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*Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA*

Tuesday

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today Mr. Patrick Collins and his wife, Shirley, who are the – we'll start again.

I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today Mr. Patrick Collins and his wife Shirley who is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Also in the Speaker's gallery today we have Andrew Abbott and his father Jim Abbott. Andrew is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** We welcome to our public gallery today former MHA Jim Bennett.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** We also welcome Ken Buckle of Forteau, Labrador, along with his wife Tracy and his parents Truman and Rowena Buckle. Ken is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** We have Superintendent Owen Brophy and members of the correction staff at Her Majesty's Penitentiary, the subject of a Ministerial statement.

Welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** As well, in the public galleries we have Dr. Christopher Smith and Jen Smith from the Memorial University School of Social Work, as well as Laura Moores and Em

Wadden, who are the subject of a Member's statement today.

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

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, Topsail – Paradise, St. George's – Humber, St. John's Centre and Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

The hon. the Member for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

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

It's an honour to recognize Mr. Patrick Collins of Riverhead, Harbour Grace. Mr. Collins is a writer and a retired educator, who taught in various communities throughout our province.

Pat finished his career as a curriculum program specialist. He is now an instructor at the Canadian Training Institute in Bay Roberts. Pat is well known for his special talent – a talent which he displays passion and brilliance, and that's writing.

He is getting ready to publish his eighth book entitled, *What Lies Below*, with DRC Publishing. Patrick's stories are based on significant historical events, especially those involving his hometown of Harbour Grace.

Since 2010, Pat's literary works include a biography of *Dr. Charles Cron: A Doctor for All Time; A Man Who Cured Our Hearts; The Harbour Grace Affray; The Spirit of the S.S. Kyle; Murder at Mosquito Cove; Belonging; Forsaken Children; and Gibbet Hill.*

Born and raised in Riverhead, he continues in his retirement to enjoy researching and writing. Pat is also a fan of healthy living and you can often see him jogging the streets of Harbour Grace.

I ask that all hon. Members join me in congratulating Pat Collins an amazing, gifted local author from the strong District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House to commend a remarkable woman whose career has a place in the hearts of all who knew her.

Beverly Williams of English Harbour West began her nursing career in 1984. Her intelligence, compassion and strong work ethic made her career choice a natural fit; however, she would chose a path six years later that would impact hundreds of lives along the South Coast.

In April 1990, Beverly became community health nurse for her hometown area in the Coast of Bays. She delivered health services to people in private homes, clinics and resource centres in nine communities from Belleoram to Rencontre East.

Individuals who have been cared for by Beverly attest that she possesses an unparalleled level of care and compassion and her kind nature and ability has made her a beloved professional in our region.

After decades of service, Beverly recently embarked on her well-deserved retirement. I ask Members of this House to join me in recognizing Beverly for the outstanding care she provided and salute her dedication and commitment to the people.

Beverly is the embodiment of what it means to be a community nurse and we thank you for the lives you have touched.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Topsail – Paradise.

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

I rise today to acknowledge 26-year-old Andrew Abbott of Conception Bay South. Andrew has been a volunteer member of the St. John's IceCaps' staff since 2011.

Andrew, who has Down's syndrome and autism, is well known to be assisting the players in the dressing rooms, supplying towels, ice bags, water and I'm sure whatever they needed. Accompanied by his father, Andrew would collect the pucks off the ice, after which he would take his place inside and outside the dressing room handing out hugs and fist bumps as the players headed on to the ice for games.

Andrew was more than just a helper to the players. Over time, he grew into a role from being helper to becoming more of a member of the coaching staff. He joined the staff for pre-game meetings and on the bench before the games. IceCaps coach Sylvian Lefebvre described Andrew as an inspiration and someone who has so much love to give.

Lefebvre said that if another team comes to St. John's, it will benefit from Andrew's presence. He says that he knows how much the team has meant to Andrew, but Lefebvre says the IceCaps got the much better deal.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in acknowledging and congratulating Andrew Abbott.

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

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

**MR. REID:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Agnes McCarthy of Corner Brook who passed away suddenly last month.

Agnes spent countless hours doing what she loved best, volunteering in the community. She volunteered with her church at All Hallows, the Cancer Society, food banks, the Western Health Care Foundation and many other organizations.

She is also remembered for her wonderful sense of humour and her amazing spirit. Whenever I saw her she always had a smile on her face, and many others have told me of the fun they've had spending time with her. Many have also told me

how important she was to them during times of sickness and the passing of loved ones.

Agnes has a loving family and many friends. She had a tremendous impact on her community and the whole West Coast. Through her volunteer work, she had a direct impact on the lives of many individuals. She will be missed by us all.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in recognizing the community work of Agnes McCarthy and celebrating the contribution she has made to this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

On Friday, May 5, in response to the current fentanyl crisis in the province, MUN Social Work professors, Dr. Christopher Smith and Jenn Smith, and Social Work students Em Wadden and Laura Moores, who started a local chapter of Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy, sprang into action and took to the downtown streets of St. John's to save lives. They designed handouts with information about the arrival of illegal fentanyl, warning people who use drugs and the general public that "Fentanyl is here. People are dying and here is what you need to know."

They spoke with hundreds of people that day, educating people about how to save lives. They are a great example of how important community involvement is in addressing this opioid crisis.

I commend these folks for their commitment, their generosity, their passion and compassion, and life-saving efforts. Bravo, Christopher, Jenn, Em and Laura.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, it is with tremendous pride that I rise today to recognize a fellow Labradorian on an outstanding achievement.

Following graduation from Mountain Field Academy in 1996, this individual who won an IODE Labrador scholarship, along with receiving four consecutive scholarships at UNB, earned a degree in chemical engineering. Since graduating, he boasts an impressive resume with past employers which include the Marine Institute, North Atlantic Refinery, and Husky Energy.

Mr. Speaker, with the completion of the Hebron platform, I am especially proud of a resident from my district, hailing from the Town of Forteau, Ken Buckle, was the engineering lead on the Hebron project.

Ken has overseen this massive endeavour through to fruition with the recent tow out and installation of the Gravity Based Structure platform, a platform that he was instrumental in building. As preparation gets underway to tow the rig to the Jeanne d'Arc Basin, we wish Ken and everyone associated with the project every success.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating engineering lead Ken Buckle and his team on a job well done, and we thank him for his hard work.

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

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

#### Statements by Ministers

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize May 7 to 13 as Corrections Week and acknowledge the exceptional correctional staff in the Department

of Justice and Public Safety. Throughout this province, the dedicated members of our correctional staff have contributed to the well-being and safety of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year, I have had the opportunity to observe the significant effort of those working in the field of corrections to maintain safe and secure correctional facilities for the benefit of inmates, staff, visitors and members of the public. It has been a pleasure to witness the positive approach they bring to their work, particularly given the demanding nature of the job.

Corrections staff make every effort to ensure that inmates have the training, tools and programs required to integrate successfully back into society and to become contributing citizens. I have great confidence in the professional and hard-working staff we have at our correctional facilities.

In addition to their work, correctional staff are integral members of their communities. They give time and effort to several fundraisers and participate in events that support non-profit organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in thanking our correctional staff for their service and their contributions to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. We join with the minister and government in recognizing Corrections Week and all the staff who we all hold in very high regard.

The minister alluded to the environment in which these employees work every day. They do an admirable job under very challenging circumstances. Government must make every effort to ensure their safety and improve their

working conditions. Again, the minister alluded to that.

All too often we hear of occupational stress injuries impacting those dedicated women and men working in corrections as well as other front-line services. I'd be remiss if I didn't again today encourage government to amend workers' compensation legislation to reflect what's known today and bring forward presumptive coverage legislation for those working in corrections.

Again, we want to recognize the importance of correctional staff – undertake in our communities. We thank all of them for their contribution to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I, too, thank all the staff and administration of the corrections system for the incredible work they do under very, very difficult circumstances with commitment and dedication.

I'm astounded the minister can stand in this House and say that inmates have all the training, tools and programs required to integrate successfully back into society. Most inmates are in for drug-related crimes. There's only one addictions counsellor for the whole of HMP and a wait-list of four months. There hasn't been a permanent full-time teacher at HMP since last December and inmates can only get three hours of schooling a week. That's not rehabilitation, Mr. Speaker, that's warehousing.

The minister must – must – commit more rehab resources so that the people at Her Majesty's can do the incredible work that they do.

Thank you.

Bravo, Superintendent Brophy and his staff!

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

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 20th anniversary of heritage fairs in our province.

This year's theme, Keeping our Stories Alive: Celebrating 20 Years of heritage fairs in Newfoundland and Labrador, presents valuable opportunities for our youth to connect with our history and culture.

I had the pleasure last weekend of attending the Regional Heritage Fair at Waterford Valley High School which featured over 200 projects by students from across the Avalon Peninsula. Projects included many inspiring and creative topics that ranged from the Blue Puttees, our role in world wars, the role of women in wartime, indigenous traditions, local fishing techniques, Viking visitors and a winning project on outhouses in Newfoundland and Labrador with the tagline: To Go or Not to Go.

I'm especially pleased to say that 19 outstanding heritage fair projects about Newfoundland and Labrador's role in the First World War received accolades this month through the Ambassador Award Program. Award recipients will have the opportunity to visit First World War battlefields of Western Europe where many of our soldiers gave their lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the preparation and organization of the fair's program that involves many hours of dedication by hundreds of volunteers throughout our province. I would also like to thank the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and Historica Canada for their constructive partnership and for continuing to successfully offer these opportunities for the benefit of students.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in congratulating all participants and wishing luck to all students who will represent our province well in Western Europe.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for a copy of his statement. Heritage fairs are invaluable to preserving our roots and keeping our stories alive for the next generation.

I want to thank the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and Historica Canada for their partnership on this initiative and for highlighting the important role that such events play, especially as it relates to our youth.

Anytime that we are able to educate our young people on the valid sacrifices that were made by the Royal Newfoundland Regiment in the First World War is one that should be commended. I congratulate the participants on their award.

It is heartwarming to know that our young minds have dedicated their energy and their efforts into showcasing what defines us as the people we are today. Congratulations to all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Thank you, too, to the students, teachers and volunteers who worked so hard on projects this year. I've been struck by projects where students relied on grandparents and other relatives for stories about livelihoods and traditions, one of the best ways to keep our cultural heritage alive. Heritage fairs encourage students to take advantage of older family members to learn new things about the past.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about Emergency Preparedness Week, taking place May 7 to the 13 and to encourage municipalities and residents to be ready for emergencies.

Our government is encouraging awareness of emergency preparedness and supporting activities at the local level. We continue to collaborate with federal and municipal governments and stakeholders in the emergency management sector, encouraging everyone to take three simple steps to prepare: know the risks; make a plan; get an emergency kit. Information on the emergency toolkit is available at [www.getprepared.gc.ca](http://www.getprepared.gc.ca)

I would like to acknowledge and thank our community partners who continue to work with us whenever we are faced with an emergency. The staff of the Fire and Emergency Services Division work hard every day in assisting municipalities as they deal with, respond to and recover from fire, emergencies and disasters.

During the Thanksgiving rainstorm event in the Central region and the March wind event on the Avalon Peninsula, emergency management partners and all levels of government came together quickly and appropriately to support impacted individuals in their time of need. Municipalities were well prepared in these instances following their emergency management plans. The quick and efficient response at the community and volunteer level made the greatest difference in ensuring that residents were cared for and safe.

I would also like to extend appreciation to all our province's emergency management partners, including volunteer firefighters, ambulance operators, and 911 operators, just to name a few. It is our hope that they will be called upon for their services less often, as we ensure preparedness through awareness initiatives such as Emergency Preparedness Week.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge Emergency Preparedness Week. As a former municipal leader, I know the importance of having community and residents ready to deal with emergencies. It's important that council and municipal leaders are prepared, and it's equally important that community groups are involved in the planning.

Whenever a disaster hits, it is vital that all partners work together to ensure residents know there's a plan in place and that people know there are people they can rely on. I have a huge respect for all emergency management partners, and I encourage all municipalities and residents to have a plan for emergencies.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. The emergency response to the Thanksgiving rainstorm event shows how much we have learned since Hurricane Igor. Trouble can come at any moment. We all need to be prepared as individuals, as municipalities and as a province.

I commend the continuing work of the department, but I especially applaud our many, many volunteers who are there when we need them. Their quick response and selflessness always makes a difference in a crisis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in November 2015 our administration announced a new generic royalty regime. The Liberal government of today promised to implement a new generic royalty regime by March 31, but then they extended the deadline to today. This still isn't done.

I ask the minister: With the opportunity to promote investment and encourage growth in industry, why no royalty regime?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much.

As Members in this House know, and as people around the province know, this has been a very challenging and significantly changing times within the oil and gas industry. A lot of the work has been done.

From my department, all that work has been done around the generic oil royalty regime. The next step is to consider the generic royalty regime and all other components of the ball of value. So things like taxation, benefits, equity: those types of things in the entire ball of value to ensure that we're internationally competitive.

I can assure the Member opposite this is consuming our time in the Department of Natural Resources, and with our partners in the oil and gas industry, to ensure that we are the preferred location for offshore oil and gas development in the world today.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the regime announced in November 2015 was a result of significant

consultation with industry and with the stakeholders in that industry.

I ask the minister: Do you know what that regime is about, that statutory? Are you considering changes to that 2015 proposal?

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

**MS. COADY:** As I just indicated to the Member opposite, we have done a tremendous amount of work and completed our work around the generic oil royalty regime. We're also now looking at that in terms of the whole entire ball of value. We have to ensure that we remain competitive in our global environment.

I'm just back from Houston, Mr. Speaker, at the Offshore Technology Conference where we looked at our competitors around the world today. We want to make sure that we are really top notch when it comes to our opportunity here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our prospectivity is incredible. Now we have to make sure that we are the preferred location.

In consideration to his question, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at all aspects of the ball of value and we'll report to this House as we do that. We are working with our partners in the oil and gas industry.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the White Rose Extension benefits agreement, I understand, is not approved yet. Is the delay in the royalty regime related to that in any way?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador continues to encourage Husky to develop the Wellhead Project. We really want to have the West White Rose Extension Project undertaken and the Wellhead Project to maximize benefits and



opportunities to this province, and we are encouraging Husky, encouraging its partners and Suncor to move forward on that. I know that Husky and Suncor are continuing to have discussions.

Mr. Speaker, the generic oil royalty regime would not apply to this particular project. As the Member opposite knows, the negotiations around the fiscal framework of that particular project were done some time ago.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in June 2016 the Liberal government promised that the final EY report on Muskrat Falls would be released last fall. In January, the Premier said the report would be released in a couple of weeks. The time has now passed.

Minister, when will the report be released?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much for the question.

The EY report was an important first step, I say, from this government's perspective in making sure we can bring the Muskrat Falls Project on track – sorry for the distraction, Mr. Speaker – to bring Muskrat Falls Project on track.

We have worked diligently. The EY report when it was introduced to the province, all the recommendations, we worked very diligently to implement them. As the Member opposite knows, one of the recommendations or one of the considerations in that was the Astaldi renegotiation, or discussion with Astaldi over how it can continue to advance the project. Those discussions were finished in December.

At that point in time, we did meet with EY. The oversight committee is continuing to develop, what I'm going to call the framework for the go forward for EY.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I remind the minister that EY was involved with it prior to her sanctioning a million dollar report, which to date we've still no idea when it's going to be completed or what the cost of the report is.

Can the minister advise the people of the province: When is the report going to be finished and released?

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

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

I didn't get a change because of the distraction to complete the answer.

Mr. Speaker, the oversight committee is engaged with EY as we speak. There are two avenues going forward. One is the completion and review of the outcomes of the 2016 report that the Member opposite is referring, and how we ensure that independent assessment going forward. So it's not just the static, what have we done in the past, but how do we continue to work with EY forward to ensure that we have the right type of independent assessment.

Mr. Speaker, that work is continuing today. I know the oversight committee, as the Member opposite knows, we've just recently introduced four independent members who will bring great value to the oversight committee, and that work is ongoing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Before I recognize the hon. the Opposition House Leader, it seems to be electronics day in the House of Assembly. I ask the

Commissionaires, or whoever it is who has electronics going, to please lower the volume.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

I know they want to hear me over there. So I certainly appreciate it, I really do.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Originally it was estimated at \$1 million, what has been spent to date on this report?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I'll have to come back to the Member opposite. I know that it was a million dollars up to the point where we had the report. I'd have to investigate further through the oversight committee as to what further expenditures there are.

Mr. Speaker, I will say this, we have worked very diligently to put the Muskrat Falls Project on track. We have a new and very competent CEO. We have an expanded and very, I think, an envious board of directors. We have new members on the oversight committee. You can see that methodically and diligently we've been making sure that that project's on track.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province will agree that we worked very hard and that we are bearing the results of those actions.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could advise: Has a draft report been received by your department?

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for a draft report from EY – at this point in time, the

oversight committee is working with EY. I have not received any drafts of any reports from EY that would relate to the Muskrat Falls Project.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, there have been no oversight committee reports on Muskrat Falls posted online since 2016, absolutely none.

Where is the openness and transparency promised? When will you release all of the reports for 2016?

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

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

We take the oversight committee very seriously. They've been working throughout the last year on a number of things. They're now currently reviewing, for example, the reports of the first quarter of 2017. We've expanded the oversight committee. We've added some independence, which we think was lacking. We have worked very diligently, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, to increase oversight, to improve governance within the project, to have a new CEO as well looking at the project.

Mr. Speaker, we're working very hard. We know that the former administration, when they committed to the Muskrat Falls Project, first of all, the amount of money they committed to we've almost doubled in terms of cost, and that was under the former administration. When we took on the project they were behind schedule.

Mr. Speaker, we have been working very diligently to make sure this project works for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Everything the hon. minister has described would be validated if she released the reports from 2016.

While she gave a great description here in the House of what apparently could be in the report, I ask her: Could you release the reports so all of the province can validate exactly what it is you're saying?

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

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

I'm sure the oversight committee is doing their work. We have a new chair of the oversight committee. We have an expanded oversight committee.

Mr. Speaker, these are important questions that the Member opposite is asking. It's too bad he didn't ask enough questions when Muskrat Falls was being considered earlier.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Well, she could ask some of her colleagues who sat on the board. There was someone who chaired it on that side and someone else who sat as a minister of the board. So they (inaudible) sure of what happened on the board, if you want to go there.

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Natural Resources if the new Canada Free Trade Agreement, or agreement on internal trade which the Premier has hailed: Will that guarantee Newfoundland the right to wheel power east to west in this country?

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

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

The CFTA agreement, as we know, which was signed on April 7, was really updating and modernizing to replace the old agreement on internal trade across Canada, Mr. Speaker.

What is unique to this particular agreement is something that we've not seen before – this came with national support from other provinces, Mr. Speaker – and that was a timeline that was put in place to work with the Province of Quebec to put in place what would be a mechanism to transport power, wheel power through Quebec.

These are early days. This agreement was only signed just a few weeks ago. There have been no discussions with Quebec on this to date, but I will tell you that across the country this agreement actually impacts all provinces, just not Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

The new Canada Free Trade Agreement says that Newfoundland and Quebec will talk. It does not promise us any kind of free flow of electricity.

I ask the Premier: Why did you sign an agreement on electricity with the only promise is to talk to Quebec rather than ensure that the provisions of the Canadian Constitution are upheld regarding electricity?

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

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

Well, we've asked about 50 questions, I think there has been so far in this House, why we would even talk to Quebec. So the Members opposite, first of all, had an issue that we should never talk to Quebec for a start, Mr. Speaker.

What a lot of people in the province would know and sometimes forget – maybe the Members opposite would like to forget this, but our number one provincial trading partner is actually the Province of Quebec. So not to have a discussion which was supported by the other Canadian provinces in the Canadian Free Trade Agreement to talk about wheeling power through Quebec, Mr. Speaker, that is how you

actually have those discussions. You have to talk.

A few weeks ago, they were of the suggestion and saying that we shouldn't talk. They forgot about the talks that they tried to get going in 2015. Mr. Speaker, there are no secret deals here. We're just exploring what mechanisms we would have with power generated in Newfoundland and Labrador, how to wheel that through Quebec, but only for the economic benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Mr. Speaker, we never said don't talk to Quebec; we said talk to Quebec with a precondition, before those talks begin, that we would be allowed to wheel power east to west in accordance with the Canadian Constitution.

Why are you negotiating with Quebec when they hold the cards and are denying us access to wheel power east to west? That's the question, Mr. Premier; you haven't answered it.

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

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

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

When we look at success, I could speak to the Members opposite if they were saying it was okay with Quebec and I guess they did – they might have had some secret discussions with them; it wouldn't surprise me, given the history that we saw with the Members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at what we're discussing here that they are now accusing and blaming us for not having success with actually having the ability to wheel power through Quebec, when they lived through 12 years with this issue next door.

Mr. Speaker, 12 years ignored; called Quebec the enemy; failed to have any success at all, just like we saw in the press conference this morning when they were hailing and saying well, why

didn't you do this sooner. They forgot about it for 12 years.

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

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

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

Today, the Liberal government announced a Cabinet committee on job creation, with untapped potential for tourism and agriculture, as well as significant growth potential for aquaculture on the South Coast, along with the opportunity to eliminate the need for one of the province's expensive ferries.

Will the Premier consider upgrading the road link under construction by Nalcor to the Burin Peninsula from the Coast of Bays?

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

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

Well, first of all, I will speak to the announcement. I was surprised actually that the Member opposite wasn't there supporting this. We saw Members from the districts of Mount Pearl; they weren't too keen on it. As a matter of fact, they stood up after and really didn't agree with what we announced this morning. Two leaders within the agriculture industry, the aquaculture industry as well as Food First NL were sitting at the table. Mr. Speaker, the response came from the Member for Mount Pearl there suggesting that this was not going to work.

The announcement that we made today to create jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador focusing on sectors like agriculture, sectors like the aquaculture industry, I would suggest that the Member opposite lives in a district that brings significant jobs from aquaculture; I'm surprised that she's not standing there with us today supporting this announcement.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, the previous administration made great strides in growing the aquaculture industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. KENT:** The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune is well aware.

This morning after 18 months in government, two-thirds of the Cabinet is going to talk about jobs finally and talk about announcing a plan, to come up with a plan, to create jobs in two sectors. It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker.

Newfoundland and Labrador was standing tall as an international epicentre of marine technology. Just months into the Liberal administration's mandate, the epicentre was moved to Halifax when Dalhousie was named the leader of the Atlantic province's Ocean Frontier Institute.

Did the minister make any representation to the Government of Canada to argue that the centre for the Ocean Frontier Institute should be right here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

Before I recognize the hon. Minister of Tourism, I'm hearing some voices. I can't tell exactly who it is but I'm asking for the co-operation of Members. I don't want to name any particular Member.

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

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

We certainly value our ocean tech sector. We have hundreds of companies that are involved in the ocean tech sector. We just announced our Regional Innovation Systems pilot project for the Avalon Peninsula that will be a focus on ocean technology.

I can't believe the Member opposite is continuing to bash the Ocean Frontier Institute, which is a partnership between UPEI, Dalhousie

and Memorial University that's going to create upwards of 162 jobs right here. The largest single federal investment in Memorial University in its history that's creating jobs, that's partnering with the Marine Institute and is also working out ways to expand aquaculture that's going to lead to job creation and R & D activity.

I can't understand what the Member opposite has when you look at the Atlantic provinces and you look at Atlantic growth, you look at that strategy. We have tremendous opportunity and we're getting value from the Ocean Frontier Institute right at Memorial University.

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

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, we spent a decade working with the ocean technology sector and building it and seeing it grow.

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

**MR. KENT:** Now we're seeing it slip away. Our province was the Canadian leader in marine technology and when that edge was taken from us and given to Nova Scotia, this government said absolutely nothing to make the case for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Why not, Minister? Why did you simply let that edge slip out of our hands with not a word in defence of our ocean technology industry?

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

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

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

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

Yes, Memorial University of Newfoundland is a world leader in first-class research, including ocean industry research. The hon. Member is referring to a consortium, a collaboration of

several universities not only in Atlantic Canada but around the world.

This was a project that was years in the making. The collaboration between not only the universities here in Atlantic Canada but internationally, especially those in Europe of course, they were a long time in generation I would like to point out to the hon. Member opposite.

The actual workflow, the tasks associated with each and every component of this project was developed by the universities, amongst the universities, in the fall of 2015. Who was in government at that point in time?

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

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

**MR. KENT:** The decision related to the centre we're talking about was made on their watch.

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

**MR. KENT:** However, that said, it's really nice to finally hear the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills say something nice about Memorial University –

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

**MR. KENT:** – instead of making inflammatory, slanderous statements in the media and in this Legislature.

Can the minister confirm that he's eliminated the position in Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation that was responsible for the promotion and development of ocean and Arctic technology?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

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

We have a team of people at the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation that's promoting sector diversification. When it comes to looking at the oceans area, we work very

closely with Oceans Advance, one of the industry clusters, working with the federal government to partner with the industry and academia, which we can leverage significant dollars so that we can look at capitalizing on the super clusters that's happening with the federal government.

Under their watch, there was time and time again when there were federal programs put in place, like the Connecting Canadians Program under rural broadband Internet, \$225 million federally, zero dollars drawn down; they used 100 per cent provincial dollars when they could have used federal monies. This is what's happened under their watch, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** The only super cluster we're seeing, Mr. Speaker, is the super cluster of mismanagement and a lack of leadership.

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

**MR. KENT:** The only positions dedicated to ocean technology in Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation have been eliminated as a result of recent cuts.

In 2011, the Government of China designated Guangdong Province to be a pre-eminent ocean economic development zone. In 2013, our Premier and Memorial signed a memorandum of understanding for exclusive partnerships in marine technology and other disciplines.

Can the minister assure us that with the decision to shift the marine technology epicentre to Dalhousie, those landmark agreements with China are not in jeopardy and the opportunities we secured will not also be lost to Nova Scotia?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, there has been no shift. Newfoundland and Labrador is a premier location when it comes to ocean

technology and our pathway to the Arctic, and all the initiatives and MOUs that have taken place, whether it be with Nunavut or other MOUs that we're entering into.

Memorial University has a headquarters for the Ocean Frontier Institute of almost \$40 million that's going to be leading to 160-plus jobs affiliated with that. When it comes to our international outreach, our team at TCII, as well as with the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, and other departments, we're always looking at expanded opportunities of which we can attract investment into the province. Inward investment is very important and we'll continue to foster those relationships.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, Auk Island Winery is concerned that the Liberal tax that allows them to harvest iceberg ice may put them out of business.

I ask the minister: How can you justify increasing the iceberg tax from \$200 to \$5,000? How does this tax help small business and support economic growth?

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

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

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

I thank the Member for the question because it is an issue that I've been dealing with, with several stakeholders. I've been speaking to stakeholders on this.

We had to put a value on water in some way but we also have to initiate and help businesses. So I will be working with the industry, working on this issue.

It is something that was brought to our attention. It is something that the industry is pleased that I'm discussing with them. We will be looking

within the department on ways how we can help mitigate this and also help the industry themselves to thrive.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, it's great to hear they're now working with industry but this is the government that brought in the \$5,000 tax.

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

**MR. KENT:** I ask the Health Minister: What changes are coming to the Medical Transportation Assistance Program? Will the eligibility and benefits to those who depend on the program be reduced?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Parliamentary Assistant to Health and Community Services.

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

**MR. B. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question to the hon. Member.

The MTAP program is a very big program for our province. It's important to us. Any of the changes that we make will be made in the best interests of the taxpayers of this province and we're going to continue to do that. Our department is working quite heavily on that and we'll report back when we're ready to make that announcement.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, we can expect cuts to the Medical Transportation Assistance Program. In a recent Estimates meeting, the minister alluded to the fact that the rapid response teams were underutilized.

Instead of simply cutting the service, will the minister instead commit to improving the

existing service in an effort to increase public use?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Parliamentary Assistant to Health and Community Services.

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

The hon. Member would know for sure about cuts. One of the things we're trying to do in the department is find best ways to do the information that – get the information out to the public as we possibly can. One of the things about these teams that we're creating, we're working within the department to find best ways to do those and find the best communities in which we should have those teams operate.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, we didn't cut the Adult Dental Program, we didn't cut home care hours. Now we're about to see cuts to Medical Transportation Assistance as well.

This government is quickly approaching its two-year anniversary and many of the election promises have not moved any further than just empty words on a brochure.

Can the minister give us an expected date for the completion of the diabetes registry?

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

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

The hon. the Parliamentary Assistant to Health and Community Services.

**MR. B. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question, to the hon. Member.

The diabetes registry is moving forward. We have the privacy assessment, as the Member would know – who was for a very short period of time as the Health Minister – would know that it's moving forward. The privacy assessment is with the department. They're

evaluating it. They're hoping to make an announcement in the very near future. It's going to mirror a lot of what we've dealt with, with the cancer registry.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North for a quick question, no preamble.

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, in 2015 there was a commitment to a specific diabetes strategy. Why have you backed away from that commitment?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Parliamentary Assistant to Health and Community Services.

**MR. B. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, we haven't backed away from any commitment here on this side.

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

**MR. B. DAVIS:** Our government is committed to finding a better health care system for the province, unlike the previous administration.

One of the things we're doing is we have a step-by-step process the department is moving through. We are not going to move willy-nilly through this. We're trying to do it differently. We can't expect to get different results in the health care system if we're going to continue to do things in the same way.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, during this opioid and fentanyl crisis, a good majority of inmates at HMP are there because of drug related crimes. HMP has one addictions coordinator and no other drug rehab counsellors or facilitators for 170 to 180 inmates. Many want help but must wait at least up to four months to see the additions



counsellor. Some serve their sentences without having ever received any rehab treatment at all, only to end up right back in because of drug use.

I ask the minister: Will he immediately make resources available so all corrections facilities provide meaningful drug rehab programs?

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

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

I'm very excited to stand up and speak about the people who are working within our facilities. In fact, they were here today, and it was great to recognize them. I look forward to going down to HMP tomorrow and working with them.

It's also another opportunity to recognize the quick work they did last week when, unfortunately, we did have an episode in one of our facilities. The quick work they did was lifesaving in nature and they should be commented for that work.

The problem is the Member opposite is talking about the things we should be doing inside the facility, but where we're going with this – one of the things I'll be talking about very soon is another positive announcement from this government is the drug treatment court, because the fact is we need to do things differently.

It's not about putting more people in institutions. It's about keeping people outside so they can get the treatment they need in the community rather than in an institution.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, inmates are not getting the drug rehab programs they need, that they desperately need, and this government is warehousing inmates not rehabilitating them.

Mr. Speaker, newly incarcerated inmates with drug addictions who aren't already using methadone or suboxone are forced into

involuntary withdrawal. Other prisons prescribe methadone or suboxone to help new inmates with drug rehab. It's the standard of care to help deal with opioid addiction.

I ask the minister: Will he work to change this policy immediately so inmates have a better chance of rehab and decrease their risk of reoffending?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand up and speak about our facilities. The fact is that we as a government are trying to change the justice system and to make it better for all people in this province. One thing I've done – actually I'm the first minister in decades to actually go down and sit down with inmates to talk about these issues –

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** – and this wasn't one of the issues that was brought up to me.

I sat down in a room with the coordinator and with the inmates and talked about, what are things that we can do to work with you to make sure that you're not coming back in here? They brought up a number of issues. This is not one of the issues they mentioned to me, but the fact is I'll be back down at HMP to talk to them again tomorrow, as I'm going to continue to do, as I have done, because the fact is we're going to continue to work on solutions and not just identifying problems.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, the solution is more drug rehabilitation programs for the inmates already incarcerated. Drug court is good, but for those already incarcerated.

So I ask the minister: Will he immediately start the process of transferring health services for all correction services to the Department of Health as recommended by the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions?

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

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

Again, the Member opposite fails to note that we can't just deal with the people inside. We have to work on why are they there in the first place. We have to have some upstream thinking here and not just – again, it's very easy to identify the problems here.

We know what a number of the problems are but we have to come up with different solutions. I actually sat in on the all-party committee as well. I know this is one of the recommendations, and we are going to work with the Department of Health to make the necessary changes. It's not just a justice issue.

In fact, in the number of meetings that I've had, what we've identified is that justice issues often involve Members from various committees and various departments. We're not going to do the silo-based approach that we've seen in the past. We're going to continue to work amongst departments to make sure that we provide the best treatment going forward, but we need to work on keeping people out of jail and not just dealing with it when it's inside.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'll allow a quick question with no preamble.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: In light of the absence of proper addictions programming and schooling, what exactly is he going to do to ensure, as he stated today in his minister's statement, that inmates –

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

**MS. ROGERS:** – have the training, tools and programs required to integrate successfully back into society and to becoming contributing citizens?

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

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

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

The Resource Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources; the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation; the Department of Natural Resources; and the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

It was a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to chair the Committee with Members: MHA for the District of Cape St. Francis; MHA for the District of Conception Bay East – Bell Island; MHA for the District Exploits; the District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels; the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave; the District of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi; and the MHA for the District of Stephenville – Port au Port.

On behalf of the Committee, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a very big thank you to the Table Officers and to the staff of all the departments mentioned.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

**Petitions**

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

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

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

WHEREAS the US Center for Disease Control now estimates that autism spectrum disorder affects one in 68 children, which represents a 30 per cent increase from the estimate two years ago; and

WHEREAS early diagnosis of ASD is essential because there is a critical developmental period when early intervention is vital for future success of children with ASD; and

WHEREAS in other provinces an ASD diagnosis can be made by specialists certified and trained in ADOS;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to allow other specialists trained and certified with ADOS to make the autism spectrum disorder diagnosis.

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

Mr. Speaker, once again, I stand with petitions here signed by people from different parts of the province, actually, as I look at it, from Goulds, from St. John's, from Clarendville, from Paradise. People who are so concerned. Many of them, I would imagine, who either have somebody in their family on the autism spectrum or know friends who have children or adults in their family on the autism spectrum.

It is such a serious situation in our province, Mr. Speaker, that the hundreds of names continue to come to me in petition on this issue. I fail to

understand how this government is not responding to the crisis and taking action.

I've mentioned a number of major issues –

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

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

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

I've mentioned a couple of the major issues here in the House already in speaking to other petitions, and it seems like we have to keep doing it. One of the big ones, of course, is the evaluation of children on the autism spectrum. The government continues to use in our system, the intelligence quota, the IQ 70, as a way to evaluate whether or not children with autism require or qualify for treatment.

We all know, Mr. Speaker, that the evaluation of intelligence is not the way to go because people on the autism spectrum can have very, very high IQs, but not able to function within society. And so what the Autism Society calls for is testing of functionality. That is what will say whether or not a child, in particular in a classroom in school, should have treatment. If the child can't function with others then the child should not be in school.

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

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

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

I appreciate your calling order in the House because this issue is a very, very serious issue. For us not to listen to the people of the province who are calling for action from the government is unconscionable actually. I can't believe that it continues to go on.

Then we have the issue as well of the lack of resources in our schools for inclusion models. That really affects children on the autism spectrum.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS smaller class sizes, adequate learning environments and effective curriculum are paramount to success of our youth; and

WHEREAS recent budget decisions have negatively impacted student supports, education resources and teaching allocations; and

WHEREAS the provincial education system should ensure that each child has the ability to reach his or her full potential;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enhance the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador; introduce initiatives which ensure smaller class sizes which will provide sufficient personal space per child and allow more individual learning opportunities; develop efficient curriculum which enable youth to develop both life skills and optimal academic achievement; provide resources to ensure a fully beneficial inclusive model is in place and to ensure all children in our province have equal standard education in their learning environment.

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

Mr. Speaker, we saw in last year's budget the dramatic cuts to the education system that were made and the adjustments that parents, educators, administrators, the agencies that support the education system, but particularly the students themselves had to make to try to keep an acceptable standard of education and to try to succeed and move forward in their education desires.

Unfortunately, some thought and some were under the illusion that this would just be a

temporary setback. That the government would come to their senses and they would eventually see that we needed to put money back into the education system.

There are certain key things in government you have to be responsible for; education is one of the key ones. And not to invest in that properly but particularly to take away programs and services that have not only proven to be beneficial but have been proven to be necessary are so important to the development of a young persons' lives and in some cases are the pillar of whether or not they're going to succeed as adults and what that means to society – to take away a lot of those potential avenues for success is devastating to everybody.

To see class size increase, to see lack of investment in resources, to see the changes for counselling services, to also look at the fact that facilities that are overcrowded are no longer conducive to learning, not having proper rooms for counselling services, not having proper rooms for being able to deal with certain issues particularly around inclusive education obviously is a detriment to our education system.

What the people are saying here – and there are hundreds have signed these petitions in different regions. Thousands have since signed their own particular types, and we've been presenting them in the House of Assembly here to outline the outrage by people about the devastating loss and impact that the cuts to education are having.

It's not in the best interest of anybody in this province, the taxpayers, the people who avail of the services, but particularly the future of Newfoundland and Labrador not to be investing properly in the education system here.

Mr. Speaker, I'll have an opportunity again to speak about what's outlined in this petition and many other petitions relevant to education.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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 provincial government has mandated the Eastern Regional Service Board to implement modern waste management practices in the Eastern Region; and

WHEREAS the Eastern Regional Service Board has opened a waste recovery facility on Old Brigus Road in Whitbourne to receive bulk items such as appliances, furniture, electronics, cars, truck tires, construction and demolition debris, shingles, et cetera;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to insist mitigation measures be established to contain waste held at the facility and improve esthetics surrounding the containment area.

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

Mr. Speaker, local residents in Whitbourne who reached out to me on this issue raised the concerns, and valid concerns, actually. It's a transshipment facility for waste that's on the Old Brigus Road in Whitbourne. It's located adjacent to the community. It's a drop-off area, as I stated, for bigger – it's not just your household garbage. It's the bigger items of appliances, furniture, electronics, cars and what have you.

The problem now is there's a tender being called. Eastern Waste Management is going to erect a fence and put some trees up to mitigate some of the problems they're faced with now of garbage and stuff blowing around. The residents, and also the town out there, have concerns that it's not going to be adequate to meet the needs. A fence and trees will not cover up what tourists are seeing when they pass by that. It's adjacent with the TCH, it's becoming a bit of an eyesore.

One example, recently there was actually a mattress that blew from this area out on the TCH in the median. So they contacted Eastern Waste

Management to remove it and they said, no, it's the responsibility of Transportation and Works. When they called Transportation and Works they said, no, it's the responsibility of Eastern Waste Management. That's an actual true story. In the meantime, the box spring stayed in the median.

Mr. Speaker, what they're looking for is better containment areas. The town was of the impression there would be closed bins in this containment area to keep stuff from blowing around out in the community and out on the sides of the road. So it kind of defeats the purpose. A transshipment facility for waste, yet the waste that's being dropped off is blowing all around the community and the highway. So with the right mitigation – the fence will help and the trees will help, but the fencing needs to go around and you need to have more covered containers to keep this waste intact.

The residents of Whitbourne have asked – of course, I have numerous petitions on this issue. They've asked me to bring it to the House of Assembly, which I'm doing, and I hope government will give this some serious consideration.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS government has removed the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in the tax on books will reduce book sales to the detriment of local books stores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed

against the loss in economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest literacy rates in Canada, and the other provinces do not tax books because they recognize the need to encourage reading and literacy; and

WHEREAS this province has many nationally and internationally known storytellers, but we will be the only people in Canada who will have to pay our provincial government a tax to read the books of our own writers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government not to impose a provincial sales tax on books.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this House on several occasions to present this petition on behalf of the thousands of people who have signed it right across the province. We've also heard from people right across the country who are astounded and surprised that, in fact, government would raise such a tax on books. It feels like a tax that is against the people of the province rather than a tax that actually helps the people of the province.

Now, this also goes hand in hand with the Minister of Education's intention to close half the libraries in the province. Again, we are a province that has the lowest literacy rates. It all flies in the face of reason.

Again, one must ask: What exactly could government be thinking? What exactly was the Minister of Finance thinking when she decided to impose this tax on books, particularly in light of the fact that we do have the lowest literacy rates in the country?

It would be like putting an extra tax on food because people needed it. We know that people need books. We also know what an incredible heavy tax burden this is for students in post-secondary education, whether they're in universities or whether they're in colleges or our own fabulous private college.

Some students, depending on the faculty they're in and their line of study, may be paying a few hundred dollars per semester extra in taxes on their school books. That doesn't make sense at all. These are essential tools for students.

Again, one must wonder: What is the thinking that went on to impose this tax, and how is government measuring and assessing whether or not this is a successful tax that helps anyone. It certainly doesn't help the economy that much. It certainly doesn't help students. It certainly doesn't help our people at all. So, why?

So far no one has given us a good reason as to why this very regressive, unfair, unproductive tax has been imposed. Once again, people across the province are asking the government to do the right thing and to not tax books.

I know that many Members on the other side also realize that this is not a good tax. This is not a tax that benefits the people of the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS government recently cut vital funding to many of the provinces youth organizations; and

WHEREAS the cuts to grants to youth organizations will have a devastating impact on the communities as well as its youth and families; and

WHEREAS many of these organizations deeply relied on what was rightfully considered core funding for their day-to-day operations;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to

immediately reinstate funding to the province's youth organizations.

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

Mr. Speaker, a number of us on this side of the House have continued to raise this issue. This is not a new cut. This is a continuation of the cuts that were experienced coming out of the 2016 budget. Going into the 2016 budget there was some fanfare around an announcement that the Minister of Finance made to say: Hey, everybody's core funding is going to be fine. All community organizations, you have nothing to worry about, your core funding will be fine.

Well, unfortunately, through the Estimates process and through asking questions in this House and then confirming with organizations affected, we learned that general, broad, sweeping statement did not apply to many community youth organizations all over this province, some provincial, some regional and some local.

For many of these organizations, the amount of funds that were received through the fund called the Grants to Youth Organizations Program, it was core funding. They filled out a form annually and received, basically, the same amount of funding every year – in some cases, for decades.

This is funding that sustained the operations of many of our youth groups and organizations in the province. Organizations like the Boys and Girls Club in many different communities; different youth centres in various communities in the province; Allied Youth, which has chapters, has posts, in various places in the province, Air Cadets, Army Cadets, Navy League Cadets, Sea Cadets, Girl Guides and the list goes on and on and on. These organizations have all been negatively impacted – the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards program. It goes on and on.

Young people throughout the province have been negatively affected by these cuts. What's most troubling about it is that these cuts happen retroactively halfway through last fiscal year, so groups counting on the money they get annually from government – and hearing the Finance Minister stand and say: Don't worry,

everybody's core funding will be fine – assumed their funding would be fine and carried on. Then in July or August of last year they find out, oh no, you're only going to receive, in many cases, half your funding; in a couple of cases, no funding at all.

That had a devastating impact on programs last year. We found out through the process this year that government has no intention to reinstate any of those funds and has not provided any assurances to those groups that they'll be treated fairly in the future.

It's a shame. It's dishonest, given the commitments that were made to community organizations. Young people and youth organizations in this province deserve better, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, the Concurrence Motion on Social Services Committee.

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

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

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

It's always an honour to stand in this House and represent the good people of Lake Melville up in Labrador and speak to a few topics. What I thought I would do is first of all just speak a little bit about a couple of key things in my

district, some things that I've been doing lately. Then I wanted to talk a little bit about the budget and some of the discussion that's going on in the House.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I was back in my district last week and very pleased to drive – it's 100,000 square kilometres; it's a big piece of terrain. It was interesting to make that drive. My wife and I and dog headed over to Churchill Falls for the annual graduation ceremony at Churchill Falls.

It's quite an interesting community. It's a company town but they sure know how to send off their graduates in style. The MP Yvonne Jones, myself and others watched some 12 graduates go through an amazing ceremony. I spent a good night in the cabin. It was all great.

Last week, I represented the Premier at the 176th graduation ceremony at Queen's College. It was my first time ever in that institution and it was absolutely fascinating. It's a divinity school and you tended to have – and why I'm mentioning both of these two events is I found equal excitement. Now, certainly the folks up in Churchill Falls they were probably 16, 17, 18 years of age. Well, last week at Queen's College I had folks who were graduating who'd worked equally hard, equally as proud of their accomplishment and some as old as into their 80s. Anyway, it was just fascinating that transformation – the juxtaposition between the two ages, yet the equal excitement and satisfaction for having done a job well.

Speaking of doing jobs well, I did want to make a plug. I've mentioned this several times when I've spoken, but I find as the minister representing a district that's not within commuting distance on a daily basis up in Labrador, you tend to rely heavily on your constituency assistant and mine is extremely able and capable. Her name is Bonnie Learning. She is absolutely a clone to myself and in fact, in many ways, she leads the charge on many things that my office is dealing with in Labrador.

One thing I wanted to mention is that on Monday she was actually working – she has an amazing dedication to the SPCA and her, with other volunteers, actually gathered up some 19 dogs from various communities. The dogs have

basically been neglected and abandoned and they managed to gather them together and get them on a plane, through some great corporate partnership, and get them out to communities elsewhere in Atlantic Canada. It was great and way to go, Bonnie, you're always doing double duty.

What I wanted to speak about is something that I've noted. Since we released our budget, I've been watching very closely – I sit here, I work away, but I'm always listening closely to what my great colleagues from across the way are saying about what we're doing, but in particular on the budget, and I've noticed a very consistent trend. Without exception, each Member on the other side of the House, I would suggest that they're struggling finding key areas and manners and means of attacking this year's budget.

It's very much a historical; let's go back to what happened in 2016. I don't hear a lot of complaint about what is happening now in this government and the financial plan and approach that we are using as a government going forward.

If somebody was paying attention to me closely and sitting in Cabinet, as I do, about two weeks, maybe 10 days before we announced the budget, I talked about *The Wealthy Barber* written by David Chilton. He talks about the simplicity, yet the effectiveness, of having a plan and sticking with it.

Mr. Speaker, as you may know and may recall, and I certainly do and all Members on this side of the House recall, last year we launched a plan. That was the plan in response to an amazing fiscal mess that we encountered when we entered into office. I found – having gone through my second budget now as a Cabinet minister – how fascinating it was. Once you understand the process and go through it, frankly the – what's the best way to describe it? I don't want to say ease because nothing is easy in this job, but I do want to say that sticking with a plan actually can produce results.

When I look at our forecast from last year – and I refer everyone to the Budget Speech to page 6, the bottom of the page; there's a nice, little chart there talking about how we approached that amazing deficit that we faced last year and then how by 2022, 2023 we will be back in a place



where we can now say we're in the plus, we're actually starting to bring in more than we're spending and we're getting this House back in order.

As we all know, it was a great challenge for us, leading up to the election. I came down on several occasions to be with my colleagues who had already been elected, as I wanted to understand how this world works and what was going on. I note and I can recall, watching either from those seats or from a TV camera, my colleagues of the day as they kept asking the government of the day: What is the financial update?

In the budget of 2015, I believe the forecasted deficit was \$1.1 billion. Well, we all know how that grew so rapidly. First of all, there was a great reluctance – frankly, there was a refusal to provide any kind of financial update leading up to those weeks prior to the election. Certainly during that campaign, we were operating in the dark but our eyes were wide open, especially – and I've spoken about this as well in public. I liken the Cabinet experience to having about two hours of, wow, that was pretty interesting how we ended up in this place, to having that first cold shower from the Department of Finance and then realizing the state of affairs and what were we going to do with that.

As we all know, had no action been taken – and these words are sort of going to be the theme for the rest of my presentation. Had no action been taken, we would have been facing some \$2.7 billion worth of deficit. As I and others have noted, that would have become – and, frankly, I'm sorry to say, it is still the second largest area of expenditure in our government.

Number one, health care and community services; number two, deficit, interest payments; number three, we get over to education and other things that are important. But just imagine if we didn't have some 11 per cent of our annual budget thrown back to the banks to pay for past debt.

I can just hope to see the day when the Minister of Finance might come to me as a minister, and say: Well, guess what? You can increase your budget this year. Some of those things you'd like to get done through greater expenditures I'm

now going to provide that opportunity to you, because guess what? We are getting back on financial footing.

I remain an optimist; you have to in this job. As I look at the situation – again, I look at page 6 on our Budget Speech and I see progress towards that.

Another thing I'm interest in, Mr. Speaker, is history. I find *Hansard* is an interesting, historical medium or vehicle to use. As I say, I started paying close attention to what goes on in this House some two years probably before the election, as I started to think about this adventure. I thought I would read a few quotes because, again, since we've launched our budget this year there's been nothing but criticism of it, but if you look at the phrases, the statements and so on, it's all about the tough decisions we all had to make last year.

As the Minister of Transportation and Works said one night, and I recall, it was a really good line. He said we are not doing this for popularity. This is not a popularity contest. I'm sure you remember that, Minister. I must say, they've been some of the most difficult days of the last year and a half is making those decisions and seeing how they affected lives.

The good news we can offer everyone is that we are making progress. Again, looking at the history of what's gone on in this hallowed room, I thought I would read a couple of lines. I'm not picking on anyone in particular –

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

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

**MR. TRIMPER:** – but I found a couple of interesting quotes. Here's one from the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. On May 29, 2014, he said: “You have to look at the economics of the day and you have to be able to plan for the future. You have to be able to build on the past, what worked and what did not work.”

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He didn't write that?

**MR. TRIMPER:** Oh, he did. Well, he said that. It's quite eloquent.

He said: “There is a whole process here of a balance of financial responsibility and proper investments and we have done that. We have done it for the last thirteen Budgets. I know we will continue to do it after the next election when we are the government again.”

Well, that didn’t quite turn out that way. I bring these points up because, again, I go back to my preamble of a few minutes ago and talked about the forecast from the spring of 2015 was for a \$1.1 billion deficit. I suspect, as I realize now in the capacity of a Cabinet minister, you have a pretty good handle on your finances, especially if you have a very capable Finance Minister, as we do and are blessed with, one that does understand mathematics, that you actually know the seriousness of your situation.

I reference that commentary from the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and his wanting to do the right thing with what he knew at the time, but I would argue that in fact we ended up with a deficit of some-\$2.7 billion. So it sure would have been nice to have seen action started a lot sooner. Frankly, we wouldn’t have had to go through the serious set of decisions that we made at that time.

Here’s another comment from that same Member. “Mr. Speaker, unfortunately last year was one of those ...” – and he’s referring to a restraint budget. “We dealt with it analyzing what was in the best interest of the people here, and how we could best still serve people but economically not hurt our rating internationally” – now I find those very interesting words – “so that we did not pay more interest which meant less money to go into social programs for people. We did that.”

Well, I would argue that in fact they did just the opposite, Mr. Speaker, because we find ourselves in a heck of a situation. I’m seeing the progress, but I’m finding reading back on these quotes – and I compliment our staff on the fifth floor that do a lot of work to pull this kind of information together.

Here’s another one from the Leader of the Opposition, who is now the Member for Topsail – Paradise. He was Premier at the time. This is from June 8, 2015. He said, and I quote: “When you face a loss of more than a billion dollars in

revenue on a Budget that is less than \$10 million,” – it says million, I would assume he’d said billion – “it is a significant impact and it is an enormous task to overcome. When you put up your hand and you say you want to sit at the table, you want to sit at the decision table and you are dealt a hand, you have to play that hand. It is as simple as that, and that is what we have done.”

I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, those words could have been said by anyone on this side of the House.

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

**MR. TRIMPER:** I would say, Mr. Speaker, and I look at the difficulty of the budget from 2016, and yes, this is perhaps why the Opposition continue to dwell on it because there were a lot of tough decisions, a lot of bad news had to be delivered there. We looked at those same words and had that same feeling but we took that action.

The good news I can offer to the people out there listening and watching is that if you look at page 6 of the Budget Speech, you will see that in fact those actions are starting to work. I’m actually pleased to say we are actually moving ahead of our forecasted schedule. I think that’s just dramatic and I find it quite fascinating.

What I’d next like to speak about, Mr. Speaker, is talk a little bit about some good news, some good things that are going on in Service NL. I’m very pleased to say that this morning I was at the Motor Registration Division in Mount Pearl; a very busy place. On average, it’s something like over 5,000 people visit that facility every month, and during the busier months we have some 10,000 people.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we announced two new enhancements that do not exist anywhere else in the country, all part of our digital by design, our *Way Forward*, so I was very pleased. One of these involves an online reservation system, where if you choose that you still want to go in and conduct your business in person you can do so, but now you can actually reserve that time. Show up, know when your slot is going to be there, go to the kiosk, pick up a number and lo

and behold, you will be served within some few minutes after arriving.

The second enhancement is that if you happen to go in and you find there is an extremely long line – and we've set it at more than 45 people – you can actually make a reservation for a time later, perhaps in the next hour or so, such that when that line gets less, guess what? The system will send you a text message, so you can be at some other facility, some other task in your daily routine. I think there are a lot of things I'd rather do than sit and wait in a line. We will let you know and you can come back and grab that ticket. The staff will know you're there and away you go, you'll be served.

It's all about streamlining the delivery of our service. There were no HR impacts with this; it's all about looking at it from the customer's perspective. By the way, I think it's a good thing to do. So for an investment of some \$17,000, we've got two enhancements that do not exist anywhere else in the country.

I compliment Alan Doody, the registrar at the Motor Registration Division and all of his staff, two of whom are retiring. I also look forward to their retirement party at the end of the month of May. They've promised me that they're going to give me a call.

Lots of other good things going on in Service NL, whether it be looking at building accessibility issues, looking at automobile insurance, the *Residential Tenancies Act*, it's a very busy office. I have been getting a few questions and looking forward to standing in the House as soon as possible and speaking more to actions that we're going to be taking to making livelihoods much better.

I noted this morning, I was reading comments by the deputy mayor, Ron Ellsworth, who's just suffered an injury and finds himself now very much challenged with his mobility as he tries to get around. I was just reading his comments and then realizing how tough that is. I get that. I must say, I look forward to working with the buildings accessibility board that's in place and their recommendations of our department.

I finally wanted to end up – because I always like to come back to Labrador, and I look to my

colleagues for Labrador West, the Torngat Mountains and Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. When we were preparing in the budget activity last year and certainly across the Big Land, the number one issue that everyone asked us to think about, if we had any money at all and to dedicate, was the Trans-Labrador Highway.

You'll hear myself, you'll hear my three colleagues for Labrador, you'll hear all of my colleagues from across the province, frankly, speak about the importance of this facility and getting on with it. I'm very pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that this year – and again thanks to the support of the entire government, the entire caucus – in our budget we allocated some \$55.7 million. It's going to do a great deal of work.

This year, I'm pleased to say – and I know the Member for Cartwright L'Anse au Clair is very pleased because a lot of the activity is going to be going on in her backyard – there are some substantial contracts that have been already awarded and will get started. These are everything from pulverizing and paving to resurfacing to widening.

I also look forward to other contracts and opportunities – I'll just back up a second. None of this work, of course, can be possible without our partnership with the federal government and under the leadership and co-operation of the hon. Judy Foote, probably those Sunday night conversations with the Premier, a great strong leadership, great use of provincial dollars, great use of the federal money. We are getting a lot done, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Transportation and Works spoke of the efficiencies he's finding now. We're actually getting more kilometres of highway paved for less dollars, just through some of the strategies he's announced. I see those same strategies at work in Labrador.

Having just made a long trek across a paved section, I will note, nevertheless a long trek from Churchill Falls to Happy Valley-Goose Bay on Saturday and Sunday, that's some 6 to 7 hours of driving – do you know what? There's not a single aspect of a facility in place. There's all matter of need there, everything from, I would suggest, signage to restroom facilities to other emergency facilities.

Mr. Speaker, myself, my Labrador colleagues, and all of us in the caucus, will continue to look for ways and means that we can protect the public and make the driving across the Big Land a great pleasure. Because you know what and as I've said many times, this is not a Labrador project. This is a provincial, nation-building project.

This is how the Island of Newfoundland is going to gain improved access to goods and services to Central Canada and vice versa. With the partnership that I'm seeing and I'm feeling all kinds of opportunity with the rest of Atlantic Canada, I see this great circle route coming up through Cape Breton, across Port aux Basques, on up through the Northern Peninsula, and into Labrador, and of course, throughout the Island of Newfoundland – lots of great things happening, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing the Opposition talk about this year's budget and the plan forward.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that the Report of the Social Services Committee be concurred in.

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.

On motion, Report of Social Services Estimates Committee, carried.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I would call the Concurrence Motion for the Resource Committee, which is deemed to be on the Order Paper.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I just want to take a few minutes to add to this debate as part of the Concurrence Motion. The debates that we have during the Budget Speech, usually wide ranging, lots of opportunity to talk about various issues that you have in your district or that you feel are important. So it's great to have an opportunity to participate in this debate.

I'm going to start off by talking a little bit about things directly related to the budget, a few items there. Then I want to touch on a few items from my district as well, the district I represent, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things about this budget I think that's worth mentioning and related to this budget is the idea of openness and accountability, Mr. Speaker. We've seen changes in the way we report the Public Accounts of this province within the last year. We've changed the legislation, which requires government to put forward information on the finances of this province that tells us exactly where we are in terms of the amount of spending.

This type of legislation prevents governments maybe approaching an election, as it was in 2015, from hiding or holding back information related to Public Accounts that the people would need to help inform them and inform their public debate about the finances of this province. So that's a very important piece of legislation that was passed within this past year to sort of make these Public Accounts more open and to allow for a more informed debate about the way we're going.

So that's one thing. It's interesting to note that this change has been recognized by the organization such as the C.D. Howe Institute. The C.D. Howe Institute is a well-respected think tank in Canada and what they've done is each year they look at the state of public accountability in financial affairs across the

provinces of Canada. They look at the way the budget is presented to the House, the way the Estimates are done and they look at the way information is released through the Public Account statements of the province.

They've recognized the improvements that have been made since this new administration has come to power less than two years ago and the things that we've done. In fact, they rate the provinces in terms of how well they do on fiscal accountability. This C.D. Howe Institute has given this government a higher rating than they had in the past because of the changes that have been put in place in that short period of time.

It's very interesting that these advances are being made in terms of accountability. The more information that people have, the more informed public debate that we can have, hopefully that results in better outcomes for the province. I think that's a very important thing to note about this year's budget and the changes that have been made in the way we do things here in this province.

That's one item that I wanted to mention, Madam Speaker. The other thing that I wanted to mention in relation to the budget was the adoption of zero-based budgeting methodologies as a way of determining how much money is going to be allocated to each department, to each item within a department.

We've seen some changes in the whole culture of spending and the way we allocate money in terms of spending. The adoption of zero-based budgeting, it's not a difficult concept, but it's an important change that has occurred here because, in the past, the starting point was: How was money spent in the past? How much was spent? What was it spent on? There was an assumption built in there that we don't have to re-examine it each year. We don't have to re-examine how we're spending money; we'll just take what we spent last year as a starting point. We may identify a few things that we can tinker with or add to but the whole concept had a bias towards things that are already being spent on.

When this government came to power, when this new Finance Minister came to power, she began to sort of take a different approach to spending. This zero-based budgeting, it's interesting

because it's not a new concept in the area of business. It's been around since the 1970s in business.

Jimmy Carter in the US was the first president to start using zero-based budgeting in government, so it's interesting that it's been around for so long. I think the question we might want to ask ourselves is: Why did it take so long for us to adopt this process here in this province? Why did it take so long for us to start using zero-based budgeting?

Basically, zero-based budgeting starts from zero. And every dollar that's spent has to be justified each year. You have to look at where the money is going and what the requests are for money and then, you start and build what is needed. I think that's an important process, especially in today's world where things are changing so quickly and new ways of doing things and new expenditures.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Not rocket science.

**MR. REID:** Yeah, it's not rocket science. It's hard to believe that we haven't been using this process in the past. It's hard to believe that a government would not use it, given the fact that it had been used in the 1970s within government, within business, within other places.

When you add up, you go through, you look at how many cellphones do you need in a department, how many answering machines. Everything has to be justified and everything has to be re-examined and built up. The amount of savings that would come from a process like that, it's not insignificant; in fact, it's really significant.

The savings that were generated from that process were \$65.9 million throughout the whole government. It's a significant amount and it's a significant change in the way we're doing things here. So I have to compliment the Minister of Finance and officials in the department on adopting this process and putting it in place.

Zero-based budgeting, we sort of used it in this province as new administrations came in place and they sort of looked at the overall of government and how we were spending money, but it hasn't been implemented to this degree on

an annual basis in this province. So it's a significant change in the culture of the way we spend money. I think that's an important thing that's happened in this year's budget.

That's something else I wanted to mention as well. Another thing I wanted to mention about the budget is we've seen in previous years – I think it's well recognized that we had overdependence on oil revenue. We sort of thought that we were going to have a \$150 barrel of oil forever. I think if you look at other countries in the world that have successfully managed oil wealth, it usually involves taking some of the revenue and putting it aside for future use, paying down debt, those sorts of things.

If you look at the countries that have had tremendous oil wealth, in some cases, places that have had tremendous oil wealth end up worse off than places that did not have oil wealth. It's called the paradox of plenty. It's well documented in academic literature, the paradox of plenty. Some places that get a big influx of money end up worse off in the long run. Usually it involves a huge megaproject started on the assumption that oil is going to last forever, and I think we were heading down the wrong direction in this province in terms of how we managed our oil wealth.

I think we have to continue to change that culture of spending. We have to think about ways of going forward in terms of legacy funds that we've talked about in this House in the past. I think we need to look at those things, Madam Speaker. Those are some things I wanted to mention in relation to this year's budget. I'll probably have an opportunity to talk about some other things later on in the budget debate as we continue to debate the budget.

I wanted to mention some other things that are happening in my district as well and I just wanted to bring attention to a few items that –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Agriculture is big in that district.

**MR. REID:** Yeah, agriculture is one of the things that I intended to talk about because there are a lot of things happening that are very positive, Madam Speaker. For example, a few

weekends ago I attended an event in Corner Brook. It was called Startup Weekend. I don't know if anyone is familiar with that sort of concept. Basically what it was, it was a group of entrepreneurs, people who got together to discuss starting a business.

It started off Friday night with a few warm-up activities. One of the ones that was interesting was groups were given two words. They put these two words together and then they had to come up with a business that they could develop around these two words. It was just a sort of an exercise to get warmed up and thinking about being an entrepreneur.

Even from that, there were lots of ideas coming. But the whole of the concept of the weekend is you have these people come together and individuals get up in front of the group and they pitch their idea for a business. Then they have everyone else in the group decide if they want to work with that person over the weekend to further the idea related to the business that they pitch.

So they take a number of the ideas, they work on them for the whole weekend, and try to develop them to the point where they can be launched as a business. This was very interesting to watch over the weekend as people sort of came forward with these ideas. Some of them were related to agriculture, some of them were related to the food industry, others related to recreation and things like that, so it was a very interesting sort of concept.

Some of these businesses are moving forward now and being developed. It will be interesting to see what will happen there. But it was very energizing to see that whole process and I'm looking forward to maybe working with the organizers of that event to have something out in the Stephenville area maybe, to get people thinking about how they can further develop their ideas and start bringing some people together to start businesses.

So that was a very interesting sort of thing. Another thing in relation to agriculture – and my district is probably one of the most agricultural districts in the province. A lot of the Crown land that is going to be released is going to be in and

around the district that I represent. So it's going to be interesting there.

One of the things I think we need to do is we need to engage with people who are interested in agriculture to let them know what supports are available to them if they want to pursue an agricultural enterprise.

I met with the Area Development Association in Bay St. George South. They asked that I organize a seminar with people from the department of agriculture to come out, to meet with them and to allow the public to come in and get more information about agriculture.

We had that meeting. There were a number of people there and a lot of enthusiasm there about it. So I think we have to do those sorts of things and we have to have that sort of dialogue between people who want to get involved in the industry and the officials in the department so that we get to a point where the services being offered by the department match the needs of the people who want to start these enterprises.

I'm very encouraged by that sort of thing happening. I'm looking forward as well to good response. I'm looking forward to expanding that to other areas in the district as well.

Another thing I want to mention, one of the great parts of the job of being an MHA, as many of you know, is visiting schools, talking at graduations and other special occasions and things like that. We had a statement from the Minister of Education here today about heritage fairs. This past weekend I had an opportunity to visit the Western Regional Heritage Fair in Corner Brook.

I must say, I was very impressed with the type of activities that were happening there. The presentations that the students were making, and the level of thought and the work they had put into these and the amount of interaction they had with their parents and grandparents in coming up with these ideas and developing them a bit more. So I think that's a very positive sort of way of looking at things. I'm very, very encouraged by that.

I'm always encouraged when you see so many smart, young people together at schools or at

events like heritage fairs or graduations. I'm always encouraged about the future of the province when you see that type of knowledge and those types of activities.

I've got a few minutes left. I want to talk about some of the things in the budget that I guess relates to the districts. One of the programs that the government has is the Healthy Living Fund. The district that I represent has been fortunate enough to receive some funding from this program. It's small amounts of funding that partners with groups and organizations, and volunteer organizations and individuals in the community to deliver very important programs.

For example, the Lions Club in Pasadena is doing some renovations to their building there. One of the things that I was able to access some funding for that renovation was through the Healthy Living Fund, which provided funding to make the building more accessible, to put a ramp up to the building and to make the washrooms accessible. So a small amount of money, but partnering with community groups having a big impact on people's lives.

Another project that was funded through that funding was the Accessible Taxis program. That's very valuable for people who have mobility issues or other issues in terms of using taxis, public transportation. That's a very important project. A small amount of money in the grand scheme of things but had a very important impact on individual lives. That's a very important program, and I think it has a big impact on people's lives directly. Those are some things in the district, some things related to the overall budget.

I'll conclude my comments there, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much for your time.

**MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster):** Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

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

Again, it's a privilege to get up here today to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis.

It is interesting today, very interesting – and to let people know that there are three committees in government that we all do Estimates for and sometimes we get – this one we're debating today is the Resource Committee which I'm on, but sometimes we have to be moved in and out of different committees because our critics for those are not necessarily the resource ones.

Today I'm going to speak a little bit about my critic role and where Estimates are for my critics, which are Service NL, which the minister was up earlier today and spoke and did a great speech, I listened to him. It will be interesting to see later on tonight when we do the Estimates on Service NL – there are some questions we have there, but I'm sure the minister will have all the answers and I'm sure it will be a good session.

Actually, Estimates are a great session. It's a great time to find out the few ins and outs. There are some questions there that sometimes they'll answer it, but most times, I give ministers credit, they do get back to you. Especially the officials in the department do get back to you and let you know what the answers are to the questions that you have, because sometimes we spring some questions that they don't know.

Other critic roles I play a role in is Municipal Affairs, and we've done that one already – again, very interesting. We went a full hour over the three hours that were allotted and there were lots of questions. Again, that's a department that had a lot of changes this year. There was some stuff taken out. Also, Environment's included in there. The Lands part was taken out; Crown Lands was taken out. So it was pretty hard to follow when you compare it from year to year. So that was an interesting one also.

The Department of Fisheries was the first one I did. The Department of Fisheries, we went over the other day and we had some questions, and I thank the deputy minister and officials in that department. We had some questions and we went over. We got briefed just yesterday, I do believe. Was it yesterday? Yeah, just yesterday we got briefed, and I thank them again for doing

that. There are some more questions that we do have and they're going to get back to us.

That's how this all works with different committees and stuff like that. So if people are wondering at home what it means by the committees, they are just Estimates committees that we do, and as critics we get the opportunity to come in here and ask ministers and their department – the whole department gets in here and answers the questions.

Now, before I get into that, I listened to the previous Member get up and he – I didn't really want to do it, but he said a culture of spending. Sometimes I look at that, and I know, no matter if it's your own household or whatever you do, sometimes you spend money that you go back and you look at it down the road.

Most times when you spend money or you spend on different things – no matter if they're household or here in government, there are results, there are great results. I know they have a role to play and we also have a role to play, but over the last 12, 13 years and just recently in my district, a new school was opened.

I'd like to ask Members across the way, what wouldn't you have done? What schools would you not have built? In the early years we had a lot of, I call it deficit in infrastructure, and the infrastructure needs in this province. Madam Speaker, in your district there was a lot of infrastructure in schools. I think there were two new schools just recently built in your district, and so they should. Just like the two that were built in my district, so they should. But when you say a culture of spending, this spending was done for – I just wrote down a few things while he was talking there. I was wondering what roads you wouldn't want built.

Let me tell you something, Madam Speaker, there are lots of roads in this province right now that need to be done. There are ones in my district that have potholes and everything else, but I understand. I spoke to the Minister of Transportation and his officials and they're doing their best. I just noticed last week that a patching crew came through the Town of Flatrock and did a real good job on a lot of holes, but there are a lot of holes that need to be still filled and that's in every district. Every



district in this province has that but there are a lot of roads that were built.

I always look at the Torbay bypass road that was built in the last number of years and what that's done for my area. It's made each community in the area – I think the growth in the communities really went up high.

The road itself cost \$23 million. Veterans Memorial Highway out your way, Member, was a very important road for Harbour Grace and Carbonear. It needed to be built and cost a lot of money. Those are investments we need to make. Investments in the Team Gushue Highway now are investments that we need to make. Are there more? Yes. Do we need more money? Yes. These investments are not a culture of spending; these investments are great investments.

I also look at recreation facilities. I look at the recreation facilities that are built right across this province. I can remember, Madam Speaker, being a minor hockey coach. I coached minor hockey right from this age at squirts, right on up to midget and then I coached in high school. Obviously, I had a son that played hockey and like most hockey players, they still get involved now. I don't know if I was a good coach or a bad coach; I was lucky that my son was a goaltender because I never had to fight with parents over ice time and stuff like this, like a lot of coaches do.

I travelled to Baie Verte. I was in Springdale, played in a hockey tournament in Springdale. I played in Bonavista.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You lost there.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yes, we did. We did lose in Springdale. I played in Goose Bay and different things. But our recreation facilities – and every Member in this House of Assembly can attest that the facilities in our districts have improved. Yes, they have improved.

Is that a waste of spending? I don't think so. I think any time that we go and we do any kind of investment in our youth – I always considered our youth, even though if you go down to Jack Byrne Arena on Wednesday nights and see me playing, it's not your youth playing anymore, it's kind of old fellows trying to get around the

ice. Those are good investments. They're real good investments.

I'll also look at investments we made in our health care. I know that Members opposite, they'll all get up and say: Oh, we're spending a lot of money in health care. We're after coming a long ways in our health care. We're after coming a long ways when it comes to diagnostic machines. We've come a long ways in the medical care that we can give the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we do have a big issue. I'm sure the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health talk about it on a regular basis.

We just saw something come out last week to say that we have the oldest population in all of Canada for a province. That's a huge issue because, obviously, as you get older, your medical needs are more and more. As the medical needs get more, obviously the increased cost is also more. That's a huge issue in our province, but over the last number of years we've made huge investments. We've made investments in hospitals and clinics right across this province. In Labrador, we've made huge investments in medical care.

Again, a culture of spending, I think they're good spends. Now, have all spends been good? I don't know. I really don't know, but I know that you do need to invest in our communities, we need to invest in our people and we need to invest in what we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is the greatest province to live in all Canada.

Now, I went off on a wing there because I wanted to talk about my three areas that I'm the critic of. The first one I'm going to speak to is Municipal Affairs. I heard the Member for Lab West get up this week and he talked about Gander this weekend; they were out to meetings in Gander with MNL. Again, he also mentioned about our municipal leaders. This year there is a municipal election coming in September. I can honestly say that it was one of the best things I ever done in my life was running for municipal politics. It's difficult. It's very, very difficult because it's a little different than what it is in here; you're dealing more with your neighbours and your friends than you are with anything else.

Sometimes it can be so difficult that you can lose a friendship over it.

When you're talking about approving a building lot or approving something for a family member who's probably your buddy, it's difficult. We have community leaders and municipal leaders in this province that are unbelievable. They are great people. We need to attract more.

The last municipal election I think there was a good few communities that didn't have a full slate of candidates and stuff like that. It's important because I tell you, for people out there, municipal leaders – you're the heart and soul of your community. I'd say in 90 per cent of the cases, you're a volunteer and it takes a lot of time. Not only are you a volunteer because what happens with most people in small communities they are not only the volunteers as a minor hockey coach, they are probably the deputy mayor of the town or some other role that they do play. So they play a huge role in all their communities.

I know the Member mentioned the other day three mayors that have been there for a long, long while, the mayor of Gander, Appleton and Bonavista. I believe that neither one of them is running again this year, so I really want to thank them, and all mayors. I know that the mayor of Torbay, in my district, Ralph Tapper, has said that he is not running again. I really want to thank all those people that put years and years of service into their communities. Sometimes it's not easy; sometimes it's very difficult.

Like I said, it's the form of politics that you deal with that is so close – its family members, its friends and everything else. Not that we don't have family members to deal with in here and friends, but it's a different form. It's a real different form. There's so much you can do for your community. I really encourage young people – I know in the community I'm from we have three ladies on the council and they bring so much to the table, it's unbelievable.

So I encourage everybody to get into it and if there's something anybody wants to do for their community, there's nothing better you can do than run for municipal politics. There'll be people who will think that you have an agenda, there'll be people who think you're on it for this

reason or that reason, but the reason that most people run is because the love their communities, and that's a real good thing.

Again, this week is Municipal Awareness Week. I'm going to be down tomorrow with the minister. We're going to be down in Torbay. Tomorrow we've got a couple of great announcements. There's a new fire truck in Torbay. The Town of Torbay has worked since 2008 to get this depot in place and that's going to be open tomorrow. There's also an agreement between my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and communities in my area – the communities in his area and mine, they work very closely together. There's the Killick Coast Games. They meet on a regular basis. They're sharing an enforcement officer now and stuff like this. So they got an agreement tomorrow when it comes to fire protection with their volunteer firefighters. The minister is going to be down for that also.

That's great to see two municipalities close to each other working together. We have to do a lot of work to get this Member up to shape with what our area is about, but I think they're doing pretty good in that area also. But that's an important thing. It's an important thing for municipalities to work together.

I also got Service NL. The minister, we will be talking later on now tonight when we do Estimates. I always say about this department, and people don't know about it – they know a lot about it when you go look for a regulation or anything at all, or look for a permit, or whatever.

I think this is the department in government that got you from the time you are born until the time you die and everything in between. That's the type of department that it is. There are so many things in it whether it's a birth certificate, or it's a death certificate or its motor registration, there are all kinds of regulatory – whatever it is.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A wedding.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** A wedding, if you need to be commissioner for a wedding, that's where you have to get anything you need.

So there are some issues, and I have some questions for the minister tonight. I'm sure he'll

be answering my questions. If not, I'll be asking them here in the House of Assembly the next day more than likely.

Just to talk about, the last one I'm critic for is Fisheries. As most people here in the House know, I do speak a lot about the fishery. I am always proud that my dad was a fisherman. I come from a fishing family, because my grandfather was a fisherman. I have a brother now who is out fishing on the water. My son, whenever he gets a chance, if he can get out with my brother, he's gone with him too. I love on the water myself. As does most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We're in real hard times. The fishery is in real hard times. I had the opportunity last week to listen to a gentleman from Fogo Island. He was on the *Fisheries Broadcast*. The way he talked about the fishery made so much sense and it was all common sense that he talked about – Mr. Payne. He did a fantastic job. He went back and he talked the way everybody speaks about the fishery, who know a lot about the fishery. He talked about how it was years ago. He, as a fisherman, realized that what we had years ago is gone. It's not the same as it was.

He talked about people on the wharves. How everybody in that community – the wharf was the place to go to. Everything was wooden back then, now everything is concrete. He said you don't let people go down on the wharves. You're afraid to let someone go because of the liability factor. He talked about if someone trips in your boat now you could get sued.

He talked about how years ago everyone used to jump in your boat to cut out a few cod tongues or get a fish. Throw one up on the wharf, and if you gave him one, you more than likely gave him two.

He talked about how it brought communities together and what made us to be Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, how we were as people and how the fishery was so important to the whole community. Not only to harvesters that were out on the water but to the children who came down to the wharf and to the families who had a fresh feed of fish that evening to cook. It meant so much to everybody in the province.

Today, we see a fishery that is in complete turmoil. I'm not here blaming anybody because we look at different species; we look at the shrimp, the crab and the cod, the three that I'm going to talk about. It's in turmoil. We see frustration. We see frustration from harvesters. We'll see frustration from plant workers as we get into the season when the hours are not there.

We had a gentleman, Mr. Gillett down doing a hungry strike. I mean nobody wants to see that. No matter what it is, nobody wants to see that.

In Grand Bank today we see a gentleman burning nets and burning crab pots. We saw yesterday frustration on the Northern Peninsula where people went out and set pots in a traditional area that the Quebec fishery is. Then we saw pots and everything burnt on the Northern Peninsula.

I can guarantee you, Madam Speaker, harvesters, fish people, plant workers and people in this province do not want to do it, but it's just a frustration level in the fishery today that's unbelievable. It's time for us as a province, as everyone in this House of Assembly – I looked at what we did when it came to an all-party committee on the shrimp. We sat down and we agreed. We sat down and we went to Ottawa. We showed them what we thought about the all-party committee. We said this is what you should do with LIFO: Throw it away. We came to an agreement. We sat down and we put a lot out.

I know the Member of the Third Party, the leader of the Third Party there; she spent a lot of time. We all did and we worked hard at it. Today in this fishery we need leadership. It's time. It's too late when the fishing season is over and we say, okay, we'll do that next year. Right now is when – this is a crisis in the fishery. The Minister of Fisheries said that last week on an open line, I think it was VOCM. It's time for us to start doing something.

We have people out there that do not want to be doing what they're doing. They do not want to be burning their gear. They do not want to be protesting. They want to be like everybody else in Canada. They want to be fair, treated the way we should be treated.

I just want to talk a little bit about the fishery itself. I spoke about this the other day when I got up, and I asked the minister even yesterday about it. I know the shrimp fishery – and I talked to some fishermen the weekend. In order for them to go and make a trip to – because most of the shrimp they'll catch will be down on the North Coast, say, St. Anthony down that they'll catch their shrimp.

This year the quota is like 17,000 pounds and it's not feasible. There's a 45-cent reduction in the price of shrimp this year. So it's not feasible for these boats to be going and leaving Harbour Grace or leaving Bonavista or leaving St. John's and going down north where they have – it's too much money. It costs way too much money.

If there was a buddy-up system they could do it. I mean they have no problem with these boats carrying 50,000, 60,000 pounds of shrimp. So why not let three crews go together and do it and split the cost? It makes sense. We should be lobbying the federal government because that makes sense.

I know Members over across the way, you agree with me. That makes sense. That's what we have to do. There are a lot of things in our fishery that makes sense and we should be doing it. I get up every now and then I speak, and I do this – I have a petition that I'll always do up and it talks about boat size.

I talked the other day to a fisherman over in St. John's. I go over every Saturday. I go over around the basin, go around and have a talk. I know most of the boys over there. We were talking about the different sizes of vessels that are used to go out and catch crab. If you go out around the 200-mile limit you need around a 65 footer, because you're not going to go out in anything really too small. I know some people do, they go out in 50 footers. Then there's a mid-shore and then there's the inshore.

I can't believe that we don't lobby the federal government. I can understand why the regulations were brought in in the first place. It was in order to keep the inshore fishermen, to give them an opportunity to catch some crab because there were some big vessels at the time, but that's years ago.

What's happening now, they should be allowed to use the same. What's happening now, each one of these fishing groups have three and four vessels that they are using. Some are in good shape; some are not so good. We're putting lives in danger by doing it.

There are all kinds of things this government should be doing to lobby the federal government to make our fishery better and to make our fishery safer for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what I'm asking for here today.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Okay.

Thank you very much.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

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

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

It's a great honour to rise in this House today and speak on the Concurrence Motion for the Resource Committee. I'm very happy, I must say, to get up today, and I'll talk about the budget today.

I just listened to the Member opposite. I must say, the one thing that was near and dear to my heart that he spoke about, this being Municipal Awareness Week. I think it's a good time to throw a bouquet to all the councillors, the volunteers out there, the firefighters, the recreation people, all the town clerks and managers. We have people in MNL; we have people in PMA who dedicate a lot of their time to keeping the municipalities going and afloat.

I have 12 incorporated municipalities in my district, and I'll talk about how the budget is going to help these out later on today. I just want to say to every clerk out there, every mayor –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They finally got a new clerk in Greenspond.

**MR. BRAGG:** Yeah, they finally got a new clerk out in Greenspond after 29 years there, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure – it was a pleasure for me. I spent 29 years on municipal council. I know, it's not every day, there are ups and downs and you try to find the good out of it all. My hat goes off to a lot of people out there.

I think the member opposite talked about the mayor from Gander who wouldn't be running again, the mayor from Bonavista, the mayor for Appleton. I know the mayor of Greenspond is not running again. I don't think the mayor of New-Wes-Valley is running again. So there are going to be a lot of mayors that are going to be up this time around.

I'll tell anybody who've ever gone and put a complaint into their town council, who wrote a letter to council, who've had any interest in their town to take part. This September, it's the municipal elections. So get out, take part, help with your town, volunteer with your fire department, help out your recreation committee. That's where I'm going with that.

Madam Speaker, again, I'm very privileged and honoured to rise here today. I spent some time in Estimates. It was, I must say, very exciting to sit there and listen to the questions go back and forth and the flow of information, but I'm going to reflect on the positive things.

Now, as you may know, Madam Speaker, I don't spend a lot of time standing in this House to speak, so I spend a lot of time listening. A lot of people might not believe that, my wife in particular would not believe that, but I'm going to tell you I spend a lot of time listening. I got to say, Madam Speaker, from the Members opposite, they know all the answers. They really have all the answers. I question why they're over there and not over here when they know all the answers. I really got to question that, and they're good at it.

I look across now; I know they're good at the Twitter. The Member opposite for – where's he from? I think it's CBS, Conception Bay South.

He has people convinced in July and August we're going to need 24-hour snow clearing. He's good at that. He's got people convinced of that. He's going to have people convinced. Given the last forecasts we've had, who knows, we may just need that 24-hour snow clearing in July and August. Let's hope not. Let's look forward to a good 24th of May weekend when it doesn't snow.

Madam Speaker, I have to say, listening to the Members opposite – we just brought in, we had our 2016 budget, brought in our 2017 budget, and the most I hear from Members opposite is how bad our 2016 budget was, not our 2017 budget. So that tells me, you know what? We have to be doing something right. We're probably on the right track, as we should be.

I'm going to take some time today in my 20 minutes or less of speaking, and highlight some of the spending highlights in the Budget Speech. I think the hon. minister did an admirable job that day. For 45 minutes she spoke here about the condition our province was in financially, and where we're going and where we plan to be.

Madam Speaker, we'll all agree that the budget last year was a budget to remember, and probably we'll have to hang our hat on that, but we'll go forward from that budget on. We projected a deficit last year of \$1.83 billion, revised that to \$1.1 billion; but, keep in mind, we were handed a \$2.3 billion deficit.

Madam Speaker, our Finance Minister set us on a path where over the next seven years she's going to bring us into a surplus – something that we haven't seen. We adopted the zero-based budgeting. Now, that's pretty good, because in municipalities we've been doing that for years. So now, since 1949, we're finally bringing zero-based budgeting into the House. I'm no good with math. I'll never be the Finance Minister, so however many years later that is, it's good we're on that track right now. We've tightened our belts. We're taken control over our spending and we're being responsible.

Madam Speaker, I have to talk about the megaprojects. We've heard the Members opposite probably put out some fear mongering that it's all gone bottom up now because the big megaprojects are over. We know what the

megaprojects have done for this province. Every municipality in this province has someone who either worked on the Muskrat Falls Project, worked in Bull Arm, worked in Long Harbour, worked on the transmission line. We know what that's done. It brought a lot of people home from Alberta for the last few years and it's really showing in a lot of our rural towns.

In every small town that I go to there is a house or two, which might not sound like much, but there is a house or two in every town getting built every year. So people in the industry of the – I look at the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay, in the life that he came from, I'm sure it was good for his business that people went away and came home and built houses.

So we know that's probably coming to the down flow and we're going to see some slowing down of that, but that's just a cycle, I would think, Madam Speaker. That's a cycle that our province is going to go through. I guess we could probably go back to Churchill Falls when the Premier of the day said: Burn your boats and go to work in Churchill Falls. We're not to the burn your boat stage but we still have the projects there.

Madam Speaker, on the megaprojects, there is one big megaproject in my district. That is the fishery. I think the Member opposite mentioned the fishery a couple times when he was standing there a while ago. The fishery last year brought into this province \$1.4 billion.

Now, Madam Speaker, I know there are cuts in quotas, but this year with the price of crab at \$4.30 a pound, I can imagine that \$1.4 billion will be closer to \$2 billion at the end of the day, if we're going to look at the value that it brings back to this province. It employs over 17,000 people direct. Now that's not counting the spinoffs.

If I look at my district, if you look at the spinoffs in my district of people who work in the fishing industry, they go in, they go to Gander. They support the businesses in Gander; the recreational vehicles that are bought in Gander, the automobiles that are bought in Gander. It could even be groceries that are bought in Gander. Because of those spinoffs, those people can go to Gander and spend money. So rural

Newfoundland, we keep the service centres like Gander, Clarendville, Grand Falls, Corner Brook and I guess our biggest service centre, St. John's going.

I have to say on the fishery, and I'm not the Member for Gander, but the mayor of Gander once told me he has more fishermen than what I do. I thought that was hard to believe but, in actual fact, he did have a number of fishermen that moved to his town.

For the folk who live on Fogo Island, New-Wes-Valley and the Dover-Hare Bay area – and that's three of the main fish plants in my area – the fishery has been a valuable part of that. I guess it's been the backbone for the community for people staying there.

I'm running out of paper, Madam Speaker. I wish I could only write better.

Madam Speaker, the 2017 budget reaches out and helps rural communities. That's what I want to talk about today. It helps the rural communities and the residents.

There's \$33 million to support early childhood education and \$2 million for child care subsidies to help low- and middle-income families. Madam Speaker, I find that to be very interesting, the child care subsidy.

Two years ago or three years, when I was on the development association out in my district, we started a child care facility. We employ three people there now. That helps a lot of people from low- to medium-income families to get out and get into the workforce. The subsidy that comes from that will ensure the viability of that building and the people that's there. We will provide the service to our area for years to come.

Madam Speaker, in the budget last year we were talking about our libraries. In my district, I think I had nine libraries. This year I'm happy to say that there's some money in the budget that's going to guarantee these libraries stay open; \$652,500 is going back into the library fund.

As I said earlier, I spent 29 years in a municipal setting. I just wanted to outline today – if you talk about the budget and what good it is and what it's going to do, I'm going to tell you what

the budget has done for my district for the last two years.

The first one I thought was a little bit symbolic. We have disaster financial assistance. It was the very first thing that we did to help out the people in Joe Batt's. I thought that was symbolic to the disaster that we took over financially from the former administration.

In Gander Bay South, Madam Speaker, the people who are there now, they're going to get potable water, dispense for water. So they'll be able to go and get safe, clean drinking water to the people of Gander Bay South and in Gander Bay North.

In New-Wes-Valley, they're going to upgrade their pumphouse. They're going to guarantee that the fish plant that I talked about – that will maintain the water source to the fish plant and to the people of New-Wes-Valley.

Centreville-Wareham-Trinity; they're looking at the environment by upgrading their lift stations which has been a problem for these guys over the year. Indian Bay is going to put in a new pumping station and a portable generator to help them when the power goes out. Gander Bay South is going to upgrade their water system because their water system, their water line was put in, I'd say, before Confederation, it was that long ago. It runs through a septic field and the lines break constantly. Those people last year, when they were told they had that money, they were ecstatic that now they wouldn't have to worry about their water lines. They were going to get nice, safe, clean drinking water.

In Carmanville, they're going to replace their water treatment mains and they're going to upgrade their sewer treatment plant; New-Wes-Valley again, we have an area in New-Wes-Valley that is called Newtown and Templeman. Madam Speaker, the chair you sit in would be clean and clear to the water that comes through those people's taps.

You would not think here in 2017 that water could be so dark. It is dark down there – it sort of looks like real good steeped tea, that's how dark the water is. The people in that area, when they have their friends come in they have to explain first, well, don't mind the water in the

washroom. It's clean enough to wash in; just don't drink it. So we're going to tie that into the main source, so that's a big thing that's going to happen down there.

Port Albert was without a chlorination system, so now we're going to chlorinate their water. Of course when you chlorinate the water, hopefully you take those people off the boil order. Down in Musgrave Harbour, they have a have a fairly new water treatment facility that fell into disrepair. They were on numerous boil orders. Because of the funding from this government, these guys will get the upgrades that they need in their water treatment facility and them and take them off the boil order.

In Brookfield Bonnews – this year I was so happy to go out there with the Minister of Health – those people are getting a new wheelchair bus for the seniors so they can get people from seniors' home, from the 50 plus club, they can take them on their runs. For the last number of years, they went, the bus was broke down and they would have to get a bus come out of Gander. So you can imagine the frustration that was. Now they're going to get a new wheelchair bus. They're going to get 12 new beds. Madam Speaker, I don't know if I'm a long way from needing those 12 new beds, but I'm sure the people who need them will really appreciate them.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, in my district, and I'm sure everybody else here that get the opportunity to get up, we've been providing really well for the last number of years. In Indian Bay, they're getting a new storage tank because when their power would go, they'd run out of water. Now they have a storage tank so that it would give them fire flows.

Centreville-Wareham-Trinity – over in Trinity, their water again was really dark. There are putting in a new filtration system, thanks to the money from this government. They have cleaned up their water. I was up there a couple of nights ago to an event, the water is as clear as what it is anywhere now. The people up there are so happy for that funding.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What a Member.

**MR. BRAGG:** I'm getting a little bit embarrassed here, Madam Speaker, because I'm hoping somebody else don't come up here with half a page.

Madam Speaker, in New-Wes-Valley we upgraded some pavement for the town on their side roads, and in Hare Bay we also upgraded some side roads. Fogo Island was amalgamated, I can't remember how long ago, but I think there are 11 communities on Fogo Island. They have six or seven different fire departments, six or seven different town halls.

Fogo Island wants to save money by incorporating that into one complex in the middle of the island. They want to build a fire hall/town hall to save money. They figure it costs them in excess of \$250,000 a year to maintain all the buildings they have with insurance, with upkeep, with light and heat. What an initiative for us to be able to help fund that for them.

Of course, I can't get up here without talking about the *Veteran* that we've also put in – because a big part of my district is the *Veteran*, and I thank the Minister of Transportation. It's too bad that the Member for Conception Bay – what is it? Conception island –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

**MR. BRAGG:** – Conception Bay East – Bell Island is not here because I know he's forever and a day going to be tagged as the minister who bought two ferries and didn't buy the wharf. I know that is what it is going to be, Madam Speaker. But do you know what? The *Veteran* – and I have to knock on wood when I say this because every time I usually say it something happens. I thank the Member opposite for the *Veteran* for the people on Fogo Island. Although it's been working –

**MR. BRAZIL:** Point of order, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island on a point of order.

**MR. BRAZIL:** I just want to acknowledge to my hon. colleague that I am here in the House of Assembly and very diligently listening to his speech and taking every word as gospel.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

**MR. BRAGG:** On the refit of the *Veteran* not only that, we're going to upgrade the terminal. Fogo Island, as you know, has become a mecca of activity for people coming here for tourism. We're upgrading the terminal so that people who are waiting on the Farewell side would have a nice, clean washroom with ample facilities, with safe and clean drinking water. There will be a facility there that's worthy so that we don't lose the tourism aspect for going to Fogo Island and Change Islands.

Another thing we did, we upgraded and we paved from the Indian Bay Bridge to Templeman. That's going to be done this year. So in this year's cycle, the contract has been called, we're going to start in Indian Bay and we're going to pave down towards Templeman and upgrade that.

Change Islands had some funding for upgrades to their fresh water supply. They had one of those – I think it's called a PWDU, the portable unit, that gives them supplies. We're going to build a dolphin in Change Islands, Madam Speaker. When I heard we were building a dolphin in Change Island, I'm not going to lie to you, I had no idea what a dolphin was. But since we had the ferry and almost had the wharf, we needed the dolphin to extend the wharf. So the dolphin is actually an extension to the wharf. As you would have recalled, there was a vehicle lost off the ferry some time ago. This dolphin will help secure the *Veteran* in a much better fashion and it will be safer for heavier vehicles leaving the ferry.

Madam Speaker, I'm almost done. Another thing we're going to deal with, we're going to put up some new signage in Farewell. Farewell is where the ferry goes Change Islands and Fogo Islands, and the complaint that I've been getting ever since I started this is communications.



People don't know. You get here; you don't know what time the ferry is leaving; you don't know where she's going next; you don't know what kind of schedule; don't know if she's delayed. We're actually going to put up some new signage there. There's going to be an electronic board there that people can go in, or else it's going to be out the window that people can read anytime they're in the lineup and see the ferry is on schedule, behind schedule, or half way across the tickle. We're hoping she will get all the way across the tickle.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Can I ask Members to keep the volume down in the Chamber so I can hear the hon. Member that's been recognized to speak?

**MR. BRAGG:** Madam Speaker, thank you so much for the protection here this afternoon.

I'm almost through, Madam Speaker. If they could bear with me for another minute or so, I'm sure I would have it just about done.

The other thing we're doing, as you know, in my district – I'm guessing there's 500 kilometres of road in my district. As you know, there are all kinds of maintenance ongoing. We're doing Straight Shore Brook Bridge this year – and that's not a tongue-twister, but it is close on it. We're going to upgrade the bridge so that doesn't fall down in the brook. Hopefully, in the next year or so, that will be all done.

Last year, Madam Speaker, on the Gander Bay North side of the district we pulverized and paved seven kilometres of road, which was in bad shape. I am so happy for the support from this government; I'm happy for what comes from this budget. I thought to get into this a little bit more, but the Budget Speech, believe or not, I only made it to page 11, and I was so excited to be able to get up and speak about this today that I'll just make a couple of more things, because it's related to municipalities.

That's the Community Healthy Living Fund. In this year's budget, it is \$1.79 million into that fund. That is so important to the small recreation committees out there who can get those little

\$5,000 and \$10,000 grants for their ball fields, for their playgrounds, for their sports facilities, for their stadiums. That is something. So with us and Municipal Awareness Week this week, to know that we're out there and we're supporting all those groups and you hear all the naysaying that goes on. I'm so happy that, hopefully, next year this time, I can get up and report to you more money that was brought to this district.

I will end on this, Madam Speaker. There's a million dollars towards active living programs targeted at youth. I don't think we could spend a million dollars better anywhere else.

I was lucky when my daughter came through the school system that she was very active in all school sports. I think she was on every team there was in sports. I looked at a lot of the kids there that didn't take part in a lot of these sports. I'm not saying everybody needs it, but it is something in your life, if you practice active living when you're younger it will bring on through your life.

I guess, Madam Speaker, it's something like we brought in for the impaired drivers. Right now, a young driver is five years with zero tolerance. Am I right with that, five years? So we're hoping that will educate them and train them so that after the five years they will go on to six years and seven years and not have a drink.

I think active living at a young age is something that we can really hang our hat on because that will help health care down the road.

Madam Speaker, I thank you so much for the opportunity to speak here this afternoon. It was a pleasure.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I'm glad to have a chance to rise and speak once again to this budget. A budget that's very much last year's budget.

We've heard a couple of Liberal MHAs today talk about how great the budget is and can't understand why we're talking about things that happened in 2016. Well, the 2017 budget is simply a continuation of what we saw in 2016. Of the 300 new taxes and fees, 299½ of them continue to exist. The cuts we saw to the Adult Dental Program continue. The cuts we saw to home care hours continue. The cuts we saw to the Prescription Drug Program continue. That's just a few examples from the Department of Health. So there's reason to discuss some of those issues further because those same issues are going to impact people even further this year as a result of the path that we're now on.

I'd like to talk more about – I will talk about the budget, but I want to focus in particular on the economy. I'd like to talk about the announcement that I had an opportunity to sit in on this morning where the Premier and a number of ministers and MHAs gathered with representatives, well-respected representatives from a number of industries to talk about the big new plan.

So over a year and a half into their mandate, they're almost halfway through their mandate and the Liberal government is now going to start talking about jobs. Well, better late than never I suppose, but the projections in their own budget documents show that there will be many more job losses on their watch this year and in subsequent years as well.

Today's announcement was simply an announcement that we're going to consult industry, we're going to hold some more consultations and we're going to work with industry to come up with a plan that will create jobs. I think the time for that has come and gone, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about a government that's approaching the halfway mark in its mandate and now they want to start talking about jobs and the economy. They're going to finally start talking to industry about how to support economic growth. It's too little too late, but at the same time, I suppose, better late than never.

The two industries that we're primarily focused on today were aquaculture and agriculture. So I'd like to comment a little bit on both of them. Those are industries that, as a party, as a caucus,

we fully support. In fact, during the previous PC administration there were great strides made in both areas, but I'll be the first to say definitely more work to do as there always is.

We heard talk this morning about food self-sufficiency which is a good goal and something that we need to talk more about. I think the recent decision by government to free up some more Crown land for agricultural development is actually a good decision and one that I'm happy to stand and support.

Today, while the president of the Federation of Agriculture was there and a representative from Food First NL, both great organizations doing excellent work to advance food security – with them sitting there by the Premier, there was no news of anything new. There was not one concrete idea, not one specific target, not one specific recommendation, just a commitment to work together, do some more consultation and come up with a plan.

When you're halfway through your mandate and when you've made decisions that have ground the economy to a halt, it's a little bit disingenuous perhaps to now all of a sudden say: We're going to start listening; we're going to start consulting.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** All we've heard from this government is consultation. We need some bold targets when it comes to food self-sufficiency and we need some action.

Let me just remind you of some of the commitments that during the last campaign we talked about. I had a very brief opportunity, probably six or seven years ago now, to work as the parliamentary secretary to the minister that was responsible for the former Forestry and Agrifoods Agency. Some of the challenges that we were tackling through our work in the agrifoods sector continue to be challenges, but I think there has been some progress made.

The availability of land was one issue that was being worked on. There was more land made available. Again, I think this government's

recent move to make even more land available is a step in the right direction, but there are other challenges facing the agricultural sector that we didn't hear anything about this morning because there were no specifics.

It's not just about land. Access to capital is a big issue for people that want to get into farming, or who are already in farming. If you want to get serious about tackling this issue, then that's an area where some focus and attention is needed. In addition to that, attracting new entrants to agriculture is a major challenge as well. While a number of initiatives have been undertaken in recent years to do just that, I think there's more work to be done in order to grow the sector.

Another challenge is succession planning. The last time I checked, and my data might be several years old now, Mr. Speaker, but the last time I checked, the average age of our farmers was late 50s, maybe even 60. So it's an aging population. Not unlike the demographics of Newfoundland and Labrador overall, or not unlike other sectors in our economy, but for that reason succession planning for a lot of farmers who are operating businesses in that sector is really, really important.

So when I heard there was going to be a news conference to announce new partnerships with industry, specifically agriculture, I thought, well maybe those are some of the themes that will be addressed – not a mention of any of that this morning. Just we're going to hold a summit, we're going to work together, we're going to come up with a plan, no specific targets.

I will stand with government and say, yes, agriculture is important. Food security should be a priority. Increasing our food supply and food self-sustainability in our province is a good thing to focus on, but we didn't hear anything in terms of specifics this morning.

Some of the things that – following our work in some of those areas that we said in 2015 we'd be interested in pursuing if we were to continue in government, and I'll quote our leader at the time, who continues as our Leader of the Opposition, said some of these things. "We will drive growth in our agrifoods sector – growth to sustain communities and jobs, to advance our food security, which right now is unacceptably

low, and to supply people with the kinds of healthy, locally grown food that we ought to be eating.

"Our plan is to set bold targets for food security. We will collaborate with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, farmers and others throughout our agricultural sector to substantially increase the amount of local food people in this province can access and eat. By 2025, what percentage of the food we eat could be produced locally? Let's aim high.

"We will pursue this strategy by making it easier for new entrants to get their farms up and running; by protecting and expanding farmland and relaxing Crown land policies for farm use; by removing the restriction on farmers relative to selling timber cleared from their land; by working with farmers to facilitate succession planning to sustain family farming operations; by capitalizing on opportunities to expand primary production of berries, beef, lamb and pork, and harnessing that growth to drive value-added processing; and by making it easier to get local produce in the markets.

"Working collaboratively with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture and farmers, we will identify barriers to accessing healthy, local food, and find solutions.

"We will bring farmers and others together to strategize on the best way forward for growth.

"We will identify ways to address issues of transportation, storage, producers' access to local retailers and so forth.

"We will promote and invest in local farmers' markets, which showcase locally grown goods and promote a greater understanding of the important role of agriculture in our economy and society.

"We will promote community gardens where seniors' groups can help us get back to our traditional roots and live healthier lives in this process." That was actually an initiative our administration strongly promoted to benefit seniors and also young people. In fact, I had teams from the conservation corps doing a really

innovative community garden project in my own district over the past couple of years.

“We will partner in support of farmers’ forums and the ‘Agriculture in the Classroom’ program so young people can help us lead the way.

“We will work with organizations and provincial schools to expand programs that ensure all school-age children have daily access to healthy foods.

“We will invest in Kids Eat Smart to expand the program, and strengthen the program’s linkages with local food producers.

“We will also continue to invest in food access for northern and remote communities.”

So that’s a plan. Many elements of that plan were underway and I’m pleased to see government acting on some of those same issues. The notion of making more land available, they’ve acted on, so good for them. But many of the other issues that I’ve already mentioned and that were outlined in that plan weren’t touched on today and haven’t been touched on in the first half of this government’s mandate. A plan that addressed all of that would have been something that we could get excited about, but a commitment to finally talk to industry and come up with a plan, it’s a little late, Mr. Speaker.

Similarly, we’re excited about aquaculture. We’re proud of the tremendous strides we’ve made in aquaculture in this province over the last 10 or 15 years, to bring us to what is now a \$300 million or \$400 million industry annually in our province. There has been unprecedented growth and that’s because of some of the groundwork that has been laid over a number of years. In fact, during our time in government – I was only around for two-thirds of it – we saw a complete turnaround in the Coast of Bays region.

For anybody in this House or otherwise who hasn’t had an opportunity to talk about aquaculture with the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I’d strongly encourage you to do so. I know that the Minister of Fisheries is receptive; he has an interest in aquaculture as well. I was glad to see aquaculture showcased

this morning but, again, we never heard anything specific.

Let’s look at the Coast of Bays example. Maybe that can be replicated, maybe that can be further expanded, but we never heard any specifics or any commitments this morning. The decisions that were made around aquaculture over the last decade have turned the Coast of Bays region around.

I’ve talked to people in that region in various communities who say to me: You know what, in this region right now, particularly around the area of St. Alban’s – but many other communities as well have benefited – anybody who wants a job, has a job. That’s a pretty powerful statement for people on the ground to make.

It was not that long ago in multiple regions of the province people were making a similar comment. Even today, despite the economic downturn that we’re experiencing in this province due to commodity prices and so on, in the Coast of Bays region there are still people on the ground who would say anybody who wants a job, has a job. I think the industry is valued at over \$200 million annually in that region alone.

So it’s real and it’s an example of what’s possible when you do engage in meaningful partnerships and you do have a plan, you do have a strategy and you commit to it, you commit resources to it and you get people working together in a concerted effort to see progress. This is an industry that had its birth in the 1980s, but it wasn’t until around 2003-2004 that we started to see some real change and some real supports put in place.

Just a couple of examples that jump to mind: There was a loan guarantee program that the previous administration created; there were biosecurity wharves put in place. Those tangible actions, with a real plan to grow industry, made a huge difference. And now we’ve got a sustainable industry that’s worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year and is employing thousands of people.

I heard the Leader of the NDP say this morning, at the same announcement I was at, that it’s government’s role to create jobs. Well, I

disagree. I don't believe governments should be in the business of job creation, but government definitely has a responsibility to create the right environment for jobs to be created. Government absolutely has to be focused on job creation, even though it's not government's responsibility to actually create the jobs. By partnering with industry, by having concrete plans to grow industry, government can create the right climate for jobs to be created and for the economy to be grown. What we've seen in aquaculture, particularly in the Coast of Bays region, is a perfect example of that.

I'm happy to see the current government celebrate it, but if you're going to talk about growing aquaculture, if that's going to be a focus of your so-called jobs plan that isn't yet written, then what's next? Hopefully, it will be like agriculture, an effort to build on some of the successes we've seen over the last number of years.

When I've talked to people in the aquaculture industry in the Coast of Bays region, I just mention some of the improvements that have been made over the last number of years – I asked: What did it look like prior to that? Because the industry didn't just miraculously start in the early 2000s; it was on the go for 15 or 20 years before that. The comment was: During the previous Liberal administration – we're going back a ways now I realize, so I'll spare you much of a history lesson. The comment was: The Liberals had us in a state of perpetual study mode.

I fear that's where we're heading again. No real plan. No real vision. So let's talk partnership. Partnership's a good thing. Let's do more consultation, hold some more summits and at some point we'll come up with a plan. Well, when you're almost half way through your mandate, Mr. Speaker, that's just not enough. It won't be enough to grow aquaculture in this province and it won't be enough to grow agriculture and it won't be enough to grow any more areas of our economy.

We now have a Cabinet committee that's going to do more consultation. I think there are only four Cabinet ministers who didn't make the cut. So it's amazing that almost half way through a

mandate, they're going to now start to focus on the economy and jobs but still no real plan.

The Premier talked this morning about economic diversification, which is a term they love to use. I honestly think it's a worn-out platitude that used by politicians who don't really have a plan, and that couldn't be any more evident than it is with the current Premier.

They talked again this morning about more consultation with stakeholders and with industry. The people of this province are sick and tired of government pretending to be listening. The time for talk is over. It's time for action and it's time for true leadership. That is what's desperately needed. As the Elvis Presley song goes, a little less conversation, a little more action, I think that's exactly what is required at this point in time.

What we've seen here today with this morning's announcement is a feeble attempt by government to make it appear that they're doing something positive after 18 months of naysaying, after 18 months of the blame game, after 18 months of wayward leadership.

This morning, the Premier looked like someone who was running to be premier. Well, I've got news for him. He's got the job and it's time for him to show some leadership. What we need is a real plan, an actual plan, a tangible plan, a comprehensive plan; a balanced plan like we've never, ever in our history had before; a plan that weaves together all facets of our economy and the fabric of our society into a complementing framework for moving forward, in good times and in bad times.

We all know so well there are a lot of industries, virtually all industries, which are cyclical. That's a real challenge for us. I don't believe we've ever been properly prepared as a province, no matter who has been in government, to properly weather downturns because it's not simple, and it can't happen overnight.

We've tended to rely on natural resource revenue to an extent greater than any of us would like, but our mines are not going to last forever, the demand for iron ore is not always going to be constant, and fish are not always going to be abundant into perpetuity. We'd love

for crab and shrimp to renew as fast as we could catch them, but that's not realistic either. We'd all love to think that oil won't drop below \$100 a barrel, but that isn't reality. So we've got to plan differently and that does require leadership and it requires some foresight. The ground work – until the last 18 months or so – was certainly being laid to do just that.

That said, we've never really sought the maximum return from our rich resources, and we need to think bigger, we need to think longer term and it can't be just about the quick buck; we need to really focus on our own self-sufficiency and, obviously, that of our children and grandchildren.

So I believe we've got to take stock of who we are, what we are, where we are, and have a real vision to manage our huge resources in a sustainable, self-sufficient manner for the benefit of not only this generation but for the generations that are yet to come.

What I saw this morning was another micro shot in the dark. It's further evidence that we've got a government with no plan and no vision, and they're simply concerned about pretending to do something in the second half of their mandate. I believe we can do better, I believe we can be better, and I believe we deserve better.

When I look at industries like aquaculture and agriculture, as I've outlined, there actually is a better way. What I outlined earlier in my remarks are some concrete ideas on how to move agriculture forward. There are ideas that have come from farmers; they are ideas that have come from organizations like the Federation of Agriculture and Food First NL.

I was really happy to see those industry leaders stepping up this morning and saying yeah, we're prepared to be part of the solution, but the time for consultation and more talk is over. We need leadership, we need a plan, we need a real focus on the economy so that more jobs can ultimately be created by entrepreneurs in various sectors of the province, and government does have a role to play.

What's desperately needed and what's desperately lacking right now is real leadership, with a vision and a plan. There was no evidence

this morning that anything is changing any time soon with this current administration.

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

The Speaker recognizes the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

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

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

It's great to stand today and speak to Concurrence. For those listening and for those Members in the House, we're debating Concurrence of the Resource Committee.

The Resource Committee is comprised of our Chair; the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay; the Member for Cape St. Francis; the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island; the Member for Exploits; the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels, yourself, Mr. Chair; the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave; the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi; and myself as the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

We had a number of substitutes along the way. The Resource Committee has sat on four occasions since the budget in April to debate issues with respect to line-by-line items of a number of departments. To give those listening an open idea of Estimates, Estimates is when we go to literally line by line through every single piece of a minister's department.

I'd like to take a moment just to enlighten those who are listening of the departments that we discussed. It was great. We had originally started off with the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and his staff who joined us for an evening to discuss the line-by-line items there. The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, he and his staff joined us to go line by line through the items in their department. The Minister of Natural Resources, we went line by line through her department. Just this morning we concluded with the Resource Committee debate going line by line with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour and his staff.

I just want to say a huge thanks to the various ministers and, of course, all of their staff for taking the time to go line by line through the items. Certainly a huge thank you to the Clerks who gave up many evenings to ensure this was a reality, the folks in the Broadcast Centre, as well as our Pages who also stayed here and went line by line with us through these various departments.

I'm very fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a Member of the Resource Committee, also, fortunately as well, a Member of the Government Services Committee. So I've had more than enough opportunity over the past couple of weeks to sit and hear from various ministers with respect to their departments, some of the new initiatives that they are embarking on, some of the things that they've done to find efficiencies and save funds.

I'm going to get into just a few examples of some of those with respect to the various ministerial departments of which I just named. The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, a couple of items – and I just highlighted a couple of items from each department and this is just, I guess, more or less for education for those who haven't been there, a bit of an education piece for those who may be listening and also just a fresh reminder for our PC Members opposite here.

The decorum in the debate and the back and forth in Estimates is very far from what occurs in Question Period. I can assure you, it's very cordial. Questions are usually politely asked and then subsequently politely answered. I find that very interesting, and I don't know if it's because the media doesn't have the focus on our line-by-line Estimates, or it's an audio debate so perhaps it's not televised and we don't get to grandstand as Opposition Members may like to. It's literally night and day, Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, with respect to the decorum in line-by-line Estimates compared to that of Question Period.

Some of the questions that we were hearing coming from the PCs in particular, even just shortly after the budget – I recall distinctly in Question Period we would hear questions from the Leader of the PC Party and the devil is in the details he said. I'm sure if we went to *Hansard*, our record keeping mechanism for what's been

quoted and said in the House of Assembly, I'm sure if we went there we would hear the devil is in the details and we don't know anything about this budget and we're not sure what this budget means. I'm pretty sure now that those details have been filtered out.

We spent 12 hours in line-by-line items in four departments from the Resource Committee; the Social Services Committee had completed their Estimates. We're going to conclude the Government Services Committee this evening. So if there are any details that the PC Members are unaware of, tonight's your last opportunity to really hear a line-by-line item. We've already went line by line through 11 ministerial departments of government, so tonight will be the final ministerial department.

The questions were all about the devil is in the details. So here are some details for you. In the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources just a few, few small lines to hint where we found some savings. A lot of this came from zero-based budgeting. Members opposite, the PC Members, were wondering what is zero-based budgeting. Zero-based budgeting, as was clearly articulated by the Member for St. George's – Humber earlier when he spoke this afternoon stated, you essentially build from the bottom up. So you ask the department not what you historically received in terms of funds, but what is it you need to operate? You work up from there, and you find yourself stopping along the way saying, well, do we really need this or do we really need that.

**MR. LETTO:** Economics 101.

**MR. FINN:** Economics 101. Thank you very much to the Member for Lab West.

We're very fortunate; we have a phenomenal public service sector in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – phenomenal. When you ask people to get creative, they will get creative. So we asked departments to sit down and think about ways to find efficiencies.

We found – the Minister of Finance and the Cabinet, amongst the various departments – \$65.9 million in savings from zero-based budgeting.

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

**MR. FINN:** \$65.9 million from zero-based budgeting practice. It's amazing, because the practice was never used in the past – \$65.9 million.

So put that in context for Stephenville – Port au Port; I've had a highway that runs from Stephenville to Corner Brook, approximately 1,800 to 2,000 cars a day, it's going to cost \$7 million to construct a bypass road. We found \$65.9 million in savings but the PCs could not find \$7 million for a bypass road for the fine folks of Stephenville – Port au Port. After announcing the same road four different times over 12 years, couldn't find \$7 million.

We found \$65.9 million – I'll tell you where we found the \$65.9 million. In the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, just Transportation and Communications, in that line item, they went from \$2,000 down to \$900. That's \$1,100 in savings. It doesn't sound like much, but you'll see where this quickly adds up when you factor in the number of departments.

Also in Transportation and Communications, they went from \$139,000 to \$120,000. That's \$19,000 in savings there. So that's \$20,000 alone, that's just in the minister's office. I didn't get into wildlife, forestry services, aquaculture. This is just in the minister's office alone, \$20,000 in savings.

Purchased Services, they had budgeted \$268,000 last year. They ended up spending more; they spent \$336,000. I point that out because this year they're going to spend \$266,000. Some \$70,000-odd in savings, and that's because they're consolidating office space. They're taking the opportunity to consolidate office space.

So we have departments all across this province that are filtered here and there. We're looking at ways where we can reduce our leasehold, our footprint if you will, from the Transportation Minister. So consolidating office space is significant savings.

Aquaculture development; this is an interesting line item, though, where I found they found some significant savings. Professional Services under the aquaculture development component

of the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, last year they had spent \$358,000; they're down to \$8,000. So one would naturally ask, where did you find \$350,000? Where did you find it? And a very unique idea.

Again, it's about encouraging our public sector, our employees and our staff amongst these departments to become creative. They said, well, we use a vessel to visit our various aquaculture sites. We've been contracting that out forever and a day. So they've been contracting a vessel to go visit these sites and do inspections and what have you, and they said, well, why don't we just buy a vessel? So last year they bought a vessel. So forever and a day now we will save close to \$300,000 as a direct result of thinking creatively, saying, well now we can do better with what we have.

The Minister of Fisheries pointed out some great initiatives in his department as well, highlighting some of the investments with Northern Harvest Seafarms, which has a headquarters in the Coast of Bays, as well as in Port Harmon in Stephenville as well. One thing I'm going to point out as well – this is the last thing, I'll move on, as I see my time's moving very quickly.

The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, that department seen a restructuring. In February there was a restructuring of several departments in government, and this department actually saw a shift with some new portfolios added. That was on February 22, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker. I won't point out the Member's name, but one of the PC Members actually asked for a flow chart or a developmental flow chart to explain what portfolios were added to Fisheries and Land Resources.

Now, these Estimates occurred in April, just for the record. So we have PC Members over there who are criticizing our every move, yet it took them just about two months to come up with a question about, well, I wonder what changed in that department. If they were very much concerned about the department, I'm sure they would have asked the question when the department restructured in February, but that wasn't the case.

Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, and the minister went through with his staff. I'm just



going to highlight a couple of quick items here where there were some significant savings. One of which, very interesting, again with the PCs having every opportunity to utilize this to their advantage. We have what's called the International Business Development Agreement, and the International Business Development Agreement is used for trade missions. So we'll send folks to – and minister, you can correct me if I'm wrong. We'll send folks to various places all over North America. Europe I think was highlighted as well.

In the past, the PC government would use 100 per cent of their own dollars to send folks to these trade missions – taxpayers' dollars, our dollars. They would use 100 per cent of their own funds to send people to these trade missions, when in reality in this agreement you can leverage funds and they could have saved up to 95 per cent of what they spent.

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

**MR. FINN:** They could have saved up to 95 per cent of what they spent sending people to trade missions – 95 per cent. It's astonishing to know that this was in existence, but it was not in practice under the PC administration.

Another interesting item, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, when we talk about reducing our footprint; Pippy Place up off Kenmount Road, we had offices and leased space there. What the minister thought would be, him and his staff had gone through some – again, this is creative thinking. How can we save money? They took staff from Pippy Place, made room for them here in Confederation Building, and they saved \$123,000. They saved \$123,000 in lease space by moving staff from one section of this city to the headquarters of government, here in Confederation Building – \$123,000 in savings.

In Corner Brook, they used a similar practice. They moved staff from Corner Brook, the Millbrook Mall. They had a leased office in the Millbrook Mall in Corner Brook; yet, they had the Sir Richard Squires Building in Corner Brook. The PC Members should be very familiar with this building. They would have had offices there as well. They had folks that were stationed down in Millbrook Mall. That move alone saved

another \$90,000. Another \$90,000 in savings by moving staff from a commercial leased space to an existing government building where there was space available.

Those are just two initiatives. There were also further initiatives in this particular department where funds were saved in other areas of this province. I believe Marystown comes to mind; it could have been Carbonear, and there were a few others. I just want to point those two out; they totalled over \$200,000 in savings. That's just moving staff from a leased operation to an area where we already own space.

The minister went on in his line-by-line Estimates to highlight some of the great things going on in the department and certainly some that we're very much proud of. The Rooms, I'll just mention, I have to throw out a bouquet to The Rooms. If you haven't been there, by all means you need to take the opportunity to go.

The Rooms increased their revenue last year \$185,000 in increased revenue, and this was primarily attributed to the exhibit with World War I. It was primarily attributed to the World War I exhibit. It was fantastic to hear from the folks at The Rooms Corporation during Estimates here.

One of the other departments that we had with the Resource Committee was Natural Resources. I just have two items to touch on here, two or three items. Again, if you're seeing a theme or hearing a theme here it's because I am kind of repeating myself.

The Minister of Natural Resources, Transportation and Communications line went from \$104,000 down to \$83,000. That's \$21,000 in savings. Transportation and Communications – we had supply line items in Natural Resources that went from \$169,000 down to as low as \$116,000; Purchased Services in various areas, \$70,000 down to \$65,000. These are just a few examples of where savings were found.

I think the exercise in zero-based budgeting was something that was very eye opening. Credit is due to employees in various departments who took the time to say we don't need this much money but we'll tell you how we can get there. We don't need the same amount we got every

year; we're going to tell you how we can get there. And savings right across the board, \$65.9 million just in zero-based budgeting.

Some of the items that resulted in that – I had a great chance to speak with the Minister of Finance, as a Member of the Government Services Committee, sitting in on some of the Finance items. We saved \$30,000 by eliminating phone lines that were not being used.

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

**MR. FINN:** Thirty thousand dollars in savings by cutting out phone lines in government that nobody is even using.

There was a department I heard that the proximity between I guess the staff in one area and another, they're sharing a Xerox machine. I don't know. That's pretty common sense you would like to think. We're doing less travel in various instances. A lot of the communication from the different departments and staff across the province are using technology. We're doing teleconferencing; we're utilizing this on a more frequent basis. Less travel, that's saving money.

We've reduced extra political staff. I understand the PC Members would have had extra political liaisons. We're doing better with less on this side of the House since we've been in government, everything from stationary supplies, using less consultants. We're utilizing the expertise within our departments.

Those are just a few items; I could go on and on. I'll perhaps leave it to some of my colleagues as we continue through Concurrence debate. Of course after this afternoon's sitting of the House, we'll have a discussion of Concurrence with the Government Services Committee. They'll be able to outline some of the other areas we had savings as well.

It's astonishing to think that we were given a task, a very formidable task in receiving government, in the Liberals taking government, and somehow realizing that we're spending more on our debt servicing than we are on education – completely shameful. So when we look at some of the zero-based budgeting this year, I just think that the exercise is great; it is something that happens in all businesses, and

you really look at what you actually need to operate.

It also reminds me of some of the things that the Minister of Finance said last year. The Minister of Finance last year met with agencies, boards and commissions who had previously never met with the Finance Minister. I don't know how as a Minister of the Crown in this government responsible for finance you do not spend time meeting with the agencies, boards and commissions that are spending your dollars.

Our minister met with each of these agencies, boards and commissions, as many as she could; they went line by line through every single department. I understand our Cabinet last year had gone line by line through every department before we even got to the budget and before we even got to Estimates. I think there's a great deal of work that's gone into this. We made significant strides in trying to restructure and trying to find ways to have efficiencies without impact. I think the zero-based budgeting clearly highlights that as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take my place. I'm going to turn it over to our Members opposite. I'd really be encouraged to hear some of the information that they've received as we went through the Resource Committee. I just mentioned three of the departments. The department I didn't mention was the one we discussed this morning with the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

I understand the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island was there; very respectful; great questions as well coming from the Member. No trouble acknowledging that when credit is due, unlike some of his colleagues throughout some of the other line items which I mentioned.

That department, we went through some of the funds for post-secondary, as well as Income Support services. That was just this morning. Those are just a few highlights of where we found some savings. It was certainly a pleasure to serve on the Resource Committee. Again, thank you to the clerks, the Pages, the staff, the Broadcast members, the Members of the Committee and a special thanks to the Chair to

the Committee, the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Speaker recognizes the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I am pleased to get up and speak this afternoon in the Concurrence debate with regard to the Resource sector.

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** I was very pleased to be part of the Resource sector committee. We have had some very good Estimates sessions within the topics covered by the Resource sector committee.

Resource, the word has a lot of meanings, and we say that our province has an abundance of resources. That's certainly true. But I think what we failed to remember, and sometimes don't realize strongly enough, is that our strongest resource is the people. The people are the most valuable resource we have as a province and if we're not taking care of people, then we have a problem.

During the Estimates, the Resource Committee looks at the budgets of the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources and the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. I think it's really significant that all of those departments are in the same sector.

While some have to do with the natural resources that are part of our earth – the fishery, the mining, et cetera – there are two other departments that very much deal with people. That's the Tourism, Culture, Industry and

Innovation, it's a mix and certainly, the Advanced Education, Skills and Labour deals with our people. That has to be our focus.

One of the things that disturbs me is that because of the *Budget 2017* and during the Estimates, what we've seen a lot of is restructuring of departments but restructuring that has resulted in many layoffs, Mr. Speaker, which government calls Flatter, Leaner Management, but looks a lot like a government that has lost many people with ability and experience who are no longer in the system. That's very disturbing.

What we're seeing is a real obsession with cutting budgets, using the word "saving," which my colleague has done a lot of over the last 20 minutes, watching dollars and cents. I know we have to watch dollars and cents and I know that we have to be wise in how we budget and how we spend money, but we also have to do, as a government, budgeting with the bottom line being how are we taking care of people, not the bottom line being how are we cutting, how are we saving. If the saving is on the backs of the people of the province, then we have a problem, Mr. Speaker.

The government likes to talk about its document *The Way Forward*, but as I've said before in this House, we don't see it as a way forward; we see it as a way backward. Today, we had an indicator during the Estimates of the Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. We had an indicator that was really startling. It wasn't the amount of money that was startling or the amount of money that wasn't being saved that was startling. What it was, it was an indicator of what's happening to our population and what's happening to our society here. Where it came in was two areas: one is the area of the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement, and the other was the area of the National Child Benefit Reinvestment strategy.

Both of these programs are there to assist low-income people – not people who are on income assistance, but low-income people. We have many people who are working who are low income, for example. So these two programs, a curious thing is happening. What it is, the money in both of these programs is being reduced. I asked in Estimates why this is

happening and the answer was it's because we have fewer babies.

I'm going to use the statistics from the briefing book, and I have to say we do appreciate very much the fact that we do get the briefing books from all the ministers. It is extremely helpful because then we all have the information that we need.

This piece of information from the briefing book on the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement is very telling. What it is, it shows the trend of the clients who've benefited from the program. I want everyone to listen, Mr. Speaker. In 2008, there were 387 clients; in 2009, 347 clients; in 2010, we had a bump, 376 clients. I'm thinking that might be the year that a certain premier brought in a \$1,000 a year if you had a baby.

The following year, in 2011, it went down to 305 clients; in 2012, 280 clients; in 2013, 262; in 2014, 243; in 2015, 198; and in 2016; 191. From 2008 to 2016, eight years, we've gone from 387 clients in that program to 191. When I asked why, that was the answer: Because we are having fewer babies.

We do know that. We know in the latest statistics that have come out with regard to age and youth that we're at the bottom when it comes to that. We're more and more going towards older people and fewer youth. What was said in the Estimates this morning is that the take-up of this program has decreased over the past five years, as I've just read. The interesting thing is this is not a program tied to Income Support; it's available to all low-income pregnant women.

This is a disturbing trend, Mr. Speaker. The same thing is true with regard to the National Child Benefit Reinvestment strategy. There, the money in the budget in one year has dropped from \$450,000 to \$380,000 and, again, it's for the same reason: our low birth rate; having fewer babies.

At the same time that this is happening, at the same time that we are having fewer babies being born we find that the Population Growth Strategy is no longer part of the AESL. I was shocked when I asked that. The answer to me was: No, the focus now is going on immigration,

on the immigration strategy, and looking for growth in our population through the immigration strategy. That's where focus is going.

Well, that's fine and dandy, but we really don't have a strategy. We don't have a plan. We have a strategy that says there are going to be 1,700 more immigrants a year, but no action plan showing how government can possibly make that happen. When I asked for statistics with regard to the retention rate, for example, in our province of immigrants, I wasn't able to get information on the retention rate. The minister said that's something they're working on and it's difficult to do for all kinds of reasons, but when they have a number they'll tell me. I guess they'll tell my colleague from the Official Opposition as well.

This is not good enough. So what we have with this budget, *Budget 2017* which continues 2016, is a budget without a plan, a budget not understanding what development is all about, a budget that has no growth in our economy planned, none whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. What we do not see is any coordinated plan to help people develop our many resources for the benefit of everyone in the province and that's what's disturbing. That's what the government doesn't seem to recognize.

Let's look at Fisheries and Land Resources; here, we see a huge new department with many more responsibilities and fewer people to do the work. This is one of the trends in what I've seen throughout the Estimates: larger departments and fewer people to do the work. So what are we going to see down the road when it comes to stress on the people who now have maybe twice as much work to do? Because, in some cases, that is what it sounded like to me.

We learned government has no real plan for the province's fisheries. They have no real answer to the various challenges that are going on today. We know that we have a lot of challenges. I'm not saying that government by itself can solve all the problems in our fishery. They can't; it's much more than just our province. I mean, the whole thing of sustainable fisheries and stocks replenishing themselves, stocks changing, et cetera, is massive; but we need to show, and this government hasn't shown it to me, that they are

really going to be inserting themselves in a very aggressive way with the federal government and with people who are working in the industry to come up with a sustainable plan, a sustainable development plan for the fishery.

There's no plan; there's no sign of it. We know that \$100 million is going into the federal fishery fund. Much less than what we originally thought was going to happen; we thought we were getting \$400 million at one point. But this is money that is needed to be put into the fishery right now, but there's no plan for it. That's the problem: There's no plan for it.

I appreciate the Member for Mount Pearl North speaking very well of what's happening on the South Coast with regard to aquaculture. That's true; there's something good happening but, on the other hand –

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

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** – we could be doing much more in aquaculture because we could be looking at, with industry, we could be looking at aquaculture that is better for the environment, still bringing in jobs; and, in a big picture, we really need to be looking at green industries.

There are people here in the province that has wonderful ideas about green industries. The association of businesses in the province who are involved in new industry and green industries have so many ideas. You don't see this government really sitting down and listening from them. It's the same way with the aquaculture, it happens – government puts money into it, but I still don't see a plan from government.

It's the same way with our forestry, unfortunately. With regard to our land, in general, again I agree with the Member for Mount Pearl North with regard to the agriculture land being freed up or Crown lands being freed up, but it has to be much more than freeing up Crown lands. We need the agricultural industry to get a real foothold. We need a plan for an industry that's going to help food security.

In that sense, I haven't always felt that these two things should be in the one department but they are in the one department, our fishery and our lands. That could really allow for really good planning about how we develop both our agricultural industry and our fishing industry together and the goal being food security, a goal being we can feed ourselves in this province, that if we get cut off cut off from the Mainland here on the Island for a period of time, we're not going to see, as we have seen with some bad weather that has happened over the past few years, the shelves in supermarkets going bare.

This is not something that should be happening. We should be able to make sure that we can feed ourselves. There's no plan for that, Mr. Speaker.

Then you have Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation; again, a huge reorganization and fewer people to do the work. So you have wonderful titles. For example, one sector is called diversification and strategic enterprise development. What is it all about? What is happening? What is that department really planning? What are the plans of the minister? There are pockets of money for investment but where's the plan to foster innovation and industry? What industries could we be going after?

Our tourism industry is very good, we know that. We do have people coming into this province and they are pleased with what happens. One of the problems is that so much of the labour, so much of the work in our tourism industry, number one it's seasonal in most of the cases; and number two, it's based on very low wages. That's not the fault of the people who have the businesses; it's the nature of the industry. There's no plan for dealing with that and changing that.

Tourism promotes our cultural heritage as a draw for visitors. That's great. I really would like to see us build on that as has happened in a lot of countries around the world. *Budget 2017* cuts funding to historic sites development. This doesn't make any sense at all.

If we are going to really promote our cultural heritage, then we have to promote; not only maintain, but improve as well and add value to what it is that will draw people to come here.

We see this happening all over the world; yet, here we are stagnant. I don't see an overall plan from this department. I don't see the concrete, identifiable businesses. I don't see the true specific examples of innovation. That's what I don't see.

Let's look at AESL, Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. This department is responsible, as I said earlier on, for our most valuable resource, our people. So we need a plan to address challenges which hold back our province from achieving more success, because the goal of doing what I just said, coming up with plans for food security, coming up with plans for the fishing industry, for agriculture, coming up with plans for cultural heritage is one so that people are engaged in real, positive development in our province. That people have jobs, that our economy grows, that we will see population growing and not fewer babies being born, as was said this morning in Estimates.

This is frightening. This is really frightening, Mr. Speaker, and this government does not seem to recognize how frightening it is. We do need a plan to address these long-standing issues. We still have an extremely low adult literacy rate; yet, we don't have a plan in place yet to deal with it.

I asked the minister this morning: oh, yes, things are being talked about. Yes, there's going to be a strategy coming soon. I asked: How would that connect with our adult basic education? I have to say –

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

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

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

I was encouraged by the minister's response around adult basic education. He really does want to look at what's happening there. I think it's essential that he look at it because I don't think it should ever have come out of our public education system because that's what we need to realize.

We have a public education system and we took our adult basic education out of our public education system. That's not a very good plan

either when you start basing the adult basic education in the hands of profit making colleges. That isn't working. Fewer people are doing adult basic education, and believe me, Mr. Speaker, it's not because fewer people need it. The people who needed it prior to that still need it.

I have a very, very short period of time left. I'll make a couple of comments with regard to Natural Resources, the department that manages non-renewable resources and energy resources; the department that manages mining; the department that manages what's going on in oil and gas in our offshore. A department that I think right now has a lot of problems to deal with because we have, for example, what's happened with Muskrat Falls.

I will make no secret of what my own position, the position of our party and caucus has been over the years with regard to Muskrat Falls. I remember saying in this House at the end of the debate to the Speaker of the day: I hope to God I'm wrong in what I'm saying. Unfortunately, what I see happening in our province right now is proving I wasn't wrong.

Mr. Speaker, my concern is we have to start managing this province and managing our resources for the sake of the real resource, and that's the people of this province. We have to manage this resource so young people will stay. They're not staying. They're leaving even more right now at this moment. I'm frightened by the number of young people who are saying to me they can't stay. There's no child care. They need child care. If they're going to stay here and work they need child care. They need jobs, and they can't find jobs.

So let's let this government show us that it understands what resource development is and take care of our people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak in Concurrence, to talk about the great things that are in *Budget 2017*.

Before I get into some of the things I'd like to talk about this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, of course it is Municipal Awareness Week. There are 38 communities in my district, nine of which are incorporated municipalities, but the other communities also have local service districts and are comprised of volunteers that do some really great work on behalf of the residents of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, just last week we had National Volunteer Week. The theme was Volunteering Shapes Lives. We have over 3,600 not-for-profit volunteer organizations in this province, and over 200,000 active volunteers. This being Municipal Awareness Week, I think it's another great opportunity for me to rise in this House and say thank you to the leaders in our communities who do some really great work on behalf of the residents in all 38 communities.

Mr. Speaker, this is my second year. I've been elected now for about 15 months, and my second time going through a budget debate and into Estimates, and it's been interesting. I sat in Estimates a few days ago and it's quite an interesting process where you get Members opposite who are going to pose questions line by line and ask the department, the department that I certainly support in terms of being parliamentary secretary to the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

What I found really interesting, though, Mr. Speaker, is as we were going through – and I know Members opposite get a little bit of latitude in terms of the questions that they pose, but politics come into play. What I found extremely interesting, Mr. Speaker, was not did they stick to the line items in the budget, but they decided to ask about confidential meetings that were happening between myself and constituents in my district. I found that alarming, to be honest.

To have the Member for Mount Pearl North to sit there and to start posing questions of the minister and referencing me as the parliamentary secretary and asking about meetings that I was having in my district. It was highly

inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, but it goes to prove the kind of latitude –

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** Well, I think there are some things probably behind it, but the latitude that some of the Members opposite will go to, to try to make political gain. I guess I'm pleased to some extent that the minister chose to answer the question, because they probably wouldn't have liked the response I would have given them.

Mr. Speaker, last year, when we talk about *Budget 2016*, I stood in my place here and I said it was time for an education. As I listen to Members opposite again today, I feel I'm no further ahead, that it's time for another education.

The Member for Mount Pearl North talks about we're 15 months in, and it's a little bit too late he says. Well, I thought it was time to remind him that we do have a plan. Over the last number of months, I felt that maybe they did get it. Maybe they finally understood that we have a plan. We have *The Way Forward*.

When I listen to the Members opposite, it seems their memories are extremely short. So it is an opportunity for me to stand today, Mr. Speaker, and to remind them of the reason why we created *The Way Forward*.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we have some strong, economic headwinds in this province. Members opposite talk about the changing demographic that's in this province.

Last week, after I left here in the House, I went to Clarenville and spoke to Chamber of Commerce. I talked about this year's budget. I do hear Members opposite, and one of the reasons I was pleased to go back and talk about the budget – because I think this is a good budget, Mr. Speaker. There are some great things for people, for individuals and communities. They were pleased to invite me and ask me to come and speak about what's in this budget.

At the end of the speech, Mr. Speaker, one of the members of the Chamber mentioned about the

changing demographic. Of course, I've heard it today here again in this House about the changing demographic. The reference has been what are we doing? I can tell you we have to get our fiscal house in order and so when we think about what is in *The Way Forward* and why did we write the document and create it the way that we have.

*The Way Forward*, Mr. Speaker, is built on some guiding principles. It's built on one of the principles that we will do better with less and aim to improve our performance indicators and better outcomes. Better outcomes for all populations, for our children, for our working and for our seniors. This is what we want in this province.

We will collaborate. I know there's criticism by Members opposite as well, that all we do is talk. The Member for Mount Pearl North got up this afternoon and said it's a bit late for them to start engaging industry. Well, we said in the document we would do that. We would collaborate with the public sector and with all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're following through on our commitment.

We also said, Mr. Speaker, in the document that we will challenge ourselves for service improvements, for economic growth. This means we're going to do things differently.

I know the Members opposite, they were in government for about 12-plus years and they had lots of opportunity. I've stood in this House, Mr. Speaker, and I've referenced time and time again that during my time in the public service I actually submitted what I felt were pretty good policy advice documents to the previous administration. The Member opposite can stand up today and say: We were going to do that. I've heard him say that in this House many times: We were going to that.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we are the government that has done it.

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** However, we must follow our plan.

In *The Way Forward* we've identified 50 policy actions and they are spread out over a time period during our mandate. In the first six months we said we would secure our footing. Now we're into the next phase where we're going to realize our potential, which is going to take us from six months to 18 months.

When the Member opposite stands up and says – and he talked about that we are halfway in our mandate, that we are finally going to talk about jobs and finally going to start talking to industry. Well, we already told the people of this province we were going to secure our footing and then we were going to realize our potential. So we are following on the path that we told people 15 months ago. We are doing exactly what we committed to do. So beyond 18 months, we will be building on our future because we want to change the outcomes of the people of this province.

There are four strategic areas of focus. A more efficient public service – and I know that some people, we made some changes back in the fall. We were hearing consistently from the general public and from the business community. They were saying we have a pretty rich – in terms of numbers of public servants, and on a per capita basis we need to do something about that. We identified that we would exactly do that, and we would have a more efficient public service. We identified that in *The Way Forward*, a stronger economic foundation.

The announcements like today, when we have a Cabinet committee on jobs, supports this strategic focus of building a stronger economic foundation. We will provide better services for the people of this province.

As I'm out in my district, and I know Members opposite say we're often afraid to go to our districts. I can tell you, even this past weekend – after I left here last week, I was in Clarenville. Then the next day I was in Glovertown. Then I was in Little Heart's Ease on Saturday night, in Butter Cove, Gooseberry Cove. Then on Sunday, I was pleased to join my colleague from the Burin Peninsula, and we were in Clarenville again. So I'm definitely not somebody that takes this job lightly, and I'm certainly not somebody that is afraid to go out and engage people in my community.



We have (inaudible) in this document, Mr. Speaker, through the four strategic directions and these 50 policy actions to support a stronger economic foundation. It's been referenced by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation that we will implement a four regional innovation systems pilot project that will focus on clusters of business, that are active in strategic theme areas. So it's going to be on fisheries and tourism.

I heard the Member opposite today talk about the fishery. That we don't take the fishery serious, as a government we haven't done anything for the fishery. The Member opposite knows that's not exactly true. To get up in this House, and I struggle – I guess as a new MHA, Mr. Speaker, I struggle with sometimes the language that's used here in the House. I leave here at the end of a session and I see that the information that comes out is like half-truths, it's a bit of the information and it causes the public to be stirred. It creates some of that fear mongering that goes on out into our communities. I think that's highly inappropriate.

It's one thing for us to be in government or when they were in government and to be honest, tell the truth and acknowledge great things that are happening by whoever is in power. But when you have Members who stand in this House and they tell half-truths and they try to incite concern and animosity in the public, I think that is certainly a disservice to the people of this province.

We've also talked about forestry and agrifoods, aerospace and defence, industrial technology development and ocean technology. These are building on the strengths that happen in every region of this province.

In the fall I stood here in this House as we talked about a new Procurement Act that aims to provide for an open and competitive bidding process. As somebody who has done a lot of work in community economic development, I welcome that change. There were a lot of things that I've seen over the last number of years that I thought if we could get a different government in there, if we could actually make some significant change to impact the lives of people – and having a new Procurement Act certainly was something that I was very proud to see.

Also in *The Way Forward* we've talked about a Business Innovation Agenda. Just yesterday, I was very pleased to join the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation as we launched Innovation Week 2017. We were both at Common Ground. I've been to Common Ground a couple of times. What a wonderful atmosphere at Common Ground, Mr. Speaker, when we meet a lot of our young entrepreneurs who are starting up fantastic, innovative businesses that are here in this city but also have expansions throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're into Innovation Week, so over the next five days numerous partner organizations will roll out 20 unique, innovative, innovation-related events bringing together our start-ups, our youth, business and public partners in an effort to collaborate and learn from global innovators on how to infuse innovation into their businesses and, most importantly, into their communities.

As part of this, Mr. Speaker, we have 170 companies and over 4,000 employees, generating \$1.6 billion in annual revenue. Now, that's tremendous for our economy. The Member for Mount Pearl North stood today in this House and he said that the fact that the Premier – we had a press release today – announced a Cabinet Committee on Jobs whose work will immediately flow and focus on two industry sectors: on agriculture and on aquaculture – the Member stood up and he said: What a waste of time.

Now, at a time when we have things like the Hebron Project that's coming to an end and those mega development projects that we need to now focus on securing jobs for our workforce, the time is perfect for us to have a Cabinet Committee on Jobs. The fact that we're focusing on agriculture and aquaculture, I think, is building on some of the strengths that we have in this province.

We also said that we would increase and enhance a number of social enterprises in this province. I just want to single out a social enterprise that happens in my district, in the beautiful District of Terra Nova, and that's the Farm and Market in Clarendville. The Farm and Market is a non-profit social enterprise that's working with local area farmers, craft producers

and a not-for-profit organization, the Ability Employment Corporation, and the Clarendville Inn, to establish a farmers' market where speciality crops will be grown locally; harvested and sold to local residents.

I know the Member opposite stood today and he said that we talked about promoting farmers' markets. Again, they talk about it. We are a government that does it. Back in January, I was pleased to join my colleague, MP Judy Foote, as we announced money for the Farm and Market. It's a project that I have been keenly interested for over a year. At the end of June, we will see that this social enterprise will open up. I think it will be a game changer for Clarendville and for the farmers and the Bonavista Peninsula. Everybody in the local area, it will be a destination now.

One of the reasons that I was keenly interested, Mr. Speaker, is I remember my time going to Nova Scotia and, on the weekend, I would go to farmers' markets and it was a great meeting place; a great place where people would bring their crafts and bring their local produce. People came from all over Nova Scotia to see what had been grown over the week or what had been created in terms of pies and jams. When some people approached me in the Clarendville area and said that they'd like to do that in the Clarendville area, I jumped on board. I thought this was a fantastic opportunity and, as a government, we should be trying to promote it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know it's been challenging. I've been in this House and Members opposite keep referencing about *Budget 2016*. There's no doubt *Budget 2016* was a challenging budget. It was extremely difficult for many of us. It was great for Members opposite. I guess that's the role; they can stand up and criticize. But as government Members, as MHAs, we had to go out in our communities and talk about the things that came out of *Budget 2016*.

I'm pleased to say in *Budget 2017*, one of the measures that we brought forward from last year – and I heard about it a lot in my district – was the temporary gas tax. As I was going around I'd ask people in my district, I'd say: Well, what is one thing that you'd like to see changed? They said: B'y, if you could bring down the tax on gas. That would be so helpful. So in this budget,

we're taking steps to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're doing that in couple of different phases.

Our intent is to reduce the temporary gas tax by about 75 per cent this year. On June 1, the temporary gas tax will be reduced by 8½ cents. Again, in December, the other 4 cents, adding to 12½ cents of the 16½ that was put on last year, that will come off. Now, if you factor in the HST on that, then we're up to over 14 cents that's going to come off the price of gas. That's what people said to us.

As an MHA, when I'm out in my district and people want me to advocate for things as I come to the House and I talk to various ministers, that was a critical issue that they asked me to advocate on. I'm extremely pleased to see that we've been able to do that.

Another issue that I've talked to people about and it goes back to how do we support seniors and the vulnerable individuals in our community. Last year, we came in with an Enhanced Seniors' Benefit and a low-income supplement. So I was pleased this year to see that we're investing \$120 million in the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit.

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** One hundred and twenty million dollars.

I've gone out there – I spoke at a dinner a couple of weeks ago and I referenced that. I can tell you, –

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

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** – I spoke about it. There were seniors who came up to me after and they said: Thank you, this was good. I'm glad your government is continuing to do this, to support seniors in our community. This will impact over 125,000 individuals and families in this province.

We do have a plan, Mr. Speaker, a plan to bring this province back into fiscal sustainability. It's going to take us the balance of these four years,

and we've got a seven-year plan that will help us do that. I think we're on the right track.

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

Mr. Speaker, I started my speech today by referencing that I spoke to the Chamber of Commerce. This was a group that would have some very challenging questions, one would expect. At the end of my 45-minute speech, at the end of it there were three or four questions, but there was no criticism of this budget. I think that's why we're challenged with the Members opposite because even what they pick on, when they stand in their place, it's not challenging this budget, they talk –

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** – about the things that happened in 2016 –

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** – not about what's in 2017.

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

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

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

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, given the hour of the day I move, seconded by the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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