out and become friends with many Pages in the past, they always look back at this as a great educational point in their life. I hope you take this experience, working with the politicians on this floor – you take that into your own life. I would guess at some point in the future we will see some future leaders sitting in those chairs because of the experience that they have here.

Hansard, the Broadcast staff; they just put in so many hours behind the scenes. No matter where

we go across our province we see people reach out as they tune into the webcasting and they read all the words that are now transcribed into Hansard. It's an important piece, not only in what happens in the day-to-day occurrences here in this House, but indeed, it is part of history in the making in our province. We appreciate the hard work that they're doing.

I'm going to reach out and thank another crew that sit up in the so-called galleries and, of course, this is the media. Some days I like them and some days I don't, I have to say. I'm sure all of us that sit on this floor would share that view from time to time. But it's important that they do their job in getting the news out on things that happen on this floor in the House of Assembly. So I want to thank the media for the work that they do.

In the background of all of this we have a very functional Legislative Library that does a lot of the research that informs the debates that occur in this House of Assembly. I want to thank them too.

We've seen it happen today, we've seen throughout this session that when we are most effective is often when we see legislation that gets passed by the co-operation of all parties. I want to thank all the party Members that are here, that reach out and make that happen as we'll see in just a few minutes here.

The House Leaders; I'm very proud of my House Leader, of course. When I was in Opposition he was my House Leader and his assistant, the Deputy House Leader. We see the same from our House leadership across the way too. So you do this, as I said, with a degree of professionalism. You are able to work together in getting things and making things happen in this House of Assembly. It does not go unnoticed and I want to thank you for that.

The Whips; for those of you that are watching and maybe do not clearly understand the role of the Whip on this floor, we have those Whips who will actually keep Members in the House of Assembly through such important times, making sure that we have the quorums that are required to continue to do the work that we do. Thank you on behalf of all of us for what you do. We, in government, reach out to our staff in the

various departments to provide technical briefings that are so important to our Members, which would help them in Question Period and help them with the important pieces of legislation that are being done here.

I guess I will declare my bias. I'm so proud of the team that I have who are standing here and now sitting here with me. They've exhibited a fair amount of courage and determination over the last few months as we went through, I think, what has really been one of the most challenging times in the history of our province. I want to thank all of you for being there in supporting us, as I would to the Members of the Opposition for challenging us in making sure we are the best that we can be. It's an important time in our history – I've said it so many times – it being a critical juncture, and I mean that. But the important dialogue and debate that occurs in this House of Assembly, I believe that will be recorded in history and one that we will be proud of.

So, as Premier, we'll take this summer and we'll be getting around the province. We'll be, indeed, listening, engaging with people, making sure that we get their input on all things that matter to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Again, I'm sure we will be running into many Members of this House of Assembly, so let's reach out and show people in this province that we are willing to work together to actually change the future of our province for the benefit of all of us that enjoy what we have in this beautiful province we call home.

Nowhere do we go where you see so many beautiful communities that are just so spectacular when you look at the landscapes, the bays and the coves that we see in our province. I think what reminds us the most, that makes us unique, indeed, are the people that actually live there and really make a difference in providing the necessary services in our homes.

Next week, has been mentioned already, public service workers and our public sector, they provide those critical services that I just mentioned. I was proud yesterday to be able to sign the proclamation that next week will be Public Service Week. So I'm very proud to be

able to congratulate them and recognize them for the hard work they do.

Behind all of us who sit here, we spend quite a bit of time away from our family, friends and home, as they watch us and they think about us and make sure that our well-being is taken care of. I want to say to my own family and my friends, thank them for their continued support, as I'm sure the Members of this House of Assembly can say the same with their own families and their own friends there supporting us.

This year, of course, marks the 100th anniversary of Beaumont-Hamel. I thank the Speaker for this, because this was a project and a program he started out. Again, when we saw Members in the House of Assembly that come in, it was important to them that we recognize the names that have been now transcribed in Hansard and will be there as part of history. So thank you to the Speaker for making sure that occurred. I would encourage all Members of this House of Assembly, at an event some time on July 1 of this year – find yourself at an event recognizing the sacrifices that many of our young men and women did on our behalf.

So I wish you all good health, safe travels, and I'm sure, as I said, we'll pass sometime over this summer. We look forward to getting back together in the fall in this House of Assembly. So good luck to one and all. Thank you very much. I appreciate the work that has been done here. Have a good summer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Lieutenant Governor is waiting and has a function at 6 o'clock, so I'm going to be quick in my thanks.

First of all, I'd like to thank all Members of the House of Assembly. We've embarked on a new direction of order and decorum. I can honestly say, so far in my 21 years here, we've had great co-operation from all the Members of the House of Assembly. It's not perfect yet, but we've got next session to work on that. I've taken a hard line with some Members on both sides of the House, and one of them now is shaking his fist

at me; but you eat the elephant one bite at a time. I think we've made great progress in making this a more professional, more respectable Legislature.

I wanted to thank the Table Clerks, Hansard, Broadcast, the Legislative Library and all staff of the House of Assembly service who help make this Legislature operate smoothly. I wanted to thank my Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chair of Committees and the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels, and Mount Pearl North, who have filled in from time to time as well at the Committee table.

I just wanted to wish all of you a wonderful summer, safe summer. I look forward to seeing you back here in the fall. Spend time with your family. I know the past few days, and this session in particular, has been a strenuous session on both sides; which makes me very proud, considering the fact that it was a strenuous session on both sides of the House, the fact that we were able to be more respectful, and the most respectful Legislature that I've seen in all the years. So I thank all Members of the House again, have safe and enjoyable holidays.

We welcome the Lieutenant Governor, who I'm hoping is just outside the doors, to come in and proclaim our legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER: Admit His Honour, the Administrator.

All rise.

(His Honour the Administrator takes the Chair.)

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

MR. SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the General Assembly of the province has at its present session passed certain bills, to which, in the name and on behalf of the General Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK: A bill, "An Act To Amend The Parliamentary Assistant Act And The Parliamentary Secretaries Act." (Bill 3)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act." (Bill 4)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Interprovincial Subpoena Act." (Bill 5)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Professional Fish Harvesters Act." (Bill 6)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act." (Bill 12)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 13)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2." (Bill 14)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 3." (Bill 15)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 4." (Bill 16)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 5." (Bill 17)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 18)

A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2." (Bill 19)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3." (Bill 20)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 4." (Bill 21)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 5." (Bill 22)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 6." (Bill 23)

A bill, "An Act Respecting Insured Medical And Hospital Services In The Province." (Bill 24)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Hearing Aid Practitioners Act." (Bill 25)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957." (Bill 26)

MR. SPEAKER: It's one of the only places time stands still.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Pensions Funding Act And The Teachers' Pensions Act." (Bill 28)

The House now stands adjourned to the Call of the Chair.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996." (Bill 29)

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Co-Operatives Act." (Bill 30)

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

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Labour Standards Act." (Bill 31)

Carried.

On motion, the House adjourned to the call of the Chair.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2." (Bill 33)

A bill, "An Act To Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Industrial Facilities In The Province." (Bill 34)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Smoke-Free Environment Act, 2005 And The Tobacco Control Act." (Bill 35)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Victims Of Crime Services Act." (Bill 36)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income And Employment Support Act And The Student Financial Assistance Act." (Bill 37)

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997." (Bill 38)

HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (Frank F. Fagan): In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(His Honour the Lieutenant Governor leaves the Chamber. Mr. Speaker returns to the Chair.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, given the hour of today, Tuesday, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that this House do now adjourn.