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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Wednesday

17 May 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Orders of the Day

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Natural Products Marketing Act, Bill 10, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 10, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Natural Products Marketing Act. (Bill 10)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 10 has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 10 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Natural Resources, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Proceedings Against The Crown Act, Bill 11, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 11, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Proceedings Against The Crown Act. (Bill 11)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 11 has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 11 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 8.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 8, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2, be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 8 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2.” (Bill 8)

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

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

I am standing here today in my role as Government House Leader to discuss An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. Bills of this nature are entered into this House from time to time. I believe this may be the second one of this nature that we’ve done this session, we may have one more coming. We’ll likely have them in the fall as well, given the fact that we have been changing the various provisions of this act based on recommendations provided by the independent committee.

Section 7 of this particular act is being amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following: “(3) Where an officer referred to in paragraphs (1)(a) to (d) is unable to act by reason of absence, incapacity or other cause or the office is vacant, the Speaker, upon the recommendation of the commission, may appoint a person to act as that officer in a temporary capacity for a period that shall not exceed 12 consecutive months.”

Basically, this bill will provide for the temporary appointment of four Officers of the House. It was approved by our Management Commission on March 15 before being sent to Cabinet for final approval and the Office of the Legislative Counsel for final drafting.

Section 7(2) of this act came into force in 2007 and requires that the Clerk, the Clerk Assistant, the Law Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms of our House be selected through a process that involves consultation between the Speaker, clerk of the Executive Council and with the Public Service Commission. Basically, it goes through this consultation process to determine an appropriate recruitment process.

Following the selection process, which is under section 7(1), the House passes a resolution nominating the successful candidate. Once a person is nominated by the House, the LGIC makes the actual appointment. It’s a process that gets done here; it’s done publicly, involving debate.

It’s been followed for all the Officers who’ve been appointed since 2007, which include our Law Clerk, our Sergeant-at-Arms and our Clerk; however, there is a gap in this legislation, as it does not make any allowance for a situation where one of these offices becomes vacant for a period of time and more importantly where that occurs between sittings of the House.

It’s fine if the House is sitting, you can immediately take action, but if something were to happen where there’s a vacancy, say during the month of July when the House is not sitting. Traditionally, the House will not sit again until October, November. That’s a long period of time where this is an unintended gap we’re not able to remedy.

What we’re doing here today is we’re amending it to take care and to fill that gap. For instance, if due to serious illness or resignation, retirement or any other cause, one of the offices is vacant, there is a need to appoint someone into the position in a temporary acting capacity.

Now, this already exists in other legislation. For instance, under the *Citizens’ Representative Act*, the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* and the *Auditor General Act*, they allow for the appointment of their statutory officers in an acting capacity when there’s a temporary absence. We don’t have that here.

It should be noted that under section 10 of our *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, in the absence of the Clerk, the Clerk’s accounting functions are carried out by the chief financial officer and the procedural parliamentary functions are carried about by the clerk assistant. Again, it’s intended to be short-term backdrop only.

The proper parliamentary functioning and daily administration of this House need the ability to appoint a clerk in a temporary acting capacity. The clerk assistant, Law Clerk and Sergeant-at-

Arms have no such legislated backup and there are no other similar positions within the House to fulfill the services that would carry out their duties.

Under this proposed Bill 8, which I'm assuming is going to get unanimous consent here in this House, the acting appointment would be made by the Speaker following a recommendation of the Management Commission, which for people out there, is made up of all parties of the House and this acting appointment could not last for more than a year. Therefore, within that year, a suitable candidate must be found, following proper competition. The name placed before the House in a resolution that would be debated and voted on by all the Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's any need to belabour this particular piece of legislation much more. This was something that the parties were aware of. Certainly, we've discussed it, various Members of this House in our roles in the Management Commission.

I'm going to take my seat at this point and allow the other Members an opportunity to speak to this. I look forward to the Committee stage to answer any questions; although, if there are questions, maybe we're better off asking the Speaker those questions.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise this morning to speak to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. I, as well from this side, sit on the Management Commission and from time to time there are various pieces of legislation that would come forward to deal with particular changes or proposed changes to come here to the Legislature.

As the minister has outlined, the intent of the legislation, I will just read briefly the Explanatory Note: To "amend the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* to allow for House officers to be appointed temporarily by the Speaker, upon the recommendation of the House of Assembly

Management Commission, in certain circumstances."

The bill would lay out what they would be, the reason for it and specifically states: Where an officer referred to "is unable to act by reason of absence, incapacity or other cause or the office is vacant, the Speaker, upon the recommendation of the commission, may appoint a person to act as that officer in a temporary capacity for a period that shall not exceed 12 consecutive months."

This is a piece of legislation, an amendment that looks at, if you will, the operational requirements in regard to the House and various House Officer positions of a temporary nature when – as Bill 8 references – there's a particular circumstance that occurs and vacancies become apparent for various reasons. It's an ability then to deal with that.

This allows the House Officers to be appointed temporarily by the Speaker. That would be upon recommendation of the House Management Commission which has membership that is reflected by the government side of the House, the Official Opposition and the Third Party. Through that, the recommendation would be made to the Speaker.

The current legislation, why we're doing this and why it's being presented I assume, is the fact that there is no provision right now for anybody to be appointed to these roles temporarily. As the bill references, this could be done for any number of reasons, normal course of events in regard to people's careers and whatever may happen along the way. It could be in a case of retirements or in a case of extended sick leave. Obviously, these would be necessary positions in regard to the functions of the House and therefore would need to be required.

I think the minister also referenced the fact that a temporary appointment may be needed as the public service undertakes the official recruitment and screening process to find a candidate to recommend to the House to fill the position permanently. So this would be an interim step to be taken, legislative authority given to the Management Commission at a time when you needed to fill a vacancy on a temporary basis.

The Management Commission would make a recommendation to the Speaker who chairs that Committee, and on a temporary basis that position would be filled. Then the process would start, it's my understanding, on the merit-based principle per the Public Service Commission and that process would be undertaken, a screening process to find that candidate that would be recommended to the House on a permanent basis.

When we go back and look at the review that was done by Judge Green in regard to the recommendation from his report, it was my understanding that there wasn't a provision at the time included to allow someone to serve in an acting role. Again, Bill 8 looks to address that interim issue and how there's a legislative authority now being suggested in this bill that it would be allowed to do that.

Without this provision or this amendment in Bill 8 there's no ability there for this Legislature or the Management Commission or the Speaker to put someone in that acting role. It could be a period of time to be extended for that position or a position to be vacant, which could certainly affect the functioning of this institution; therefore, this allows action to be taken.

At various times, depending on what that role is, as I said, it could negatively affect the operation of the House. That's what this Bill does, to amend that and to make sure there's the ability for the Management Commission and then make a recommendation to the Speaker that the position would be filled on an interim basis. Then we would proceed to the normal course of events in regard to the merit principle or what is usually the normal course of events. We go through the merit principle and they would recommend, through the merit-based principle, the possible candidates that could be recommended to the House for approval.

This is needed. We certainly recognize that. Bill 8; we certainly support this bill to make the amendment and to give the authority of the House to do what it's intended to do, to allow to have the authority to make a recommendation to fill a temporary position that may be due to any number of circumstances, but allow the function of the House to continue without any negative consequences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm happy to stand this morning and speak to Bill 8 – which has been explained very clearly by the Government House Leader – An Act to amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act No. 2.

Of course, I'll be supporting this bill which is an important piece to put in. Right now, at the moment, with regard to this section in the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, which I will call the act from here on in, the section in the act which is called section 7 has two parts to it. One part names the Officers who are being talked about. Both my colleagues have named those officers: the Clerk of the House, the Clerk Assistant, the Law Clerk and the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Section 7(2) of the act currently, and will remain, says: "Before a nomination is made under subsection (1)," – that's where they're all named out – "the speaker shall consult with the commission, the Clerk of the Executive Council and the chairperson of the Public Service Commission to determine an appropriate process for recruitment of suitable candidates for appointment."

Today's bill is putting in a new section – not omitting anything that there is now – that is dealing with the fact that one of these Officers could be absent temporarily because of incapacity or other causes, or the office could become vacant. Section 3 is dealing with what to do in a temporary situation because it takes time to fill a position, it takes months and months to fill a position and you can't have the position empty.

Once the temporary period is over – and that's a 12-consecutive-month period – and a permanent nomination is being made, then the section that's already in our act kicks in and the Speaker shall consult with the Commission, consult with the clerk of the Executive Council, and the chairperson of the Public Service Commission to

determine an appropriate process for recruitment of suitable candidates for appointment. That's where it stands when it comes to the four Officers who are being talked about. Now we have something to cover both temporary and full-time nominations and appointments.

The good thing about saying the Speaker would now take recommendations from the Commission is that the work of the Commission is open and transparent. So it lends to continue the openness and transparency by saying it's the Commission that would make the recommendations to the Speaker. The bill does not give any details as to what that process would be, but as that process is worked out, again, because of the nature of the Commission, we think this will be an open and transparent process. I think that's what's important here.

There isn't a lot more to say. It's important that we do this and it's important that we do it in an open and transparent way. I think it's good for the public to see that here in the House of Assembly things are being taken care of in an orderly fashion, that there will be an objective procedure for the appointments. I think right now people are looking for that kind of thing with regard to appointments within anything that has to do with the House of Assembly.

I'm happy to support this bill, but I do urge the Speaker to make sure that a process for doing this gets worked out quickly so that people will see what exactly will be the process for the recommendations from the Commission. Of course, that isn't spelled out in the bill, the actual process for the recommendations, how that would happen. I think we need to have a discussion on that. That kind of thing is like a regulation. I guess it doesn't go into a bill per se, but it would assume if there are going to be recommendations made, then there has to be a process put together covering that.

Having said that, I thank the minister for bringing this forward and I look forward to voting for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to make a few comments in relation to this bill. I think it's very appropriate we have this kind of legislation come forward to look at the possible absence of some of the staff here in the House.

I just want to make a few comments. It won't take long. I think we have to also look at succession planning here in the House and for the Table Officers in the House. Succession planning is a big issue within the private sector and also in government in general, about how we are going to move forward and the knowledge that senior people in our organization have is not lost when they leave.

I think as a House of Assembly we have to look at succession planning and what we can do to sort of ease that transition as people leave employment here with this organization and move on, to make sure that we have sort of a steady staffing and steady knowledge in terms of the way we operate our House. Because these Officers here in the House provide a great service to the House and I think we need to look at the larger issue as well of succession planning and how we're going to do it as a House of Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

If the hon. Government House Leader speaks now he shall close debate.

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

I appreciate the commentary from my colleagues across the way, as well as my colleague here on this side who certainly has a significant amount of experience as it relates to parliamentary procedure. I'm not going to belabour this except by saying I look forward to any questions or comments that come through the Committee stage.

I'll take my time to sit now and I look forward to having Committee on this and moving this bill forward.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 8 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 8)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 8 has now been read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 8)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 8.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 8.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

Before we move on with the proceedings of Bill 8, I'm going to go back to yesterday. I would like to make two rulings with respect to issues raised in this House during Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, May 16.

The first is a point of order raised by the Government House Leader with respect to a statement made by the Member for Mount Pearl North. Hansard has been reviewed and the exact words stated by the Member were: "... that kind of behaviour from a minister is unethical, it's dishonest and it's deceptive."

While at first glance, the comment is phrased so as not to appear as a direct accusation against a specific Member, in the context of the questions and answers being asked and responded to, it is obvious that this statement was in fact an accusation directed at the Minister of Finance.

O'Brien and Bosc states at page 618, "... the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden" At page 619, "In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking"

I find that the utterances of the Member for Mount Pearl North were offensive and not conducive to the proper conduct of debate in this House. This is a violation of Standing Order 49, and I therefore ask the Member to withdraw his comments.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Madam Chair, I've reviewed the recording from yesterday and I would encourage

others inside and outside this House to do the same.

I cannot apologize for being asked –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Is the Member going to withdraw or not withdraw?

MR. KENT: Madam Chair, I won't apologize for being straightforward with the people of the province.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Whether in the House of Assembly or outside the House of Assembly, we have to be honest.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I will continue with the second issue. The second issue that was also raised –

AN HON. MEMBER: No, no, if he doesn't withdraw, he (inaudible) out of the House.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair is speaking and I ask all Members for respect in this House.

The issue raised was also raised later the same day by the Government House Leader who was raising a further point of order under Standing Order 49. *Hansard* has been reviewed and showed that the Government House Leader stated that the Member for Mount Pearl North had tweeted from the House that: *Hansard* will have a record of the questions asked and the misleading answers provided. The tweet has been captured and was indeed sent by the Member for Mount Pearl North.

Again, in the context of the questions and answers occurring in the House at that time, I find that the comment was directed at the Minister of Finance. The issue is more complicated than the mere use of an unparliamentary word such as "misleading." Had the Member stated this openly in the House,

he would have been immediately required to withdraw it; however, he chose to tweet his comment presumably from the floor of the House of Assembly and certainly while the House was sitting.

Similar issues have occurred before. On May 9, 2012, the Speaker of this House, while addressing a tweet made while the House was not sitting stated: Had this accusation of lying been sent while the House was sitting so as to escape being sanctioned for unparliamentary language, I believe it would have been a prima facie breach of privilege.

While I do not believe this is a matter of privilege but a point of order under Standing Order 49, I endorse the sentiment that this is a breach and an attempt to do by the back door what could not be done by the front door.

This is not the first time that this Member has been reprimanded for his tweets. While social media is a wonderful tool, I admonish the Member and I ask him to refrain from tweeting comments that could not be said on the floor of this House.

I will one final time ask the Member: Will he withdraw his comments?

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Madam Chair, thank you for your ruling. Unfortunately, I cannot apologize for what I said yesterday.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the hon. Member to leave the House for the remainder of today.

We are now considering Bill 8, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act No. 2." (Bill 8)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I wasn't quick enough to jump up when we were doing second reading. So just for the record, obviously, what's being proposed in this bill does make sense if one of our Officers should be off with sickness or for any other reason that we would be able to appoint someone to replace them.

So just for the record, I support the bill.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I don't know if the Government House Leader has an answer to this because he did make reference to maybe questions have to go to the Speaker. I would like to know if there has been any thought given to what the process would be for recommendations being made by the Commission to the Speaker with regard to the temporary positions.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a good question by the Member. I probably can't say because, as it stands, I guess I'm bringing this in in my role as Government House Leader, but really this is a Management Commission and House issue.

What I would suggest is that maybe at one of our next Management Commission meetings, I think it's a good topic for us to discuss because, right now, I'd only be giving my opinion, which has no more weight than any of our opinions on this. I'm not trying to duck, but it really is a House thing. It's a good question that we need to address because the recommendation carries a lot of weight.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I really appreciate the answer from the Government House Leader. We're all – I mean, he and I are both on the Management Commission, but I'm wondering since, as Government House Leader, he was the one who brought the bill forward, will he then be the one to speak with the Speaker, who is the Chair of the Management Commission, for us to have it on the agenda.

One of us has – somebody has to take responsibility. I agree with what he's saying, but one of us has to take responsibility. So I'm just asking: Will he take responsibility for making sure we get this on the agenda of the House Management Commission?

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Certainly, I have no issue with that, making sure that's a topic we discuss. I doubt it's going to be at the meeting tonight but, definitely, it's something we should discuss soon.

Maybe what I can do is, hopefully the House staff – I have to give them credit for even the notes I get – can remind me to make sure that it goes on as well, because if I don't bring it, it's not intentional. It's my memory and that's my fault.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers.

Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act No. 2.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 8 carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy House Leader.

MS. COADY: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 8, An Act To Amend The House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act No. 2.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 8 carried without amendment.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. Deputy Chair of Committees.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 8 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 8 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Bill 9, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

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

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

I'm pleased to stand in the House this morning to speak to Bill 9.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. C. BENNETT: Oh, sorry, my apologies. It was a long day yesterday.

MR. SPEAKER: Move and second.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 9, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act, be now read a second time.

Thank you for your patience.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 9 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 9).

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

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

As I was saying, I'm pleased to stand in my place today to speak to Bill 9, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act. This particular piece of legislation relates to our government's commitment, as we stated in last year's budget, to reduce the temporary gas tax that we had no choice but to implement as part of last year's budget decisions. It's always a privilege and an honour to speak in this House, particularly when we are able to say, do, and reflect the information that we gave the people of the province by committing to reducing that gas tax, which is what this piece of legislation will do, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past two years, in the wake of a very serious fiscal situation facing Newfoundland and Labrador, our government has taken a smart, focused approach to financial management. The magnitude of the fiscal challenge we inherited

cannot be understated. The easy solution would have been to ignore the situation and pass the problem on to future generations. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we choose to make some very difficult and responsible decisions for the long-term benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our government made hard choices and we asked the taxpayers to support those choices so we could close the gap between our revenue and our costs. This included implementing a gas tax increase. As we stated as part of *Budget 2017*, we are now on the path to gaining control of our finances and striking the balance of better spending controls and valuable investments. In fact, we are currently ahead of our forecasting in terms of deficit projections and we are on track to return to surplus in 2022-'23.

As part of this path to better financial management, we want to make clear that our government is responsive to the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We committed to the people of the province that we would review the gas tax on a regular basis and as soon as we had the ability to reduce this temporary tax, we would do so.

We have seen increased revenues since the temporary gas tax was implemented, and as part of *Budget 2017*, we felt it was prudent to reduce the tax. We are listening and we are following through on the promise we made to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

In 2017, residents of this province will benefit from two reductions to the temporary gas tax. Beginning on June 1, we will reduce it by 8½ cents per litre and on December 1, 2017, we will reduce it by a further four cents per litre for a total reduction of 12½ cents, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: We will review the remaining four cents as part of the 2017 fall fiscal economic update.

Mr. Speaker, this reduction represents a 75 per cent reduction in the temporary gas tax by the end of the calendar year. This will provide residents with more disposable income, ultimately providing for a positive impact on the provincial economy.

As well, Mr. Speaker, consistent with the phase-out of the temporary gas tax on June 1, 2017, the rebate for the Labrador border zones, which was set at 10 cents per litre last year, will be reduced to 1.5 cents per litre until December 1, at which time it will be discontinued. The affected areas are Labrador West, Lab City and Wabush, and Southern Labrador with the Quebec border to and including the community of Red Bay.

As implemented in 2016, the temporary gas tax on the North Coast of Labrador will continue to be reduced to the point that the tax per litre does not exceed \$1.55 or the temporary gas tax is fully reduced. This will be evaluated over the coming months. There will be no change to the tax rate on diesel fuel, Mr. Speaker.

As a government, we have established a vision for sustainability and growth in this province, but in order to achieve that we must have a solid foundation in which to work from. That solid foundation includes strong fiscal management. As part of this, we know that tax increases must be balanced with tax competitiveness. That is why we will initiate a comprehensive, independent tax review of our tax system this fiscal year which will be completed within our current mandate.

As outlined in *The Way Forward*, this government must be redefined to address economic, social and fiscal challenges, and strong fiscal management is a top priority, Mr. Speaker. With *The Way Forward* providing us with the guiding principles of developing a smarter approach to governance and management, we are methodically and responsibly redesigning government to address our economic, social and fiscal challenges. Our focus will always be on positioning our province to be in an ideal place to raise a family with a competitive work and business environment.

Mr. Speaker, in order to return to fiscal balance we must think and act in a way that is long term. We can no longer afford to be bound by short-term reactionary thinking. That is why we reviewed the temporary gas tax we had in place and we found we were in a position to reduce this tax and provide some financial relief to the people of this province. It is also why our government is committed to beginning a tax review this fiscal year.

As we continue down the road of strong fiscal management, our government will make decisions, such as reducing the temporary gas tax that are in the best interests of good governance, responsible finances and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Bill 9. As the minister said, this bill is related to An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, and specifically related to the gas tax which was part and parcel of last year's budget and part of 300 fees and taxes that came about as part of this government's direction to raise revenue.

This amendment is revisiting that, one of those 300 taxes and fees. Revisiting it not to remove the tax, but certainly revision of the current tax, what was implemented last year in the budget and to reduce the gasoline tax as announced in, as I said, *Budget 2017*.

There is also reference to subsequent necessary adjustments to the legislation to continue the gasoline tax –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, the bill will amend the *Revenue Administration Act* to reduce the gasoline tax as announced in *Budget 2017* along with the 299 other taxes and fees. This is really the only one that's been modified from the budget prior to this year. It will also make subsequent necessary adjustments to the legislation to continue the gasoline tax rate within the Labrador border zones.

From the technical side of it, section 1, as you go through, allows for the reduction in what was 16.5 cents in *Budget 2017*. A reduction of 8.5 cents per litre will occur on June 1, 2017. This is in the portion of the bill 1(e)(ii). The gas tax will be set at “\$0.245 per litre for the period beginning June 1, 2017 and ending November 30, 2017”

A further reduction of four cents per litre on December 1, 2017, for a reduction of 12.5 from 16.5 I think last year, was implemented in the budget. This provision is shown in section 1(e)(iii) where you get “\$0.205 per litre for the period beginning December 1, 2017.”

Section 2 of the bill makes changes to the Labrador border zones gasoline tax. These changes (a) and (b) reduce the border zone rebate so that the effective gasoline tax which is paid in the border zones will remain at 23 cents per litre.

Currently, the Labrador border zones have a discount of 10 cents per litre applied to their gas tax. This means that the gas tax at the border zone is exactly at 23 cents. This is done, I understand, to prevent residents from crossing the border into Quebec to purchase their gas. That zone, the Labrador border zone, consists of Labrador City, Wabush and South Coast.

On June 1, 2017, the gas tax will be reduced through this bill, Bill 9, by 8.5 cents. The border zone discount will also be reduced by 8.5 cents to a discount of 1.5 cents per litre. This keeps the gas tax rate for the border zones at 23 cents per litre.

From my understanding, the Labrador border zone discount will be eliminated on December 1, 2017. The entire province then will pay a gas tax of 20.5 cents per litre.

The question of the gas tax and the philosophy behind it, and certainly the public policy in regards to raising revenue through this method, there's been significant discussion in our province since the budget, since this was brought in, in last year's budget, 2016. We've seen the effect of it, and the ripple effect, in regard to consumer's consumption tax.

When you look at gas and what is required for the fuel in terms of operations from families, take their kids to school in the morning; from business in terms of able to operate, whether it's a small business, whether it's a large corporation; emergency services. The full spectrum of what a gas tax and the effect it has on society and economy is enormous.

We've seen and heard it, I know last year on the gas tax bill itself, when it came to the House, we had a filibuster on that gas tax bill. It went on for considerable days. I know thinking back to that, the gas tax at that particular time and the concerns people expressed in regard to what it believed it would do. The effect it would have, the negative effect. We were here for days going through, reading out letter, reading out emails on the gas tax that we're proposed to change here today, not remove, but reduce it; literally hundreds.

I know myself, it comes to mind on this particular public policy in regard to gas tax, I read out middle-class families talking about the fact of how they're going to be able to function and pay that consumption cost on fuel. While this bill here reduces it, the whole philosophy behind it and the intent and how it's being used and the effects it's having on society and on the economy still stands today. There's no change from 2016 in regard to when it was brought in, to the negative effect it's having and what that ripple effect is. When you put that in with the larger view of the 300 taxes and fees and this gas tax was one of them, it is significant.

I think we heard that last year in 2016 when it was brought in. We heard it continuously throughout the year. We continue to hear it today in regard to what those concerns were.

We talked about last year, too, and again this year, there was a financial situation and you needed to deal with it. Yes, indeed. I don't think anybody would dispute that, but the reality is there were choices you could make and the policy decisions you make and the amendments to legislation you make, whether it's gas tax or whether it's HST or whether it's fee, there's a balance and a direction you take on where that threshold is to where you can tax and fee an economy to the point where it becomes negative and you don't even reach your targets.

It's interesting enough – and I'll speak to that in a little while – when you look at the targets that were last year or the target that was identified for revenue from this tax, the target wasn't met. So let's think about that for a second. You're setting a gas tax. You increase it 16.5 cents, which is negative to the economy, and we've seen that over the past year. We continue to see it, but your own target you set for this tax that was way out of proportion then anybody would think was even realistic, you didn't even meet your target.

So you have to ask your economic plan and your vision for raising revenues: How can that even be on target? You raised the tax; didn't meet your target. So this year – and I'll speak to that in a few minutes – you're going to set another target to try and balance your books on the ledger. You don't even know if you're going to meet the target because you didn't do it the first time.

Not only didn't you reach the target when, again, we keep talking about industries and how this gas tax affects them. In my own district, I speak to people all the time, seniors and middle-class families in regard to this gas tax, a bill like this. I've got processing facilities in the fishery. I've got fabrication facilities in my district, as I said, all kinds of small business. So every cost for every time they filled up a truck or a vehicle, where do you think that – they have a margin that they need to make, that's why they're in business. Once you get into that margin, where's the cost going?

Well, the cost is going on to the consumer. The cost is going on the person who walks in and whatever they buy or whatever service they want, that's passed on to the consumer. So that's passed on to everyday Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, when they go in and whatever they buy, whether it's a service or a product, they're paying that and they're paying this gas tax that we're talking about here today.

We've seen it over the past number of months. We've heard from people in regard to what it means to them and what affect this ill-conceived tax is doing. As I said, based on unknown projections, they didn't even reach the projection that they thought they would in regard to bringing this in.

This actual gas tax wasn't done in isolation. It's just not one tax or two taxes and say: This is part of a bigger plan. Through this gas tax, what we're charging here, we have an economic development plan and we have targets and those targets are going to be hit. Based on hitting those targets in employment, we're going to raise so much personal income tax, we're going to raise so much corporate income tax, so much business tax, whether it's payroll and that will offset and that will show some of the revenue. So that's driving the economy with a taxation system that's inviting, that allows investment, yet raises revenue.

So as I spoke earlier in regard to this bill and this tax and fee structure that was brought in, it's not balanced and that's the problem. When you negatively affect the economy, you're not hitting your targets. You're not doing what you need to do in regard to setting out that fiscal plan to make sure you can meet the targets and what you need to do.

If we look at *Budget 2016*, the Estimates that the revenues projected for '16-'17 – excuse me, Mr. Speaker. In *Budget 2016*, if you look at the Estimates, the revenues for the '16-'17 gasoline tax would be \$328 million. That's \$328 million, as I said, taken out of Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' pockets, young families, middle-class families, seniors. That's gas tax that was applied and would come out of all those businesses, various types, various industries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're a natural resource commodity market very much in Newfoundland and Labrador; we produce. To extract those commodities, to transport them, to get them for processing, to get them to marketing all involve fuel and fuel costs and it's related to this bill.

That's all put on that cost of operations. That's less people you may be able to hire, that's less period of time you may need to operate. Based on all that, it reverts to this decision made in 2016 to implement the gas tax. Now we see some other revision here today, but that's all directed to negatively affecting the economy.

As I said, in 2016 the Estimate for the gasoline tax was \$328 million; the revised number for '16-'17 was \$305 million, so it didn't reach the

target. My understanding for this particular year the target is somewhere in the range, I think, of \$273 million, \$274 million. Looking at, as I said when I started, the 300 fees and tax increases in 2016, in 2017 this is the only one that's been modified or adjusted in any way.

Even with this one, in terms of revenue projections last year was off, coupled with the negative effect it had on the economy – and I'm sure it negatively affected other things like sales tax and other things like that because it has an effect. There's a ripple effect throughout the whole economy and those revenue streams that any government has the ability to extract them or get revenue from. It continually negatively affects those and then this year there's another projection for almost \$274 million.

What faith do we have that this projection and all the others are going to be where they need to be based on what we've seen in the prior year? This economic indicator doesn't even measure what the effect is on the others. Now I don't have *The Economy*, the document that came with this year's budget, but if you were to look at that and go in and look at the economic indicators, when we look at this gas tax that was brought in last year, it shows what the performance of many of those economic indicators were last year. For the most part, they were heading in the wrong direction. That's related, to some degree – a great degree in some cases – to this gas tax and what we're talking about here today.

If you look in that document, *The Economy*, from the budget, you look at the current administration projecting what their economic indicators and what the achievements are going to be this fiscal year and they're not even the same. Most of them are worse than they were last year.

So, again, if you factor in this tax and the effect it's having and the ripple effect throughout, no doubt it's related. Whether you're building homes, you're involved in extracting natural resources, whether you have a small business, whether you have a fabrication facility, as I said before, it's all interrelated. It's all a fee of operations.

If you exceed that threshold and what someone can actually – small business or a family, what they can actually sustain and give back or give more of net dollars out of their revenue, there's only so much they can do. So at some point they have to stop consuming, or stop those activities, or stop buying, or stop doing those things that drive the economy.

This right here is one of the key indicators when people look at: Here's the income I have, here's what I need to do to run my family. I have kids in school, kids in recreational activities. We may take a vacation a year; we may go to the parks. We may do a whole bunch of things, but there's a lot of reflection that's gone on in the past year in this province, in 17 months, since some of these taxes and fees were brought in. People are making tough decision, hard decisions related to employment.

One of the scariest things for anybody here who's elected and looks at the future of our province is when you get young families saying: Is this too much? Can I sustain our family here? Can we still stay here? Can we still pay the fees? The gas tax is one of these that keeps coming up and is causing huge pain and hurt for many families. That becomes where they make the decision of: Can we stay here? Can we continue to build a livelihood here under this tax and fee structure that's been put forth on them? This being what we're talking about today, one of the ones that is concerning to them.

Back in 2016 when the budget was announced, the hon. minister at the time talked about the fact that they needed to do revenue generation and this was one component of it, this gas tax. Through that, there was going to be a matching exercise that looked at reduction in cost. This gas tax was part of that revenue stream. Months after, it was supposed to be a process for looking at expenditure reductions and there was going to be a second budget. Would the second budget look at these taxes and fees? We weren't sure. We didn't know but we were all looking forward to it.

Lo and behold, we never had a second budget. We never had an update. We still don't know why. Then we flowed into the fall where there was supposed to be more updates. Then we flowed into the next budget of 2017 and we see

here today that out of the 300, we're going to get a small reduction here in this particular part of it and the results of that and what's it been over the past number of years.

It's concerning, this bill. We're certainly pleased to see some of the reductions. But I have to say, based on what we've seen and based on the predictions in terms of what the activity was going to be in the economy and what the returns on this was going to be to the Treasury, they haven't been met. That's concerning because, then, that questions further projections and where we're going. Is there validity in those? Can we expect those to be achieved?

It's not only the gas tax component in terms of the revenue. That factors into the whole envelope of the budget and the whole envelope of revenues. Obviously, there's a whole spectrum of areas where any government raises revenue. So if one component of it is not hitting a target or any component, then where is that extra money coming from at the end of the year? You've laid out what you believe your expenditures are going to be and you've laid out what your revenues are going to be, and one of those are tied to this bill we're talking about today.

If they're not hitting those revenue targets, and more concerning, if you have a piece of taxation or a bill that we believe – and I think last year's economic indicator certainly demonstrates it in some way – slowed the economy. So if it's slowing the economy and you have a tax that's supposed to deliver revenue based on a buoyant economy and you don't have that buoyant economy, you're not going to hit your targets.

So the actual taxation scheme or plan is a disincentive to the economy and you're not even reaching your other targets. As we look forward to – we hope, certainly, the targets are attainable, but what we've seen to date on this, it's questionable on whether indeed they will be attainable and we'll hit those revenue targets that allow us to deliver the services that have been outlined in the budget and meet the needs and services of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciated my time in terms of speaking to this bill. I'm sure we'll have lots of questions when we get into the

Committee. I'm certainly eager to hear what Members on both sides of the House have to say in regards to this particular bill.

The amendment to it we're pleased with. We think there's more that could be done. We think a more expansive and innovative approach to terms of taxation, fees and reduction in costs on a broad sense, coupled with key indicators of how they would drive economic activity, tied to job growth and subsequently to things like other revenues, whether it's personal or corporate income tax, business tax, which is a more fulsome approach in terms of the economy and management. Rather than saying we're going to inundate Newfoundland and Labrador with a whole scheme of 300 taxes and fees, and at some point this year reduce it a bit, but still really drown the economy and the stability of the economy by this approach.

As I said, I look forward to debate as we move into the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to stand here to speak to Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. What this act does is reduces the gas tax that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador by 8.5 cents on June 1 and another 4 cents on December 1. The further 4 cents will be reviewed in the fall fiscal update.

I'm just going to read a couple of paragraphs that I presented to the Bonavista-Trinity Regional Chamber of Commerce during the Easter break, during their AGM

As a government, we faced many challenges in 2016, but while others would run from them and pass the buck to future generations, we faced them head on, as unpopular as they may have been. In October, our Liberal Government released *The Way Forward* document, which is our action plan to achieve a strong, diversified province with a high standard of living. This is a three-phase approach where we just finished

Phase 1: Securing our Footing. We all know that government has a spending problem and that we're addicted to oil, that has to change.

Budget 2016 was tough but necessary to shore up our fiscal footing; however, we realized that everything couldn't be put on the backs of the Newfoundland and Labrador taxpayer. That is why over the past six months we have taken measures to reduce spending and support economic growth. We're going to make every dollar count and account for every dollar.

I don't think there's a better place in our province than the District of Bonavista to support diversification and drive economic growth. *Budget 2017* will help do this and one thing we recognize is that we need to give people more spending power. This is why we are reducing our gas tax by 8.5 cents on June 1 and another 4 cents on December 1 with the other 4 cents being evaluated in the fall fiscal update.

As well, we will once again be investing \$120 million in the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit and Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement which supports low-income seniors, families and individuals. These two initiatives will have a positive impact on your businesses.

That's just an excerpt of the speech that I gave the Chamber of Commerce back during the Easter week. They certainly appreciated the comments I made. I talked about agriculture, forestry, fishery, tourism and other initiatives that were important to them.

When I talked to my constituents last year, and I held two public meetings after *Budget 2016*. I didn't hide away. I faced the people head on. I firmly believe you have to do that. You have to listen to people. One of the biggest concerns that I got through those town hall meetings and throughout the year – and said: If there's anything that we could change right away, what would it be? The first thing that came out of everyone's mouth was the gas tax. I made a commitment to those people to bring that information back to caucus and I did time and time again, such as other Members of the government caucus.

Budget 2016 wasn't the budget that we liked but it was a budget that we needed. I thank the

people in the District of Bonavista and the people in Newfoundland and Labrador for standing with us and taking the brunt of this gas tax. It helped us get our financial footing in order and now that we're able to reduce that tax, we're going to do in June, December and, hopefully, with the remaining 4 cents sometime in the near future.

What also got announced in *Budget 2017* is a full tax review for taxation here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's long overdue, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the results of that because it could lead to some very sweeping changes to our taxation here and certainly that would be a benefit to, not only people in the province, but businesses, anyone who wants to invest here as well.

That's pretty much the gist of what I wanted to talk about. I know others will echo my sentiment, but I'm glad that we're here debating Bill 9 where we'll see the reduction of our gas tax and I fully support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 9, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. Of course, as has been pointed out by the minister and speakers previous to me, this has to do very specifically with a reduction in gasoline tax, but the reduction is in a very particular gasoline tax which was leveled by this government in the 2016 budget, the austerity budget they put in place. This tax, the tax they brought in 2016, which was a 16.5 cent temporary tax, was quite a regressive move along with so much else that was in the 2016 budget.

It's very interesting; I know it was called temporary and it's good to know this budget is reducing the tax that was put in place, but it's interesting to note that they had great plans for

the new tax they brought in and had estimated \$328 million as the revenue from that tax, as has already been pointed out by my colleague from the Official Opposition. The revision of their estimate was actually \$23 million lower.

We do know there actually was a reduction in consumption by the motoring public – there was actually a reduction. I think the minister already noted that herself a few months after the tax was imposed. So when it comes to that tax, Madam Speaker, the proof is in the eating for sure because the fact that consumption went down showed that people in this province were basically negatively affected by that tax. They obviously were using their vehicles more carefully. They had to probably not do things for pleasure, using their vehicles because of the extra burden that had been laid on them.

So, yes, I'm glad the 2017 budget is reducing that tax – not removing it completely, but reducing it. I'm glad of that, and obviously I'm going to vote for it, but I think we need to look at the context in which this is happening and make some important points about that context and ask some questions as well.

As we know, and has been said already but I will repeat it, we'll actually get the first reduction on June 1, in a couple of weeks, and that will be a reduction by 8.5 cents. Then on December 1, it will be another reduction of four cents, for a total reduction in this year's budget of 12.5 cents. So there's still a four-cent temporary tax on gas. We still have some tax that is still part of that temporary tax, that is four cents.

Now, government has said it is looking at reviewing the idea of dropping that four cents as well as part of the 2017 fall fiscal and economic update, but I don't put too much hope in fall updates. When I think of 2016, the government had everybody geared up for their big fall, fiscal update, which basically gave us nothing. So we'll see whether or not the 2017 fall fiscal update will drop the rest of this temporary tax.

Now, the government has said this reduction will be in conjunction with a comprehensive independent review of the tax system this fiscal year. I have to say, I really am looking forward to some information from government on the independent review of our tax system, because

we have a tax system that is becoming more and more regressive with more and more dependence on consumer taxation, which is very, very problematic.

We have to look at that budget in the context, not just of taxes that are called taxes, but also fees and levies. We do know the 2016 budget had 300 very unpopular fees, onerous fees in some cases, and taxes and levies on the people of the province. So I hope when the minister says there's going to be review of our taxation system, that that review would include not just looking at the levies, which are actually called taxes, and consumer taxation in particular, but also look at all the other fees and levies which are out there, which are part of taking money from people.

What we need to see, I think, in doing your review is what is the impact of all of those fees and levies, and how could the money the government takes from fees and levies be incorporated into a progressive taxation system, not a regressive taxation system, which we are definitely part of and which is getting worse. This year there was nothing new, but 299 things remained. The only thing that's being changed is this temporary tax. We still have 299 other taxes and fees and levies that this government put on the backs of the people of the province.

Now, the thing I'd like to broaden into is the context. I have to ask if government is doing this in anticipation of a federal tax that is going to be imposed, depending on other things that this government does. Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau has said he will impose an 11 cent per litre federal gas tax if provinces do not come up with their own scheme by 2020, their own scheme with regard to carbon emissions. He's imposing it.

This government has an agreement with the federal government, has accepted the agreement with regard to the greenhouse gases and with regard to the federal plan that's been put in place. Part of that is if the government doesn't come up with their own scheme, their own gas tax or some scheme around gas tax by 2020, then there will be an imposition by the federal government of 11 cent per litre federal gas tax.

We have to know, what is government's plan with regard to this carbon tax imposition? They have said, I remember hearing them say, they've suggested in the media that at least part of the increased gas tax they had in place in 2016, but which is now being reduced, could be converted into a carbon tax to meet federal government requirements.

I remember the Minister of Service NL – I think that was the minister – who said publicly that the government certainly would not want to have both provincial gas taxes, especially the temporary one and an extra carbon tax on top. They would find ways to make the federal government understand that the tax they've put on could be something that could be considered into the whole scheme around the carbon tax scheme.

I don't know where that sits right now when you look at the fact that they are reducing the temporary tax. But, you know, just as they put the tax on and now they're reducing it, they could also make a decision again to increase that temporary tax. So everything with this government, we just have to wait and see for a lot of the things that they're doing.

I would like to know, it would be good to know, where the government is standing with regard to the carbon tax. What are they going to do between now and 2020? That's just down the road. They have to plan for it. I would like to know if there's any connection between the reductions of this tax in preparation for putting on a carbon tax which is being imposed by the federal government.

I think that this is an important question. The very fact that we seem to just accept it, that carbon tax is the way to go when dealing with greenhouse gas emissions, is another issue. I really do want to know where the government stands on this. Everybody in the province is being affected by our cost of gas. As I said, that certainly is obvious in the fact that consumption has gone down. Consumption is lower than has been anticipated.

I'm sure the people of the province also want to know where government is really sitting with the whole carbon tax because if the carbon tax goes on and it's part of an agreement with the federal

government, it's not going to be something that this government is going to be able to put in one budget and remove in another budget. It's going to be there. The people of the province have been heavily hit by the increase, as I've said, in taxes, fees and other levies – heavily hit.

People are being impacted. Our economy is going down. Our GDP is going down. All of that is true, and as we've pointed out before, all of the indicators are there that we are in a recession time when it comes to our economy. That's a fact.

At the moment, this one little move will obviously help. How much it will help, I guess we're going to have to wait to see as the year unfolds, the degree to which this small move by government is going to help our economy and going to help the people of the province.

Having said all that, Madam Speaker, I may have some questions for the minister in Committee. Having said all that, obviously, I am voting for the bill because it is undoing something that shouldn't have happened in the first place.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to speak to a bill that's going to amend the *Revenue Administration Act*, one of which we will see a reduction in gas tax by 8.5 cents per litre starting June 1, plus the HST that would be added to that. So that's almost 10 cents, it's 9.8 cents per litre that consumers will see relief in just a couple of weeks which is very important. As well, further relief will happen on December 1 of another four cents per litre.

This was a temporary measure. We have reviewed where we are financially as a province. We are meeting our targets. It's very clear that we have a plan to get back to surplus. This was one of the measures that we had to put in place last year to deal with the financial situation of

the province. As we have the ability to act, we are doing so and giving back to consumers.

I want to say, too, there are other aspects of the bill that deal with Labrador and the Labrador border. I will leave it to my colleague, the Member for Labrador West, to address those.

I want to say, though, the Member opposite, when she talked about consumer and consumer behaviour; I think consumption is an important issue when you talk about consumption. Any type of temporary measure or a gasoline tax that exists – and they exist in all provinces across the country. Quebec has over a 20-cent gasoline tax and it varies from province to province and other jurisdictions.

Some jurisdictions have implemented a carbon tax as the Member opposite is talking about. When you look at implementing a temporary measure and if it drives local behaviour to reduce consumption of fossil fuels, that's not necessarily a bad thing. As well, there's more effort being placed on people looking at the choices they make about having more fuel-efficient vehicles, more vehicles that are environmentally friendly, as well as vehicles that don't use fossil fuels and gasoline such as those that are using the electric charge.

We have a minister here that's using an electric vehicle. We talked about yesterday in the House. The Member for Mount Pearl North advised of a business that's there in Mount Pearl that's Green Rock. They have charging stations.

There are different things that are happening; more effort and investment from the federal government around enhancing public transportation. We're seeing where bus service is looked at being added at the airport and other areas of Paradise and growing communities. These are positive things that are happening. As the minister responsible for industry here in this province, I want to talk about that we're cognizant when we make decisions and the impact that it will have on business and industry here in the province.

There was a rebate that remained for loggers, for the fishers, for farmers, for manufacturing and processing, for transportation by boat, locomotive, and other measures that existed so

that those industry players would get the full temporary gas tax – which was 33 cents per litre – back. They could apply through the Department of Finance for that mechanism.

I also want to point out that from a tourism point of view when this temporary gas tax was put into place, people were saying: You're going to drive away tourists here in this province; people are going to cancel their trips, their vacations and their bookings. That didn't happen.

Despite the doom and gloom from Members of the NDP and the PC caucus, we saw the busiest year at the St. John's airport driven by tourism; 836,000 passengers. The busiest year in the 70-year history of the airport was during the summer season last year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: The temporary gas measure did not drive or detract from tourists coming to our province.

As well, Deer Lake Airport: busiest August in its history, 50,000 passengers. They broke a record. Marine Atlantic last year saw over 100,000 non-resident visitors coming by rubber tire traffic. That's year over year, two years, for the first time in 20 years have we have had over 100,000 non-resident passenger traffic.

It shows that people are coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. They want our product. They want our experiences. They want our unique offering of our people, our culture and our place, and tourism is driving and stimulating that. There are good things that are happening in the economy despite what Members opposite would like to think.

I'm very pleased to support this bill, this legislation that's coming forward. I would say the onus is on all of us to support a bill that is going to reduce the gasoline tax by 8.5 cents here in this province on June 1, plus the HST, which is almost 10 cents per litre in just a couple of weeks; another four cents on December 1, plus the HST there.

You're going to see a significant reduction in gasoline tax, which is good on the basis that it's going to allow for people, from a consumption

point of view, to do more travel. We also want to be cognizant that we want people to be cautious of the fuels they are using and how they use and how they spend when it comes to travel, from a fossil fuel point of view. It is the responsible thing to do.

Seeing a reduction in consumer or local demand is not necessarily an indication of what's happening in the overall economy. I think this is a good thing, this is very positive and I would say the onus is on all of us to support this piece of legislation to reduce the temporary gas tax. It was a temporary measure. It was something we said we'd look at and do as the financial situation of the province improved.

Things are improving. We have a very strong team here led by our Premier, our Finance Minister, our team of Cabinet and our caucus that are feeding in to helping the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador thrive.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm certainly pleased once again to stand and speak to Bill 9. I will say, first of all, obviously I'm supporting this bill; obviously all Members are supporting this bill.

I'm not going to give the government any pat on the back because they're the ones who put all these taxes in place to begin with. I'm glad they're going to reduce at least one of them. I will add this is the only one, but that is happening nonetheless and we are going to see a decrease of 8½ cents in June and another four cents on December 1.

AN HON. MEMBER: Plus HST.

MR. LANE: Plus HST, as the minister pointed out. Interesting, he throws in the HST to make it seem bigger now, but at the time when the tax was added didn't want to talk about the HST. They only talked about 16½ cents. When we were talking about almost 20 cents, they were

saying what are you talking about, 20 cents, it's 16½ cents. So we were saying no, no, it's 16½ cents and HST on top of that.

They didn't want to talk about that but when we're going the old reverse, now all of a sudden we're going to throw in the HST. He is being accurate but I wish we could be accurate when we're debating both sides of the equation, not just the one that suits them.

I would say as well, Madam Speaker, the minister just spoke about the benefits of this exercise. I have to say that the argument – I believe the general public are listening. I think they would feel that those arguments were pretty weak when he talks about increasing this gas tax on people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That was a good thing, because now more people are taking the bus. That was a good thing, because now people have electric vehicles.

I'm not sure who has electric vehicles. The Minister of Service NL does, but I'm not sure who else has one. I don't know anybody else. Maybe there are a few people. People can't even afford a regular vehicle, let alone electric vehicles. There are certainly no used electric vehicles out there, I don't think. I have to say that was a bit of a stretch but I'll give it to him for at least throwing it out there. He did throw it out there and good for him for trying to defend the indefensible, I would say, Madam Speaker.

Now, Madam Speaker, when we talk about the gas tax, and, of course, this was one in many taxes which I guess were thrown upon the people of Newfoundland and Labrador last year. This has had a major impact. It has had a major impact and, as has been said now by my colleagues in the NDP and the Official Opposition, consumption is down. The numbers are there. Consumption is down, and consumption is down for a reason.

I'm going to just give you one example. This is an individual who lives in my district, a couple. This is a retired couple. They are ordinary folk; they're on a fixed income. They have very little expendable income to begin with. They're not in a position to be able to go down to Florida for a couple of months to get away from the snow and so on. They don't have that ability. They're on a fixed income and they just don't have it.

In their retirement days they get a little bit of pleasure out of life, I suppose, in terms of they are involved in their community, very much involved in their community. They're involved with our seniors' organizations. They're involved with the sporting community. They're involved with the volunteer community. They told me, they said: Paul, you know, when you talk about the gas tax, this is how it impacts us. The one little thing we look forward to on a Sunday afternoon is to get aboard our car and drive over to Bay Roberts.

They usually go up through the old Conception Bay Highway and they go up to Bay Roberts and Carbonear and whatever. They said we usually might stop at Fong's or something like that and have lunch or whatever the case might be. That's our one little thing we like to do on a Sunday afternoon.

Well, that's been taken away from us. The ability to do that is gone. That was the one little bit of enjoyment we got, that's gone. Now, I'm not saying we'll never be able to do it, but we used to do it probably in the summertime – they'd do it every Sunday or every second Sunday. They said, now we might get to do it once or twice over the whole summer, because we legitimately can't afford to pay the gas. On top of the insurance and everything else, we can't afford to do that.

Obviously, if they're not doing that, then their consumption – so when we're talking about consumption being down, that's why consumption is down because there are so many people who are in that same boat.

Now, yes, there are lots of people in my district, I can guarantee you, who live over in the Southlands area and Admiralty Wood and so on, they haven't change their habits. They're still driving and doing everything they always did, for the most part, because they have that extra expendable income and they're going to continue on.

Their attitude is we don't like the extra taxes but I'm able to suck it up. I have to, I have no choice. I'm certainly not going to sit around the house all day and not do things like I did, not take the kids here and there or whatever because of the gas tax. I'll do it. People have to go to

work and so on. No choice there and they're not prepared to take the bus. That's reality.

We can talk about buses and all that all we want, and I'm not saying that buses are a bad thing and they're used more in other provinces and so on, but a lot of people, you can put as many buses there as you like, they're just not doing it. They want the convenience of getting aboard their car and going where they want to, when they want to go and not be waiting, not having to go circling around through different neighbourhoods to get where they're going. They're going to take the car.

There's no doubt, a lot of it's going to happen anyway. People will begrudgingly pay the extra gas tax, but the people on the lower end of the scale are the ones who couldn't afford it. As a result, the consumption is down.

When you're looking at gas tax, or any tax for that matter, you have to bear in mind those things. There is a tipping point, and the trick is finding that balance because there's a tipping point. There's a point where you could increase the gas tax or you could increase the HST or you could increase other taxes to a point where people are able to suck it up, so to speak, but they will still continue with their habits.

Once you go too far, then all of a sudden people can't continue with their habits. All you're doing is you're penalizing people who can least afford it and, at the end of the day, you're not getting the revenues you projected you were going to get because people couldn't use their vehicle. So all you did was tax people to death for nothing, to some degree. You might have gained a little bit but you didn't gain near as much as you thought you would because you went too far.

That was what we were saying from the very beginning on *Budget 2016*. It was a matter of how far it went. It was a matter of degrees. We felt it went too far and that it would impact people.

Now, we've seen the taxi industry – (inaudible) talk about gas tax – the taxi industry. We see the issues they have. Now, I know their biggest issue is insurance, which is brutal in itself, and I really hope we can work to, hopefully, make

some changes to the insurance system for sure, but another factor in it for them is the gas.

Not only are they getting hit with high insurance, not only are they getting hit with 2 per cent extra HST every time they get repairs on their taxi cabs and they buy windshield wash, antifreeze, windshield wipers and do repairs, but they're also getting hit by the gas. These are people that are working, in a lot of cases – I don't know if you know any taxi drivers. I know a number of them and, man, they work an awful lot of hours just to survive. They're not making any big money. Maybe the owner of the stand, of the business who has 100 or 200 brokers working for them, they're doing fine I'm sure, but the average person who just is taxiing with their own car, they're just barely struggling as it is and this made it worse for them.

We also look at the impact that it would have on goods and services. We all know when we start increasing these taxes, other goods and services are going to go up. I did hear the minister talk about for certain industries they could get a rebate. That's a good thing, but not every industry, every business is getting that and they're going to pass it on. That's just reality; they're going to pass it on. And when they pass it on, who do they pass it on to? They pass it on to the consumer. They pass it on to the same person who is hit with all the other taxes. Now they're going to be paying more for goods and services because businesses are going to pass that expense on. They're not going to absorb it, the taxpayer will.

I'm very glad to hear the minister talk about tourism and that tourism numbers were good. I'm glad to hear that. We all are. Sure we are. It's fantastic, actually. I don't doubt his numbers but I guess that's fine for people who are coming to the province. In terms of staycations, I wonder how many residents who look forward to taking their family out to Terra Nova for a holiday or out to Gros Morne or whatever –

MR. HOLLOWAY: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: I say to the Member for Terra Nova, I spent many, many a summer, year over year, with my family when they were growing up, in your district in Eastport and all of that. It's a beautiful spot – beautiful.

I was up to the Northern Peninsula last year. First time there – it was only my second time, I think, ever there. My dad was from the Northern Peninsula, born in Englee. I was up there last year and absolutely spectacular. I can see why people want to travel that district because it's an absolutely beautiful product; pristine.

AN HON. MEMBER: Good roads.

MR. LANE: The roads weren't great, I have to say. He said good roads; the roads weren't great. I hope they're in the plan. I haven't seen the roads plan. I'm not sure. I hope some of them are in there because they do need work, but a beautiful area.

AN HON. MEMBER: Did you go across on the *Apollo*?

MR. LANE: No, I didn't go across on the *Apollo*.

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you going to Burin – Grand Bank?

MR. LANE: Planning on going to Burin – Grand Bank this summer.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LANE: Yeah, a beautiful area. Although I was there with the Member for Placentia West about a year ago, we were down in that area, down to the – we were in Marystown.

There's no doubt we have a beautiful tourism product here to offer, there's no doubt, and I'm glad the message is getting out. There's no doubt that all the work that's been done on those ads, commercials and other initiatives that have been taken by the former administration, and this administration as well, that we are getting more tourism. That's an excellent thing. I think there's going to be more opportunity to get even more tourists. I think the key now is to try to enhance tourism in the winter and the shoulder seasons and so on. That's really where we need to go, I believe, for sure.

In terms of the gas tax, while it's not preventing those people – obviously it didn't – I wonder does it prevent people within the province from taking those excursions around the bay, if you

will, which is good for all the districts and all the towns. We all know a lot of the towns in Newfoundland and Labrador really – some more than others. I know the Terra Nova District – and I'll just use an example, Eastport, Traytown, that area – rely very, very heavily in the summer months in particular on tourism, because they have so many cabins and a beautiful sandy beach. They have a lot there to offer and the location is pretty good. It's only an hour and a half, a couple of hours out of town.

I wonder will that impact those towns in that area in terms of people not travelling from, say, the Greater St. John's area, not going there because of things such as the gas tax? I hope it doesn't have an impact but I have a feeling it is having some impact for sure. Madam Speaker, really what we're talking about here is a ripple effect that the gas tax has had, and particularly combined with the other taxes.

I am glad. I will end off by saying once again that I am glad to hear that we will now be seeing a reduction in the gas tax at least. That's a good thing. It's obviously something that we're all going to support.

I hope that as time goes on – it won't be going on now, I wouldn't think, in this sitting of the House, but I certainly hope in the not too distant future we'll see some movement on some other things, perhaps the levy comes to mind as one. Hopefully, we'll see some movement on some other things as well that will relieve the burden that's been placed on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As I said, I will support this bill, Bill 9, because it does relieve that pressure, at least, to some degree. Hopefully, as times goes by, like I said, we'll see more.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I feel honoured to be able to rise here this morning and speak on Bill 9, which is a very important measure that our government is taking to reduce the burden on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Do you know what? We're not ignorant enough on this side to believe that the measures we brought in during *Budget 2016* weren't hurtful to the people. Of course they were. That's not something we wanted to do, but when you're faced with a \$2.2 billion deficit, you cannot allow the province to continue down that road. They're measures that had to be taken.

One of them was a gas tax and we said it when we implemented that, that it was a temporary gas tax. Here we are today, honouring that commitment. It is temporary and we're reducing it in the next few months by 12½ cents down from 16½ cents.

Yes, of course, people felt the hurt from increased taxes, not only in gas tax but any tax that's increased is not good for the people, but, in fact, neither is a bankrupt province, Madam Speaker, good for the people. So there were measures that had to be taken. They were drastic measures and here we are today trying to give some relief to the people of the province from those measures that we put in place.

Madam Speaker, I want to bring it a little closer to home and include your district in this as well, at least the southern part of the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and the District of Labrador West, who, by the way, when you talk about gas prices, the people in Labrador have always paid the highest gas prices.

When we think of Labrador today, we certainly have to think about what's happening in Lake Melville area with Mud Lake people. They've been evacuated from the community. We pray and hope that everybody is safe and that the damage is limited to their properties. It is unfortunate at this time of the year these things are prone to happen.

I know the Minister of Service NL, the minister who represents Lake Melville, is on his way there. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and

Environment who's responsible for Fire and Emergency Services has been on the air this morning explaining to the people what's happening and all our resources have been deployed. We're doing what we can to help the people of Mud Lake. We wish them well and hope that they all stay safe.

Madam Speaker, I just want to touch on the border zones. Now, as you know, when you talk about gas prices in Labrador, my colleague the Member for Torngat Mountains, when you're talking about capping it at \$1.55 a litre, you have to put that in perspective. We are talking about you go from the Avalon to that part of the province; it's quite a disparity in the price of gasoline.

I applaud the government, and I applaud the minister and Cabinet, when they were implementing these measures around the gasoline tax, they took into consideration that there are parts of this province, namely Labrador West and your District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, that are bordering on the Province of Quebec. There comes an issue of, I guess, competition and being able to go across the border and get things a lot cheaper.

I know when this happened they took this into consideration. No different than what has been done with the tobacco tax. When you talk about the zone of Labrador West, you're, of course, talking about Labrador City and Wabush. When you're talking about Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, the southern part, you're talking about from L'Anse au Clair up to and including the community of Red Bay.

When you look at the 16½ cents, if you put that on to those areas, when you can drive – like in the case of L'Anse au Clair and that area – three kilometres or four kilometres, you can get gas for 16 cents cheaper, you know what was going to happen. You were going to destroy the entrepreneurs that are in that region trying to make a living.

So we implemented a subsidy, a rebate, I guess you can call it. No different than we did with tobacco tax when we brought in 16½ cents, that limited it to 4½ cents. Here we are today, we're lowering that. It's 10 cents – or 6½ cents rather than 4½ cents.

Today, we are looking at a bill here that reduces the rebate or the gas tax by 8½ cents which means that the rebate now in the border zones will be 1½ cents until December. When the gas tax is further reduced by another four cents in December, then the rebate disappears so that everybody across the province then will be paying the same gas tax. That's 20½ cents per litre.

Madam Speaker, in the case of our border zones, that still makes us very competitive with the cross-border shopping and gasoline price in Quebec. The Quebec tax is 21 cents per litre and we'll actually be at 20.5 cents. When you include the HST in that, it makes it even more, but we become very competitive then. We remain competitive with the Quebec border crossing area in those regions.

I think it's very methodical that this has been done, taken into consideration and still being realistic about the financial situation of the province. We're not out of the woods yet but we have reduced the deficit from \$2.2 billion, when we implemented this, to just around \$780 million today. Obviously, with the measures that we've put in and the other – not only the tax increases but all the measures that we've put in are working.

I've gotten up in this House a couple of times now and mentioned what the C. D. Howe Institute has put forward. They confirm that the measures that we've taken are working and we are being accountable. In fact, they've raised our accountability rating from E in 2015-'16 to B last year. We're doing things right. We're being very prudent and we're being very responsible.

As the financial situation improves, of course, we'll be looking at other measures that we can to ease the burden on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Of course we will. That's what this government is all about. But until we get our fiscal house in order, we just can't sell the farm, we have to still be responsible and prudent.

Madam Speaker, that's about all I wanted to say on this bill. I think it's a very good bill. The fact that we can implement this bill so early in our mandate after what we were faced with on December 1, 2015, when we were faced with the minimum of a \$2.2 billion deficit, and to be able

to start giving relief less than two years later speaks well of the measures that we've done and the work that we've done and the work that we've done as a government to get our fiscal house in order.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the time. I look forward to getting support of all the Members of this House on this very important bill today – one that will help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's good to get up to speak on this bill, Bill 9, reducing the gas tax by 8.5 cents in June and another further 4 cents in December. We're pleased that this tax is being reduced, obviously. Any reduction of any of these 300 taxes and fees that were introduced in *Budget 2016* it is always good to see some reduction. We would have liked to have seen more taxes and fees reduced, obviously, as most of the public would because any tax, especially this gas tax, it has had huge impact on our economy, on our different sectors and on just the general population, especially the middle class, Madam Speaker.

If you take everything in context, I guess the gas tax – as a MHA for the district I represent and Member of the House, it was one of the most talked about taxes of all the taxes and fees, the 300 we had. It was one of the most talked about taxes that people actually expressed frustration to me about.

On that note, that's the good part, we're seeing some reduction, but it's still there. We still have 300 fees and taxes and it's still having a negative impact on our economy. You talk to a lot of business owners – I know I've talked to numerous ones in my own district. I guess a combination of all the taxes and fees had a negative impact little by little, but, ironically, the gas tax appeared to have one of the biggest impacts, they actually started to notice. Now, whether that was the proverbially straw that

broke the camel's back, I do not know, but, ironically, that's the tax that people keep mentioning to me the most, among others, but that one always seems to arise.

Generally, it's a good thing to see any reduction. We would rather not see any of these or a lot less of these fees and taxes that we put on the backs of our taxpayers, the hard-working people in our province that struggle to survive, that were having trouble surviving without any of these taxes and fees.

You look at a family that was struggling to make ends meet prior to *Budget 2016*. Then with this extra burden placed on them, you can only imagine what that's done to the family model and trying to make ends meet in this climate.

When you look at the gas tax, that was a 16.5, plus HST, that went directly on gas right at the pump. As we know, in today's society everybody drives. I know in my district, for argument's sake, I don't have public transportation. There are no bus routes. It's either taxi, friends, family or have your own vehicle.

Obviously, I would say the majority if not all – not all, obviously, but a high percentage of my constituents drive. They have their own vehicles. They have no choice; they have no other options. It's the only way they can afford to get to their medical appointments and what have you.

Most everything is in St. John's. If anyone is not sure, CBS is only 20 minutes outside of the city so most of our commercial activity and most people who work commute to St. John's. This has had a significant impact on my own district and I'm sure a lot of other Members, my colleagues and the Members across the way. Once again, I'll reiterate that it is a good thing to see some reduction.

A couple of Members opposite acknowledged that this tax did hurt the economy; it did have an impact on individuals, which is true. It's good to see they acknowledge that. The only thing that jumped at me when I heard a few Members opposite say that was, why would you take credit for it now, reducing something that hurt our economy and hurt individual's ability to be

able to pay their own bills, to be able to operate in our society?

I guess you take credit for something you shouldn't have done last year. There have to be some small wins for everyone. That's how that's being portrayed across the way.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture, innovation – and I always struggle with the name so apologies for that – TCII, got up. I heard him say it several times – and I had the opportunity to spend numerous years in that department in my previous life, so I do have a fairly solid grasp on the tourism industry and how it works.

He was talking about the record number of visitors in our airports and what have you last year. That's a result of 2015. Tourism was always that year behind so the effects of the 2016 budget will come out in the data following this tourism season. People plan a year ahead. Most of the stuff, the numbers, the trip planner thing, they've done that in 2015 or 2016 and what have you.

The record numbers that have shown up, that's good to hear. It's always good to see visitors come to the province. Our tourism industry is a thriving industry and it's great to see we have a record number of visitors. We applaud that and the more the merrier. We think that's a wonderful thing.

I don't think there's any need of taking credit for the record numbers of people showing up based on this economic decision that's been made across the way, especially this gas tax. I guess if he's applauding the record numbers, he needs to thank the former administration for the benefits that this current administration seems to be seeing with the travellers. It's always a year back and I wanted to point that out.

Madam Speaker, we've seen in the news this past week with the taxi industry and insurance rates but, obviously, that's one piece that's being dealt with and worked on. There's been a lot of back and forth on it and in the public media. You're looking at they're struggling to pay their insurance. The gas tax; you can imagine what effect that 16.5 plus HST has had on their day-to-day operations because, as we all know, that's their lifeline. Obviously, it's a huge cost to each

individual taxi owner and cab company with the price of gas.

That's hurt them, obviously. It's hurt the middle class, so much so even the food on our shelves – everything in our province, being on an island, as we all know, it's trucked in here, it's shipped in here. Most of it is trucked across the Island from Port aux Basques, so that additional gas tax does reflect on the store shelves. That does reflect in what goods we buy, merchandise we buy and furniture we buy. It all has an impact. Everything is always added on. As their costs go up, our costs go up.

As a consumer and a resident of the province, as most of us are, we're paying it at the pump and we're also paying it when we go to buy a new piece of furniture and we go to the grocery store. Again, I'll say to take credit for reducing it, well, that's fair enough. I understand the politics of that. You have to score some – you have to find a win. I'll reiterate again that we are content to see some reduction in this tax. I think it was one of those taxes that could have been probably thought out better, could have been a better way around.

We know you're trying to generate revenue. I just think it was one of those taxes of the 300 that there could have been more alternatives found to find that revenue because that one really has had a negative impact. It continues. It's still there; it's just less of a tax. On that note, we're going to have 12½ cents removed; we still have four cents left, which if anyone has been paying attention to the carbon tax topic that will be our new carbon tax thereabouts, roughly.

I think everyone is accepting of that fact because they know it's coming. Now, I'm not so sure, I still think that's an argument for another day and I've made it many times in the House. There's an element of: Should we have to pay that four cents? Aren't we already paying our fair share on a carbon tax in the province?

I'm not sure how people will react to a portion of this former gas tax becoming a carbon tax at the gas pumps because I'm sure that's what's coming. I've said many times that will be a new tax. This tax was introduced as a temporary gas tax, temporary revenue-generating measure, but if you leave a portion of that four to five cents

on the gas, that will become a permanent tax. Realistically, we still have 300 taxes and fees; although less, it's still there and it's still going to have an impact on our individuals of the province.

I'll say again, the middle class, high-income earners – no one likes to see extra fees and taxes or extra costs, they can absorb it. When you have – the middle class, a family of four – two children, working, making average wages, it's a real struggle to survive in this world.

Before we had these fees and taxes, our economy was on fire. The cost of goods and services are increasing, the cost of building a home – everyone has seen the cost has risen across the board. They were struggling as it was. Then, we introduced this gas tax which, like I say, is putting an immense burden on our middle class mostly. Middle-and low-income earners are struggling anyway and this hasn't been good.

When we speak of the gas tax, like I said about our store shelves, your trucking industry, our fishing industry; we always talk about our fishing industry. That has an effect on each individual fisherman. Everyone uses gas.

As I said, it's not a luxury in Newfoundland to have a vehicle, it's almost a necessity. We don't live in compressed areas where you can hop on a bus or you walk around the block and you're at where you need to be. The geography of Newfoundland prohibits or it makes it almost impossible not to have some sort of transportation of your own. With that comes this extra cost.

You look at your fishing industry; look at agriculture, another industry that we're – I give credit. The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources is working to grow our agricultural industry and I'm generally supportive of that. My community, Conception Bay South, was always founded on agriculture. As opposed to a lot of Members, the fishery was the foundation. Agriculture was always the foundation in Conception Bay South and it still is to a lesser degree today.

You look at all your farmers. They use gas, obviously. Again, it just affects every industry, affects every single person. When you bring in a

tax of this nature, if some more thought could have gone into it – I've talked to people that said we could have adjusted probably with the income tax rates and adjusted on the high-income earners, the middle, and done some tinkering to generate the revenue.

It's fine to say get rid of the gas tax but government is saying we need the revenue. My argument is as an alternative, there was a way to find that other revenue and it could have been done with less impact and less obvious impact. I'll go to the middle-class and low-income earners again, if it would have been done exponentially based on your income, you would have gotten the revenue and it wouldn't have had that impact at the gas pumps.

When you say 16.5 cents, in essence, it's almost 20 cents when you add HST. As my colleague for Ferryland pointed out when he spoke earlier, we filibustered here. We read email after email after email, and a lot of people had a real, huge problem. I know Members opposite, when I say it I don't if they listened to them all, but we read a lot of emails and lot of them had great concerns over this gas tax.

In saying that, the tax is still there. It's less, and it will never totally be eliminated because it will go from that to be a carbon tax. So it's still an issue and, like I said, we still have our 300 taxes and fees. I'll say it again: The gas tax was by far the most discussed tax increase out of the 300.

I'm glad to see there is a reduction. I would have liked to have seen a better plan in place when the tax was introduced to find another alternate means to generate this revenue that wouldn't have had the impact it had on each and every individual in the province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

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

First of all, before I start to speak about the gas tax today, I'd like to just say my thoughts and prayers are with the people out in Mud Lake. I know Members from Labrador, they're majorly concerned. The minister representing that area is gone down to see if he can do any assistance at all.

I heard earlier today the Minister of Municipal Affairs saying Fire and Emergency Services are there. Our thoughts are with those people today. I know there are some people evacuated. Please God, there are no injuries or anybody gets hurt and people get back safely to their homes.

We're all people of a great province, and Newfoundland and Labrador is that great province. I just wanted to say that before I start off this morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Madam Speaker, reducing the gas tax is a great thing. It's a great thing. Any time we can put money back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and relate – I guess what it is you're relieving burdens that they find every day in their lives.

When people look at a person's health and people will tell you this all the time, stress is a huge thing. Stress that people have in their lives can cause so much havoc. And I don't know, I'm not a doctor or anything like that, but I know my mom was a public health nurse. She always used to say stress was a killer just like cancer or anything else because people really find it hard sometimes to get by. If this takes a bit of stress off the people that are there finding it really hard today, I hope it does because that's what we have to do, is make sure we do the best we can for the people of the province.

When we go back to last year's budget, we look at last year's budget and there were some 300 fee increases and 50 new fees added. That was a lot of stress added to a lot of people. The comment I heard more so than any other comment was: It was too much, too hard. Too hard on people to be able to absorb the bulk of what the government was trying to do.

The minister said it even this year in her statement – and I get up every time I talk on the budget I talk about it – how it's reaching in the pockets of average Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's what was done last year because the total amount to the average family last year, when it comes to what the fees and the new costs, whether it's income tax or anything, was approximately \$6,000 per family. That's a lot of money and it's a lot of stress on families and everything else.

It's good; I have to say it's good. I would love to see the increases that were done last year all of them reduced. To be realistic, we know that couldn't be done, but there are some things we can do to take away the stress that's on every family in this province.

The gas tax is a tax that affects a lot of people. It affects so many, a different variety of people. Sometimes you don't see it until you talk to people in construction industries and you talk to people who are in different industries where gas is used a lot.

The other day we had taxicab drivers in here. I met with them also. I asked them a question; I asked them point blank, if your cost is going up so much, well, obviously you're going to have to put it on to the consumers. They said, no, if we put this on to consumers – consumers just can't afford to pay for it, so they won't use it. They'll drive impaired. They'll leave and go this way and they won't use our services. So we have to stay in that consistent rate.

I looked at that and said, yes, you're right on. It's an expense, but then there's also – I'm sure the trucking industry and people that use the trucking industry, and they all got families.

When you look at small business, small business may employ 20 employees but overall, the effect they have on the economy could be up to 100 employees. Businesses that are shutting down and businesses that are finding it hard to survive in this economy, they're finding it hard because they are paying out so much money.

Even the other day, I know there were some questions asked here in the House of Assembly on bankruptcies. As far as I know, I think it was 30 per cent this year or last year; 30 per cent

more bankruptcies in the province – God, that seems to me to be a hard number.

That's a number that's not just affecting the big businesses. That's not affecting the Walmarts or the Sears or the Sobeys or any of those. A lot of that is just affecting a lot of families, homes, people who can't afford to pay for what they had before, their vehicles, their home or whatever.

I don't know, but I would imagine that's the last resort, bankruptcy is for a person. When they realize they get to that much stress in their life, like I said earlier about stress, they get that much stress in their life they have to go and declare bankruptcy.

Once small businesses leave our communities – I come from a very small community, 1,400 people, but every time you turn around in that community and look for somebody to sponsor a softball team or donate to a senior's party or donate to anything – and everyone over on the other side will know what I'm talking about, because we can't survive without small businesses in our community. Not because they employ people, because they do, not because they pay taxes in their communities and they do, and keep our tax rates going, but because they support our communities.

They're the ones when we have a fireman's ball, and you need a few prizes, that the volunteer fire department calls upon. When you have a senior's party at Christmastime and you want to give out a few prizes, those are the people that will come through every time.

Small business – this tax, the gas tax itself, the effect it has on small business is unbelievable, because they don't work on margins that are millions of dollars. They work on margins that are enough to pay – they have to make sure they have their bills paid and they have groceries on their tables during that month.

Not only that, I spoke the other day to a company in my community, it was a roofing company. He employs probably 10 or 12 people during the summer months and is very busy. Every year he is flat out busy all the time. When I spoke to him the other day he told me: Kev, it's going to be hard; it's going to be really hard. I said how are you doing with it. He said this is

going to be the worst year ever, I can see it coming. He said construction is way down, people are not building houses. The people who are trying to do renovations on their houses have to make a big decision because they don't have the funds to do what they wanted to do. So if somebody is going to shingle a roof, they said my shingles are 25 years old, I should replace them this year, but if I don't have the money I can't do it.

That's what these taxes and fees have done to people. It's great that the gas tax is coming down. It's great, it's good news. I listened to a Member earlier today – it's 8.5 and the minister apparently said it's 10, but there was a 20 cent increase on our gas tax last year. That was a lot. I tell you, when you look at the bankruptcies –

AN HON. MEMBER: Plus the HST.

MR. K. PARSONS: Plus the HST, but when you at the bankruptcies and what it's done to small business – and the biggest thing that any tax, and we listened to it – when we were on that side of the House I listened to Members, and I always listen to Members. I listen to everybody and what they have to say in this House of Assembly, and it's important that we do because everybody has a point of view. It should be expressed and it should be listened to.

When we were on the other side of the House we were told you can't increase taxes. You can't do that. It's a job killer. Well, you did it and you saw the effects. You saw the effects that these taxes and fees have had on the people. The numbers don't lie.

Our unemployment rate is the highest it ever was. We have more bankruptcies than ever before. We have small business – and like I said, small business is the heart and soul of our communities – are struggling. There are a lot of people struggling.

I think most politicians and most people in this House come to represent their constituents, to make sure that if there's anything we can do for them, the hardships they find, maybe there's some relief that we can get them. I know the relief is coming through this gas tax relief and that's good, but I don't think it's enough.

I think the budget should have gone further this year to give people: our seniors, people on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, people who are really struggling out there – they were looking for a break in this budget. They were looking for a break, not only in gas tax; they were looking for a break on over-the-counter drugs. They were looking for a break on insurance.

The insurance is – as far as I know we're the only province in Canada paying that tax. I think Saskatchewan has a tax but the government subsidizes it to a large tune. It's the effect that it's having on so many different individuals in our province. Again, it goes back to taking too much and doing too much and hitting people too hard. That's what last year's budget did. This year's budget, while there is a little bit of relief, a small bit of relief, it's not enough.

Madam Speaker, I look at students and I watched lately what's happening with students. My two are not students anymore, but I can imagine when they were going to school and they got their first cars. I tell you, dad put a lot of gas in those cars to try and get them back and forth and make sure that they had to do it. I know the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island is agreeing with me because it's a huge expense, but the extra cost of the gasoline last year, the extra cost of the high prices that we're paying for gas now makes it difficult to do other things that you want to do for them. It makes it difficult for families to do that investment.

Today, they need the transportation to get back and forth to college or get to trade school or university or whatever. Or most of them today, I know young people today – I look at the young Pages here in front of me now have that job. They work hard for their money and they have to pay the taxes too. It has a big effect on young people too, because there's so much more they want to do.

I believe it all comes back to the fact that last year's budget didn't have a plan. There was no plan in place and analysis that – whenever you do what was done last year with 300 fees that were out there. Now, these weren't new fees, these were 300 things that were there, but there were 300 increases on those fees. They

increased everything they could and then they added 50 more on to it. So you had 350 fees that were either increased or new fees were started.

Again, that's a lot and it's hard on everyone. It's hard on people that are trying to – for example, over-the-counter drugs. I know that when I speak to seniors in my district, it's only probably \$5 or \$6 or \$7, but at the end of the month it adds up to \$30 or \$40 or \$50. When you're on a fixed income, to come up with that kind of money month after month after month; this is not just a one-deal thing that you have to pay for it and it's all done, taxes are something we continue to pay and continue to pay.

I said the gas tax; I would have liked to have seen it eliminated altogether, to tell you the truth, because I think it would have had a good effect. I think that we as politicians and the government on the other side should look and see the effects that these taxes and fees are having on the economy, having on individual families.

As a province we talk about trying to keep people here, trying to make it better for our families to live here. Recently, I had a friend of mine who came home from Alberta. His mom died and he came home. We were at the house for a couple of nights and he came by and he said: Kev, I can't believe it, everything is after going up.

We don't see it as much as they see it. He said: I don't know how you live here anymore. It's so expensive to go anywhere now. He used to go out to – I won't say the name of the fish and chip place but out on Torbay Road. He said: I could get fish and chips for \$9.99. He said that he and the wife went out and had fish and chips, the same thing they always had, and it almost cost \$40. That's the cost.

Things have gone way up because businesses need to survive. If they're going out and they have deliveries to do or they got trucks that are coming to their place with produce or fish or whatever, they need to survive because of the extra cost of all these fees and all these extra fees that they're paying. So it's hard on business.

Even the people from away – we don't see it. We go out and I know we see an increase in fish and chips or chicken and chips or whatever it is and we just take it for granted. But people that come from away and come home and see the changes the last couple of years, they're amazed with it. They really are amazed with the added cost of what it costs to live here.

Those are the people we want to come back. We want people to come back to our province. We want people to work in our province. We don't want to see anybody leave our province, but it's a job to convince people to come back to this province if it's so expensive to live here.

When you look at our gas – I know I go on gasbuddy.com every now and then and I have a look at the prices right across Canada. When you see that ours is up over 20 cents to the next lowest and then you look across Canada and see that some places in Canada are paying 30 cents a litre less than we are, people that live in those areas are going to say: How can you guys afford to pay for that? They're not going to come back and want to pay \$1.30 or \$1.40 for a litre of gas.

That's what's happening in the province. That's what's happening to people outside our province. People look at this place and they say anyone that's lived here, grew up here, or want to be here, they love it. We have the greatest people in the world. We have the friendliest people in the world and it's a great place. Our climate is not the best, we get a bit of everything, but it is a good place to raise a family.

If you look at your national news all the time, I feel we are in a safe society. It's changing a lot these days because of different things out there, but I do believe we live in a safe society and I do believe we live in a society where most people know their neighbours and they can depend on their neighbours.

I know that when things like that are happening in Mud Lake today, they can depend on the people of the province. They can depend on government to go down and do the assistance that needs to be done. I'm sure the people that are moved from Mud Lake today, when they go into Goose Bay, I think it is. Is that where they're going today? Anyway, wherever they go

today, they're going to be treated well. They're going to make sure they have food. They're going to make sure they're going to be well taken care of. Fire and Emergency Services will be on the ground, the Red Cross will be on the ground and people will be there to take care of each other. That's who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Going back to my point on the gas tax, while it's getting reduced we still live in a society where it's too expensive to live. It's in a place where we want to live, where we want to keep our families and where our families want to stay. The gas tax, while relieving some – and this year it's 8.5 cents and in December 4.5 cents, that's good. I'm pleased with it. I'd like to see it be all gone. I would love to see it be all gone, but that's only one part of the total amount of taxes and fees that were charged to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador last year.

We realize, just like everybody else in this province do, that our province is in financial difficulty these days. There's no doubt about it. We depend on oil, we depend on production. Last year, the production for oil was four times what it was the year before.

AN HON. MEMBER: Four times?

MR. K. PARSONS: Four times what it was the year before. So it took care of a lot of the anxiety that we had this year because it brought us back to reasonable stuff, I think it was \$400-extra million and that's just on production alone. Now, with Hebron going out, I'm not sure what the schedule is for next year, but that's part of who we are, oil and gas is who we are.

There are other provinces like it, but to do what we did, to reach into people's pockets, like I said, reach into people's pockets and take out \$6,000 from individuals, a regular family in Newfoundland and Labrador. They all want to live. They want to support their families. They want to do what they can for their families and they want to live here.

So while I will applaud the government for making this move, I would have hoped that it would have been a whole lot more; a whole lot more to – no matter if it was some relief for senior with dentures. I know when we were

government; first, we did one set of dentures, either the upper or lower ones. Then the next year you could apply for – but last year, cutting them out completely, that was hard and it puts a lot of stress on people.

I have residents calling me all the time and they say: Kevin, what can you do? Now, there are some ways of going about it. I spoke to the minister. They do have to make special application, but the stress and the tension that was put on our seniors is just unfair. That's what a lot of these taxes did; it put a lot of stress on people. It put a lot of hardships on families. I think government can do a whole lot more to help our businesses and help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

While I applaud taking away the 8.5; it's a good move, yes. I'd like to see much more done, but I think we have to really consider all these fees, all the 300 fees and the 50 new ones that you did last year. I think you should have a look at the whole lot of them and reduce them so people can live right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: In accordance with provisional Standing Order 9, this House now stands in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I wish to deal with the behaviour of Members in the Legislature yesterday. For the course of debate, positions can vary and emotions can run high. As a result, it is often a challenge to deal with the behaviour of all Members at all times. It is equally challenging to control every word that the 40 Members of the Legislature say.

However, overall decorum in our Legislature has improved compared to what was the norm in previous years, except for yesterday. Yesterday, our Legislature reverted to the type of behaviour

that was custom in our Chamber in previous years. This is the very type of behaviour that we have recently strived to move away from.

There are several points that I wish to address. Committee sat for six hours yesterday and Members know that the Speaker does not interfere with the Committee process. This does not give Members a licence for a different level of decorum.

Further, the process followed yesterday evolved into something that was somewhat different than a normal Committee process of 10 minutes speaking time back and forth. While the Legislature can be flexible with the process, this should not allow for flexibility to the rules for Members' behaviour.

During Committee, the Speaker leaves the Chamber and the Deputy Speaker sits as the Chair of Committees. During Committee, the Deputy Speaker assumes the same authority over Committee as the Speaker has during General Assembly. The Deputy Speaker, while sitting as Chair of Committees, is not a substitute and should not be treated as such.

I don't want Members to think that because we go into Committee and the Speaker leaves the Chambers that the rules simply go out the window. I am disappointed at the behaviour of the Legislature yesterday. The lack of decorum is one thing and certainly not acceptable, but unparliamentary language such as the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language is strictly forbidden.

Members of the Legislature, while we don't always agree on the issues, we should be held to a higher standard of debate and decorum. The words used in the Legislature yesterday against another Member are strictly forbidden, as I have said. The words that were used were: "deceptive," "unethical." This type of language will not be permitted in our Legislature.

The individual that was ejected by the Deputy Speaker this morning was not ejected from the Legislature because of the use of that language but his refusal to apologize. Other Members have used language in the past and have apologized and were not ejected from the Legislature. I will say that I expect better from

Members of the Legislature, and Members should know the general public expects better of Members of the Legislature.

We welcome today to our Speaker's gallery, Dustin Angelo, President and CEO of Anaconda Mining, as well as Vice-President of Exploration Paul McNeil.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in the Speaker's gallery, we have Kallie Stone and her parents, Gail and Terry Stone. Kallie will be the subject of a Member's statement today.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: In the public gallery today I would like to welcome Terry Doyle. Terry is present today for the reading of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well, in the public gallery today we have, from the Town of Lawn, Mayor Johnny Strang, Councillor Joe Jarvis, Councillor Dave Drake and Town Manager Arlette Strang.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of St. John's Centre, Baie Verte – Green Bay, Lewisporte – Twillingate, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Conception Bay East – Bell Island and Terra Nova.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm thrilled to recognize a constituent who is one step closer to his literary dream. Terry Doyle of St. John's Centre was the winner of the

Percy Janes First Novel Award at the Provincial Arts and Letters Competition for his manuscript *Union*.

The award commemorates one of Newfoundland's most influential writers, Percy Maxwell Janes. Terry was encouraged by a previous Percy Janes Award winner, Sara Tilley, to enter his manuscript.

Terry was inspired by his work as a tradesperson, both as a residential plumber and on an industrial site, a perspective we rarely see in fiction. Taking an unflinching look at the underbelly of transient work, Terry writes about the struggle to make this way of life work, and what happens when it doesn't.

Union challenges us all to think hard about how a sudden influx of income – and then it's just as sudden a loss – affects us and the ones we love.

I look forward to reading *Union* when it is eventually published, and I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Terry Doyle. Bravo!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WARR: I rise today in this hon. House to acknowledge the heroism, courage and quick thinking of several residents of Baie Verte.

In the early evening hours of April 6, fire broke out at the Baie View Manor seniors' home. The fire was first noticed by Stephen Ackerman and his wife Pam. Stephen rushed to alert residents of the home and asked his wife to call the fire department. With assistance from another Baie Verte resident, Shawn Loveman, Stephen escorted all 21 residents of the Baie View Manor to safety.

The efforts were so efficient that all 21 residents were safely outside before the building's sprinkler system even had a chance to activate. The home was completely destroyed by fire, but thanks to the heroism of Pam and Stephen Ackerman and Shawn Loveman, not a single resident was harmed.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are to be commended for their courageous actions which prevented a tragic outcome and saved 21 people. I would also like to acknowledge the Baie Verte Fire Department for its efforts in combating the fire and the staff of Central Health for rendering assistance to displaced residents.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating all those involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate.

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

I rise in this hon. House to recognize the outstanding contribution made by the Lewisporte Lions Club. The Lions Club was first chartered on December 5, 1951. Since then, they have provided 66 years of volunteer service to the area.

During a recent visit, District Governor Valerie Clarke presented a number of awards, including a 50-year service pin to Lorne Jacobs. Lions Bill Hooper and Les Penney previously received this prestigious 50-year award.

I have gotten to know each of these three gentlemen on a personal note. Over the years, I can attest to their commitment to the community and their desire to enrich the lives of those they serve.

The Lewisporte Lions Club supports fantastic initiatives like the Max Simms Camp, Children's Wish Foundation, the Calypso Foundation, as well as community organizations such as minor hockey, figure skating, air cadets and the scouting and guide movement, along with their ongoing commitment to the Lewisporte Fire Rescue.

I ask all Members in this hon. House to join me in thanking Bill Hooper, Les Penney and Lorne Jacobs for their 50 years of service and the Lewisporte Lions Club for honouring their motto "We Serve."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm honoured to rise in this House today and sing the praises of the many men and women who serve as volunteer fire fighters and firettes in my district. The District of Fogo Island – Cape Freels is serviced by 19 volunteer fire departments; over 350 volunteers keep our communities safe.

I've had the privilege of attending several annual banquets over the past few weeks and interacting with the volunteers. These men and woman sacrifice countless hours without their families to give to their communities.

While the numbers of emergencies may be low, each year their commitment is high. They spend many hours training on various techniques of firefighting and vehicle extraction.

Today's firefighter is called upon to respond to many different emergencies from searching for lost people, to medical emergencies, to helping bring a patient over a snowbank which was the case in Gander Bay a few weeks ago. They assisted ambulance attendants in bringing a patient over 300 metres across snow drifts. At one point, they had the person strapped in and stood upright against a snowbank.

I would like everyone to join me in thanking these volunteers in my district.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to recognize the accomplishments of a citizen in my district. I speak of Ms. Valerie Abbott who this past weekend was inducted into the Newfoundland and Labrador Softball Hall of

Fame. Valerie is the fourth member of the famed Abbott family to be inducted into the provincial hall of fame. The Abbotts are considered the first family of sports in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's. Valerie joins her brothers Vern, Keith and Collin into this prestigious club.

Valerie is the only female to be inducted this year in the athlete category and that is a testament to her decade as a star player at the local, provincial and national levels. Valerie has won numerous individual awards in Senior Ladies Fastpitch at all levels. She has been league champion on a number of occasions, has raised the trophy as the province's best many times and has represented this great province on the national stage both at the junior and senior levels.

Valerie, in her acceptance speech, thanked all those who guided her along the way, particularly her parents and her brothers. All three brothers joined her on stage as she became the latest athlete from my district to be recognized for their outstanding success in athletics.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Valerie.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure today to rise in this hon. House and recognize Ms. Kallie Stone, recipient of the 2017 Canadian Association of Principals Student Leadership Award for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Each year, high schools across Canada nominate a Level III student whom they feel is the paramount example of outstanding leadership, who demonstrates compassion for others and who excels academically.

Kallie has extensive involvement in her school council, having been president in grade nine and again this year. While at school, she helps to organize special events such as assemblies and

she volunteers at the breakfast program. Kallie enjoys music and is an active member of the school choir.

In addition to her athletic interests in golf, basketball and volleyball, Kallie volunteers at the Clarenville SPCA, the Young Leos Club and enjoys assisting in the Flying Blades Figure Skating Club.

Recently, Kallie was nominated as Student of the Year at her school, Clarenville High. Ms. Kallie Stone is a remarkable young woman who is intelligent, responsible and mature.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Kallie for this outstanding accomplishment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to congratulate 119 women who are being recognized this evening at an event hosted by the Office to Advance Women Apprentices. These women have reached their Red or Blue Seal status and obtained their journey person in their trades. I am honoured to have the privilege to attend this event.

Mr. Speaker, each one of these women faced barriers at some point along the way when coming through the skilled trades system – but the event tonight is proof that it can be done and it is such a positive accomplishment for these women, the industry and the province.

Mr. Speaker, we want everyone out there to know that the skilled trades offer good career choices for women – as is evident in the fact that so many women are succeeding in these fields. In fact, the Office to Advance Women Apprentices currently has over 1,600 tradeswomen registered in their database. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage

more women to step up and consider a career in the skilled trades which in turn will help create a greater gender balance in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country.

We must keep working until we reach a place that ensures we are all equal around every table at which we sit. We still have a lot of work to do in order to ensure the culture, the policies, the training and the workforce reality supports the goals of gender diversity. I commit to this House that as long as I am the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women in this province I will never stop advancing the role of women in business, in politics, in trades, and in every place where a woman can make a difference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, I join with the minister in congratulating the 119 women who are being recognized for achieving their Red and Blue Seal status and have become journeypersons within their trades.

Mr. Speaker, these women are proof that hard work and support can help overcome great challenges. I encourage these women as they start their careers in their respective trades. I'm sure they will all have successful futures ahead of them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take a moment to encourage other women to step up and consider careers in the skilled trades. No matter which industry one is interested in, they can pursue that desire. Whether it is in politics, business, skilled trades, science, industry or other areas, women can and should be involved in every industry. We cannot be held back by traditional gender roles anymore.

I encourage each and every person in this province to support gender diversity and to encourage women to push back for equality. Together we can make a difference.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. 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 her statement. I'm delighted that women are getting the support they need to go into trades training. It's been part of my own background, working with women, but there is still work to do regarding women in male-dominated workplaces. While their numbers are increasing, there are way too many cases still of workplace harassment. We need to put a better system in place to ensure that women in male-dominated workplaces feel safe.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia held annually on May 17. This day represents the largest LGBTIQ solidarity event to take place across the globe, with more than 1,000 events taking place in over 120 countries around the world.

With a focus this year on families, the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia draws attention to the lack of inclusion and often violent acts still experienced by LGBTIQ people. It was first celebrated in 2004 to elicit the attention of policymakers, opinion leaders, social movements, general public and the media to the discrimination and violence still experienced by the LGBTIQ community internationally. It places a much-needed focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and all those who do not conform to majority sexual and gender norms, and the hardships they often encounter.

Mr. Speaker, while the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is one

day of the year when we draw attention to this important topic, eliminating discrimination of any type needs to be our focus every day of the year. We all have a right to be respected and treated equally, and to be active participants in an inclusive society. We know that achieving full inclusion requires a new way of thinking. Let's continue to put that thinking at the forefront of all we do right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, I join with the minister in recognizing International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. I also want to recognize the tremendous and continuous work of the LGBTQ community.

Mr. Speaker, the many LGBTQ groups work tirelessly to advocate for change. I recognize their dedication and encourage their continued advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, as today is the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, today draws attention to the lack of inclusion and the violent acts which those in the LGBTQ community unfortunately still face. Violence against an individual because of their gender, sexuality or identification is not acceptable. We all have a duty to encourage inclusion.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a proud lesbian I am happy to stand in the House to join people around the world marking International Day against Homophobia,

Transphobia and Biphobia. This is a result of years of activism, lobbying and working within the LGBTQ community and with our allies.

We have gained much in our province but still there is more to do, especially in access to medical services for trans folks and addressing the lack of LGBTQ curriculum in our school system and services for our LGBTQ youth. Today we celebrate, but we mustn't stop working for the change and full equality.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in June of last year, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the federal government announced funding to determine whether it is feasible to implement a Drug Treatment Court in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that following a tremendous amount of work by our working group and advisory committee, the feasibility study is complete and we are now proceeding with the planning for a new Drug Treatment Court pilot project in St. John's.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: I would like to take the opportunity to thank the working group, John Duggan, Trish LeGresley and Michelle Greene, for their hard work and their dedication to this project. Also, I'd like to recognize the advisory committee which consisted of various government agencies, Provincial Court and the private bar. I'd also like to thank community groups for their participation and their collaboration throughout.

Mr. Speaker, this court, which we expect to open in 2018, is intended for offenders with serious drug addictions, who commit non-violent, drug-motivated offences. It brings together treatment services for substance abuse and the criminal justice system to deal more effectively with

drug-addicted offenders. This problem-solving approach offers an alternative to traditional criminal justice responses by addressing the underlying problems that contribute to crime.

This government strongly believes in restorative justice and recognizes the need to find innovative approaches to the administration of justice.

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. Mr. Speaker, knowing that reductions are happening in government, in Justice and enforcement, today's announcement is certainly a positive one.

We know that issues associated with drug use are on the rise and are growing in seriousness throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. We're pleased to see that government is engaging in ways to proactively address the serious drug issues that are facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. But as the minister points out, treatment services at the back end are vital as well.

I, too, would like to recognize and thank the members of the working group, the advisory committee and the passionate and dedicated groups and individuals who have contributed to this. I thank them for their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good to see our province moving in this direction on this very vital initiative. I remind the minister that this new court will only succeed if government also provides the

appropriate programming. These programs must be based on the recovery model, addressing the underlying trauma and mental health issues that lead people to addictions in the first place. This will be the key to the success of this new court.

Thank you to all those involved in making this a reality, let's keep on moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I'm sure all Members of the House of Assembly today share in having the people of Mud Lake in our thoughts today as they face a very serious circumstance.

I ask the Premier today if he can provide the Members of the House of Assembly with an update on the situation in Mud Lake and how the government is providing assistance and support.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Certainly, everyone in this Legislature and indeed people across the province are thinking about the situation in Mud Lake today.

Last night, we had representatives from Fire and Emergency Services on the ground who worked through the night. The evacuation process has started with the support of 5 Wing Goose Bay. Minister Trimper is on the ground today.

As we speak, there's an organizational meeting, as the water continues to rise very quickly, and working with the community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay as well, involved in the organization

up there, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the people of Mud Lake and the area that all government services will be available to the residents of Mud Lake, supported by this Legislature, supported by this government and supported by people in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, yesterday here in the House the Finance Minister had some difficulty in giving us an answer when asked how much a former employee of Government House had received when he was dismissed so the Liberals could put someone else into that role.

I ask the minister today: Why did she only give a portion of the cost when she was being asked for the total cost to terminate that employee?

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

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

I'm grateful for the Member opposite asking the question. Yesterday, it was somewhere in the vicinity of about six hours I spent here in this House answering questions in Committee, in an Estimates process.

As Members of this House know, in typical Estimates, officials are in the room. In the Committee Estimates that we did yesterday, officials were not in the room and they were providing information off-site.

As the information was coming in to me to provide the answer to the questions, I was doing that. I provided the information yesterday in the House as soon as I had it. And I believe for the remainder of the day there were numerous questions that as information from officials came in, I provided the information.

I was very willing to answer the questions. I think having sat in the seat for six hours, I certainly am proud of the effort that I put in.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I remind the minister it was very, very early in yesterday afternoon's sitting that this discussion took place. The minister had originally told the House and the Committee here that the cost to remove the former employee was \$111,000. But after repeatedly being asked for more information it was later revised to \$378,000.

Minister, are you saying the reason that you never gave the total information in the first place was because you only provided us what officials were providing you? Is that what happened yesterday?

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

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

I'd like to stand. I think the minister provided information yesterday during the six-hour Estimates process and certainly provided an answer here now.

I appreciate the questions from the Member opposite. It's unfortunate that other Members of the PCs had to take that opportunity to conduct themselves with behaviour that's unparliamentary in this House and, in fact, curse while in this House while asking those questions.

The fact is that while you're in government – and Members opposite should know this full well. The fact is sometimes you don't have the information right away at your disposal. I've sat through these Estimates and provided information at times that I realized was incorrect and provided the right information right away.

The fact is the minister provided the information as soon as they had it. I appreciate the questions here which have been done in a respectful manner and certainly in more of a respectful manner than was done in this House yesterday.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I appreciate the Minister of Justice providing an overview of what took place yesterday. From our perspective, it became quite frustrating in trying to determine and actually get all of the information, which is what led to the events that were dealt with earlier this morning.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the Finance Minister is very simple: Is she saying here in the House that the reason why she changed her number from \$111,000 to \$378,000 was based on the information provided to her through officials? Is that why the number changed from what she stood by to what she later provided during the discussion yesterday afternoon?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I think for the Member opposite, the information that I provided initially in answering the question was information from an ATIPP that was released earlier this year or even – I don't remember the exact time it was released but it was an ATIPP that was released.

Further to the questioning from the Members opposite, as I heard the words that they were referencing – because there's a difference between a number of benefits an employee may get paid – officials reviewed the ATIPP information and provided me with more updated information and that's what I referenced in this House, Mr. Speaker. I spent a tremendous amount of time here answering questions and I was happy to do so, on behalf of the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

When we were in this process yesterday we were trying to find out the full amount. It was quite clear, we were asking about severance. Severance is known to be payment and benefits provided to an employee upon termination from their employment. That's what we were asking about. That's the information we were looking for.

The minister first sent us to tabled document that she provided last week in our discussions yesterday and then soon after, sent us to go look at an ATIPP request when she had made a commitment right here in the House to provide detailed discussion on line-by-line items.

I'll ask the minister: Are you saying that you weren't open and completely transparent as you said you would do? Is that because of the information you were provided by officials? Is that what I understand? I'm just trying to understand. Is it what the officials had provided to you yesterday that you provided us as you received that information? Is that what transpired yesterday, Minister?

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

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

I think it's quite unfortunate that we're standing here four questions into Question Period and talking about a shameful episode that occurred in here yesterday when a Member, a former leadership candidate for the PCs, stood here in this House and conducted himself with behaviour that brings shame on this entire House.

The fact is the Leader of the PCs knows full well what it's like to get here and sometimes put out information that is later found out to perhaps not be accurate. He's done it himself. The fact is what's going on here now is that accurate information was put out there. I'm certain that the Minister of Finance is not going to throw staff under the bus.

The fact is that we were sat here for six hours answering questions yesterday. The information has been provided, yet the Member opposite wants to stand here and throw staff under the bus

and, again, commit the same accusations that the Member for Mount Pearl North did yesterday.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm not making any accusations. We're just trying to understand the information and exactly why and how this transpired yesterday.

The Minister of Justice is right. There are times you come in here, you provide information with your best efforts and best intentions to find out that the information wasn't completely accurate and you correct it. We're just trying to understand exactly what happened yesterday.

The person that was terminated at a cost of almost close to \$400,000, we finally found out that information yesterday. I know this government is about good fiscal management.

Minister, are you telling us that terminating a person without cause – which means they were doing their job perfectly well, but you terminated them anyway – at a cost of \$400,000, is that good fiscal management?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, Mr. Speaker, we sat here for six hours yesterday. In fact, the PCs had 2½ hours extra that they gave up last night and decided to vote on the budget. They had 2½ hours extra that they chose not to use. The minister sat there for six hours and provided all the information that was asked by the Opposition.

By the tenor of the questions being asked by the Leader of the PCs today, the question that I have to ask is: Are you condoning the behaviour of the Member for Mount Pearl when you continue to perpetuate the attacks that he did yesterday, which brings shame on this House and certainly shame on that side.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Minister of Fisheries was directed to set up a Fisheries Advisory Council to help inform fisheries policies and programs. Money was included in last year's budget but there was nothing spent and nothing done.

You're well into the second term, your second year. Minister of Fisheries: What is the delay?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, back, I think it was on March 8, if my memory serves me correctly, we appointed Mr. William Wells as chair of our Fisheries Advisory Council. He, at that point in time, started to do a piece of work for us to build a terms of reference and a structure of this council.

I can assure the hon. Member on the opposite side that we're going to make sure we get this council correct because it's an independent council; it's going to provide us in the Department of Fisheries and this government, information and guidance as we go forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, you've stated in public that there's a crisis in the fishery. Last year's fishery came and went. The Fisheries Advisory Council has to look at many things.

For the next two months there's fish on the water to be caught. People need to know, when will this council be put in place?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. What I can assure the hon. Member is we're putting this independent council in place so that we can get the best independent advice we can.

I have to remind the Members opposite; the Leader of the Opposition said last week it's important to remember the past. This is the same former government that promised a market advisory council, Mr. Speaker, back in the 2011 election and never delivered. What I can assure the Member opposite is we will deliver on the Fisheries Advisory Council.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We are in a time of transition in the fishery. DFO increased the quotas in the Gulf cod last week. The council was supposed to be created to create a strategic action plan for revitalization of the cod.

When can we realistically expect this strategic plan to be put in place?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we all realize there are tremendous challenges right now facing our fishery, whether it's in 3Ps or in the Gulf in 4R, on the Northeast Coast, 3L, 3K, 2J. Every area of the province has its own challenges. I can assure the Member opposite that we speak to our federal counterparts on a regular basis on this.

We put a proposal forward to the cod advisory committee a few weeks ago. We're asking that the Northern cod quota this year be increased, modestly increased. We think it's important that as we transition – as the Member said, it's important that we have the ground fishery there to help us bring us through that transition from shellfish to groundfish. I can assure the Member opposite we will work with Ottawa to make sure that this happens in the most expedient way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The town manager of Dover said she was threatened with possible jail time and fines because the town was not following the federal waste water regulations.

Does the minister think this is appropriate or even reasonable for a town clerk to be threatened by federal enforcement officers for something she has little or no control over?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. I don't think anybody should be threatened over that work; but, Mr. Speaker, if we go back four years, it was your government that allowed Stephen Harper to bring those regulations in.

What we're trying to do now is work with towns, work with the federal government to bring funds in to help with waste water, help with sewer treatment. The federal government has come onside, this Liberal federal government has come on – the regulations that were imposed by Stephen Harper which your government agreed to, did not oppose. Although you didn't sign on to it, you did not stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with all municipalities. We are dealing with Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador on it. Last year, it was \$140 million spent on water and waste water. More to come this year; next year is phase two of water and sewer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, can I remind the minister that these town clerks and town managers are underpaid because of the work they do in all municipalities in this province. They're very hard-working individuals.

Upon learning of this ridiculous action, has the minister contacted his federal counterpart to speak against such treatment to our municipal employees?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the Member for the question. I know he's very concerned. I'm going back a year now, nine, 10 months when we met with our federal MPs. We're trying to change the regulations. We're trying to help out municipalities, Mr. Speaker.

I don't need to wait for the Member to stand up – what are we trying to do? We're being proactive. I've been working on this for over a year to explain the regulations, even to the towns that feel that they have to have waste water by 2020. We are helping the towns with their flow data that they have to put into the federal government. This is something that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is helping with the towns and municipalities. We are working with MNL. We're working with every municipality in the province.

I was at the symposium two weeks ago. I spoke at the symposium in front of 350 people about this same issue. We will work with all municipalities in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The mayor of Dover and the vice-president of MNL, Tony Keats, said he has no problem doing it but when it comes to no money involved and the time frame that you got to get it done today, he has a big concern.

Is the minister confident that the funding will be available for all communities in the province to meet the requirements before action is taken by his federal counterparts?

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the hon. Member – I really do – but a year and a half ago, your government, which you were a part of, left \$34.6 million on the table that could have helped people –

AN HON. MEMBER: Unspent.

MR. JOYCE: Unspent and no money put aside from the federal government – unspent. You're standing up here today: What are we going to do? You had the opportunity, but we are taking the initiative. We are taking the steps to help municipalities to work through these regulations, to make sure the data is sent to Ottawa. We're working with the federal government to secure funding.

There will be another Canada build fund in 2018-2019. There will be a Green Fund for Newfoundland and Labrador across Canada. So we are taking proactive steps to help the municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador and we are working with MNL on these major issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind the minister that they've been in power

now for 17 months and this only happened last week.

What I'm asking is: What are you doing for municipalities in this province to ensure the federal government don't come down and threaten people with jail terms?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, once again, I hear the Member as if this government – Minister Sohi was in Western Newfoundland last week; I met with him. The Premier of the province met with Sohi. We discussed all these issues. We are working with the federal government through our MPs on all these issues.

Mr. Speaker, here's what I find strange. We're working with MNL. I went out to MNL and I spoke; I stood up and I was honest with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I spoke last year at their convention – 800 delegates in the convention. I explained the situation with the water and waste water. I explained the roles of what we can do with the help from the federal government.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? I haven't seen one of them at the last convention or the symposium last weekend, but they're standing in this House now as if they're concerned. They should have been out there where they would have heard the answers and the concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberals promised that *Budget 2017* would be open and transparent, but yesterday showed anything but that.

Minister, who made the decision to reduce access to flu shots to the public?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question. It gives me an opportunity to explain quite simply that there is no reduction in flu shots to the public. They have and continue to be available free of charge.

What we have done is looked at scopes of practice, Mr. Speaker. We are encouraging and moving the vaccine schedule into the hands of the public health nurses and community nurses and avoiding the extra billing that was happening from those physicians.

There is no reduction in availability of the flu vaccine in this province. It remains free of charge, as it always has.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Many of the province's physicians are concerned about the negative health impacts that will result from government's latest proposal to eliminate coverage of flu shots from the MCP payment schedule.

How will government ensure that 65,000 people who depend on their local family physicians to get flu shots will continue to have access to this affordable health care process?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

There will be no reduction in the number of flu vaccines available in the coming season. Of the number referenced by the Member, the vast majority of those flu shots given by doctors at an extra charge of \$17 are in actual fact delivered in clinics with public health and community health nurses.

It's simply a matter of going down the corridor and getting the flu shot in a different room. It will encourage the use of public health nurses and community nurses. It will free up physicians' time, and will not impact the delivery of the flu vaccine to the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: I would like to remind the hon. minister that in rural Newfoundland, particularly, the citizens there rely on their family physicians. Health care is supposed to be about accessibility, affordability and convenience.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: In this case, it's taking away those potentials.

Cutting dialysis supplies, slashing home care hours, wiping out the Adult Dental Program, charging low-income seniors for over-the-counter medications and now they want to cut the flu shots. Can the minister table in this House the cost analysis that was undertaken as part of this proposal?

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

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

Just to correct a little alternate fact there; there is no reduction in the number of flu shots available. A physician in any setting is still capable of administering a flu shot and billing for an office visit. He simply cannot extra bill for a vaccination which can be done at the same time.

There is no reduction in the availability of flu shots to any member of the public in this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: So with all the other cuts that have been done by this government, taking money out of the pockets of middle- and low-income people, now there's going to be an additional cost if they go to their family physician that they must pay because the doctors can't bear to; they have overhead expenses as a part of that process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: So you're back loading that back onto the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I always thought that our health care system was supposed to be proactive and we're not taking that avenue here. The Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has voiced serious concerns over the latest proposed cuts.

I ask the minister: Did you even consult with the province's physicians regarding this decision that will affect patient safety and immunization rates in this province?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Again, Mr. Speaker, some alternative views of reality. There is no diminution in the availability of flu shots. There will be no reduction in the number of vaccines supplied to the public. There is no cost to any individual who goes to a community clinic or to a family doctor to get the flu shot. There never was, nor will there be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An overwhelming majority of the travelling public feel that for months the road conditions in our province are worse than they have ever been. Mr. Speaker, two days ago, the minister stated the equipment in his department used to fix

potholes is being used in the minister's own district.

Out of the four asphalt recyclers in the province, which ones are currently in use?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd certainly like to make some corrections to those alternate facts as well. I made it clear the last time I answered this question; I mentioned the one on the Avalon Peninsula was not operational. The one in Central Newfoundland was. As a matter of fact, we have two in Eastern that are operational. We have one in Western that's operational. We have one in Labrador that's operational. So that's one out of three, four, five, six that's not operational.

Mr. Speaker, our machines are out there. We're certainly utilizing them. We've had some issues with the mechanics on the Avalon Peninsula, but that certainly doesn't jeopardize the work that our crew members are doing throughout the province and will continue to do. We're working through those situations, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to point out to the minister that's not what he said the other day. He said there is one operational in Central, no update on the rest, but I appreciate the update on the others.

Mr. Speaker, this equipment is designed to repair roads in all seasons, but over the past number of months, as potholes grew larger, vehicle damages skyrocketed and the risk to the travelling public increased, the Transportation Minister had his repair equipment collecting dust in a storage facility.

When did the minister instruct his department to actually use this equipment?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the question from the opposite Member.

Certainly, in the capacity that he worked in or served in before this government opposite were taken out of office, he would have been able to answer that question as well. The same (inaudible), Mr. Speaker, we know, and the Member opposite should know, there are conditions in Newfoundland and Labrador that sometimes are not conducive to having those recyclers out at periods of time when the weather, the temperatures are below freezing, when you have snow conditions on one day, you have clear conditions, warm conditions on another day, followed by snow.

So really when you look at a lot of these situations, the equipment is designed to do the job when the weather conditions permit, and as soon as weather conditions improve, Mr. Speaker, we have gotten the equipment out. We will continue to do that and our crews are doing an excellent job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South for a quick question, no preamble.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on April 5, there was a news release on chemical water testing; a delay in the testing. So without any preamble: Minister, at the time you said they were investigating the situation and results would be available online within 10 days. Can you provide any further details about the situation?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you very much for the question. The information has been gathered. It's either online now or will be online in the next day or two.

I can assure the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in Central, there has been no change in any conditions of the water whatsoever. It came back the same as it did before, normal, safe drinking water as I suspected.

It's either online today or will be online in the next couple of days. All the testing has been done and completed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much.

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

MS. MICHAEL: I wondered.

MR. SPEAKER: My apologies.

MS. MICHAEL: You have to mark out those seconds there now, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I will.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, heavy ice conditions in parts of the province have left many fish harvesters and fish plant workers without a source of income.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources: Will he inform us of any response he has received from the federal government to industry calls for income support, including a timeline for when harvesters and plant workers might have a decision?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for her question. I thank her for her concern. I will recognize that she did write me a couple of weeks ago on the same inquiry.

I can tell her as recently as yesterday, I was in contact with DFO. This process actually crosses a number of federal government departments so, unfortunately, it does take time to work through the system.

I can assure her that we are following through on our commitment to our harvesters and plant workers to request this compensation. I can assure her that we're hoping to hear something in the very near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to hear the minister say that they're still on top of this. People are waiting, as we know.

The FFAW has recommended that what is expected to be a significantly reduced cod quota in fishing area 3Ps be made available to the inshore sector only, which is what happened the last time the quota was 10,000 metric tons or less.

I ask the minister: Does he support making the 3Ps cod fishery inshore only at those quota levels?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we all realize the challenges that are facing the 3Ps fishery, particularly inshore with declining crab stocks and cod stocks. That decision hasn't been made by Ottawa yet this year to say what their quota is going to be, but what I would assure the Member opposite is that we want to put the priorities of our inshore harvesters first.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government has identified aquaculture as a priority industry. Jobs in this sector are important to many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We therefore have a collective responsibility to build an industry that is sustainable for the environment and for the people who want long-term employment.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources: When will we have the same robust regulations for aquaculture that exists in other jurisdictions to ensure we have a state-of-the-art, world-class sustainable industry?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, just last week in an announcement with the Jobs Committee, one of our main focuses and in the early stages of this is going to be aquaculture. We see the opportunities in aquaculture, \$161 million in our province last year.

I can assure the Member opposite, we have some of the strongest regulations in aquaculture anywhere in the world, particularly in North America. Our aquaculture industry has received sustainability recognition and certification long before others, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to do our work to make sure that this industry is sustainable for the long-term future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I'm not so sure the minister's regulations will stand up to that kind of scrutiny. The Norwegian industry has halted open-pen salmon aquaculture because sea

lice are costing them millions and they can't get rid of them. New technology is being developed for salmon aquaculture in order to minimize adverse impacts on wild fisheries and the environment.

I ask the minister: What research and development is this government doing to ensure the industry provides sustainable employment and adheres to science-based best practices around the world?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Member opposite this season or this summer when this House breaks to take a trip to the Bay d'Espoir region of this province and see what the aquaculture industry has done, and if she's got questions about the value of the aquaculture industry, maybe she should have a conversation with the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

Mr. Speaker, our industry is first notch, our companies are first notch. We support the industry. We support the sustainability of our industry. We have what I would call one of the best aquaculture health labs in this country located in Bay d'Espoir, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolutely wonderful facility.

We have four veterinarians; we have four aquatic veterinarians on staff at my department and I can assure you that we have the best aquaculture industry anywhere in North America.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I will seek guidance from the House. It being Private Members' Day, will we stop the clock and continue with the Orders or will we go to –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. I will stop the clock at 3 o'clock. We've got about half a minute left.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

We don't have time for petitions? Are we going to go with petitions?

MR. A. PARSONS: No, we're not going (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, I call on the Member for Cape St. Francis to present your motion.

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

It's indeed a privilege to get up here again today and represent the District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis. I've been here now for a little over eight years. This is a private Member's resolution that I'd really look forward to hearing debate on today.

The private Member's resolution that I'm moving forward today:

BE IT RESOLVED that this House urges the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate action to establish a joint fisheries management.

This was seconded by the Member for Ferryland.

This private Member's motion today, I am sure this House will agree, is a very important motion. It's very important in the time in our history that – Mr. Speaker, it's a very important time in our history.

Mr. Speaker, it's a job to hear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I understand we have guests in the back of the room. I would ask the guests and the Members greeting the guests to go out to the scum area if you would so the Member for Cape St. Francis can continue with his private Member's resolution.

The hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

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

I know it's nice to see so many guests here in the gallery, but it is a very important motion today that we're putting forward. I look forward to hearing from Members across the way and from the Third Party on this motion because this fisheries joint management is an issue that crosses party lines in this province. I think we all realize the great role that fisheries management plays.

Today's question is not who will deliver or how much longer we need to wait, this is something that needs to be done immediately and needs to be done by all parties and press our federal counterparts to make sure that we get a little bit of control over our fishery.

When Canada carved out provinces and territories in Western Canada, they gave those provinces jurisdictional control over most of their resources on the land. The Prairie provinces had jurisdictional control over agriculture, mining, petroleum and so they should. In the mid-'80s after years of work, the Peckford government secured an agreement with Joe Clark and their federal counterparts on offshore petroleum resources in our province that we brought into Confederation.

Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the Atlantic Accord, Brian Mulroney and John Crosbie delivered Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a pivotal time in our history and we are reaping benefits of that vision and that hard work today. In the '80s it was Ottawa negotiating the Meech Lake Accord when our province and Premier

Peckford insisted a clause be added according to – and make constitutional changes to discuss roles and responsibilities of the fishery. Now, we know what happened in Meech Lake; it died in 1990.

But just two years later was the fish moratorium, something that really took heart and soul of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Northern cod stocks depleted at such an extent that Canada, by way of Fisheries and Oceans Minister John Crosbie, felt there was no other choice but to impose a moratorium on the Northern cod.

Close it or lose it: that was the advice from the scientists. Twenty-five years later, we see cod stocks recover, not to where we want them to today, but they are recovering and we see it all over this province. I know first-hand talking to fishers and harvesters in this province in the last number of years they've seen cod, greater amounts of cod and also healthy cod.

Also in this time in our fishery we're faced with our shell fishery with stocks being depleted. We see it today because, again, speaking to harvesters that are on the water – and I'm sure from all hon. Members across the way, they speak to harvesters in their districts also – they're seeing a big decline in the crab, in particular, this year. We saw what happened in Area 6 where the federal government has come down and cut 62 per cent of the quota in our shrimp fishery. That has a huge effect on harvesters in this province.

I've gotten up the last couple of weeks and I've spoken to a petition that basically wanted to see a buddying-up system. That is completely controlled by the federal government. But for those harvesters that are out there that can't afford to make that trip to the North to get the shrimp where they are, it's hard on them because it's not worth the trip. If there was some management control that we could do and force the federal government and be at the table talking fisheries with the federal government, these are things that can change.

Management; you know if you look at our Northern cod stock and if you look at the international waters – and we always talk about the nose and the tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. They were vacuumed up by the

technology employed by numerous countries all around the world. They went out there and they said it's for anybody and it's for all. We had the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, NAFO; they did an unacceptable job of managing and allowing this overharvesting to take place. Even inside our 200-mile limit, where you'd think we'd have some control as a country, there were vessels breaking the rules and reaping our resources.

I can remember back in the day when Brian Tobin made international news by hanging an illegal turbot net by a crane in New York City in front of the United Nations. Remember the turbot war when there was a firing of a machine gun right across the bow of a Spanish vessel in international waters. It was important to draw attention to the ecological crisis of overfishing and what it was causing to us here as a people and to us as a province.

It's not only foreigners who have been responsible for mismanaging our fishery, the Government of Canada over the years has traded and sold our fishery resources at the expense of the people who brought the resource to Confederation. Under the Terms of Union, fish processing is a provincial responsibility but harvesting, including setting and allocations for quotas, fall within the federal jurisdiction.

Also, if you look in the federal jurisdiction – and it's something I talked quite critically about with the Minister of Fisheries and I know I talked to different Members across the way about it – it's the safety of our fishery. Far too often, we see harvesters out on the water in vessels they shouldn't be in when they have vessels that are onshore that they could fish in. But because of federal regulations, they're forced to use smaller vessels. We've seen this too many times. We've seen too many people in our province lose their lives at sea. That happens on a regular basis and it should never be happening.

When the Northern cod stocks collapsed, Ottawa admitted it had a role to play. They compensated the impact through NCARP and TAGS programs with efforts to deal with tens of thousands of people displaced in the fishery. It was the most economic and ecological disaster in Canada's history.

Some areas have never recovered. Our province's population has never rebound. No province has invested in sustainable management of the fisheries to the extent ours has. The resource would not be a part of Canada if we weren't a part of Canada. It was the most important industry at the time of Confederation and it remains the most important industry today. We should have a greater role in our management and we should insist that we get it.

While we can't undo what has already been done, we have the right, moving forward, to ask for it to be done correctly. Joint management is not a guarantee that there will be no errors made in judgement moving forward; there's no guarantee in it. All we want is the guarantee that the people who are impacted by the decisions, the ones with the greatest stakes, the ones with the historical claim of management, will be at the table making the choices.

That's what management is all about. What we want is for us as a people, as a province, to be at the table when decisions are made in our fishery so we can first-hand – and not let the bureaucrats in Ottawa – decide how our fishery is run. We have to be very responsible in what we're doing, but at least our harvesters, our plant workers, the people in our province will know that we have a say. That's what this PMR is about today. The idea that Ottawa protects us from having made tough decisions is really condescending when you think about it, because I'm sure we can make them ourselves.

In the offshore petroleum industry, through the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board, we're managing offshore oil and gas resources very effectively. We have become respected international leaders in the offshore petroleum resource management. We're dealing responsibly as partners with some of the biggest companies in the world. If we can accomplish that in our petroleum industry, we can accomplish it in our fishing industry.

Finally, in the last five centuries of harvesting, we need to have a collective role to managing our resource. I believe our resource can recover and management sustainable for the good of people and the communities of our province. Obviously it cannot be a free-for-all. We know

that; harvesters know that. They're the ones that will tell you.

When you talk to harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador, they'll tell you. They don't want to catch everything this year. They want to make sure – because in most cases, Madam Speaker, it's family. If you look at most of the harvesters in this and I'm sure the Minister of Fisheries – and all over this province, if you look at most of the harvesters, it's a family industry. It's a family enterprise.

I listened to a guy the other day talking about his son on the vessel and how they had eight generations of fishers in their family. If you go back to the harvesting industry in our province, you'll see that most of the harvesters in our province come down through the years. That's how it works and I'm sure it's the same thing in your district also.

We don't want to see a free-for-all, we want to see it managed properly and we know that there will be some difficult decisions. But it's better that we be at the table to make those decisions because we're the ones that care the most than the bureaucrats do in Ottawa. It's our best interest.

Like I said, we've seen what's happening to our resources and we saw what happened to stocks that have been traded, bartered and handed away too long. Other provinces would never stand for this, and it's time for us to stand and demand a long-lasting management position on our fishery.

I think the case is most effective if we, politically, put everything aside and let's work together. We have done it in the past. We've recently done it when we talked about shrimp and the Northern cod, when we talked about LIFO, when we did an all-party committee here in the House of Assembly and we went to Ottawa. We presented our case and we got results. That's what needs to be done.

This issue is not a political issue; this issue is an issue for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's an issue for the people that – the reason we came here in the first place. It was John Cabot when he got here first, the thing he noticed the most was the cod. The cod will come back and

the cod will be here forever. It's something that can sustain our future for years and years to come.

We can all agree to make this happen and we can all work together to make it happen. But this is a time in our history where we have to stand up and we have to say listen, enough is enough; we want some control of our fishery. We want control of the management of our resources. We want a say at that table. When we hear regulations again – I heard a gentleman on talking about the scallop fishery on the Southwest Coast this morning and he talked about Nova Scotian boats being able to come and he cannot go out and catch.

I don't want to hear any blame today. I don't want to hear blame that it's your fault; it's this one's fault. I don't think it's anybody's fault. I think there are solutions that can be made. I think there are solutions that should be made. I think that if we work together – it's a good time in our history. All I hear from the other side is about their cousins in Ottawa. We have seven federal MPs and a Liberal government here, so it's time for everybody to stand up in this province and fight for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's an important time in our history. It's an important time for our people.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and I ask the Premier of this province to put that on their priority list. I know that the Minister of Fisheries had it in his mandate letter. It's in his mandate letter since day one, but it's 17 months and I know there are a lot of things that had to be done and there's a lot of good things happening in our fishery, but 17 months in let's, get at it now. Let's do it now. Let's force the federal government into making sure that our people have a say in the biggest industry that is in this province, and an industry that will be here for years and years to come when oil and gas and everything else is gone.

I talked a little bit about it when I got up and spoke; this is an industry that brings generations of people together. It's an industry that brings our communities together. We look at rural Newfoundland and Labrador and we look at people who live in rural Newfoundland and

Labrador. They want to stay there; they want to stay in their communities.

I don't think we'll ever go back to the day that there was fish plant in every community, but I think there's going to be a day that we'll get fair market value for the cod. We'll get fair market value for whatever we harvest on the water, and that's what we need to do. But we need to get back and we need to have some control of how we catch our fish, how we market our fish and how we take care of the people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Not only rural Newfoundland because here in St. John's it's probably the fishing harbours in the province, but take care of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'm sure on the South Coast of Labrador that people are very concerned about the fishery. They're concerned about shrimp; they're concerned about crab. We need to do everything we can to ensure the industry that we came here to settle with is the industry that our grandchildren and other children get to see in the future.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The Speaker recognizes the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I thank the Member for Cape St. Francis for bringing in this private Member's resolution this afternoon. I'm pleased to stand here this afternoon and speak to today's PMR. This is a very important topic for our province and one this government takes very seriously. The fishing industry today still employs about 17,000 people in this province, and brings about \$1.5 billion a year into our economy.

Madam Speaker, since becoming minister, I've raised this important issue of joint management with the federal government on every single occasion. I have often spoken to the federal minister about it any time we speak. Every

single time, this is one of the topics that we, as a government, raise, and it is a priority of ours.

The Member for Cape St. Francis just mentioned the fact that it was a part of the mandate letter that the Premier gave me when he invited me into this department. Of that mandate letter, it's very interesting, because this portfolio really is a portfolio that deals directly with Ottawa on a fairly regular basis. As the Member pointed out, joint management was there, a fairer arrangement on the Northern shrimp, and that is one, as the hon. Member pointed out, that we were able to achieve as a people or as a House of Assembly to have LIFO removed.

One of the other things that were in the mandate letter was full stock assessment on Northern shrimp. That's something we were able to achieve. Unfortunately, that's not resolving the problems that we have today in the shrimp industry. But it is important to note that one of the other things we have been able to achieve is now a \$14 million five-year annual assessment on cod. Because as the hon. Member mentioned, as we go through this transition from shellfish back to cod, there's a lot of work that needs to be done. There are going to be a lot of tough decisions and it's going to bring a very tough time for many people in our province while we're going through that transition period.

I'm going to respect the hon. Member's request not to look at the past this afternoon and talk more about the future and how we go forward. I am just going to mention for one quick moment, back in 2002 a former Liberal administration did do a White Paper on joint fisheries management, and that's a paper now that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. CROCKER: In 2002.

That's a paper that we as a department have now taken back off the shelf and are looking at it to see what updates it needs, but again, this is a very important issue for us as a government.

The rationale for the joint fisheries management is based in goals to make our industry more efficient and decentralize decision making. Because I think, as the hon. Member mentioned, one of the biggest challenges we have today

with DFO is the centralization of a lot of the decision making. One of things that I've often said, as I stand here as the Minister of Fisheries, is we have to be listening to our harvesters; their input has to get to the table. It's important to have science, it really is, but it's important that we listen to our harvesters as well.

One of the other things I think we see today that we didn't see 25 years ago in the cod moratorium, we see things today like MSC Certification. Unfortunately, just last week, our 3Ps cod voluntarily removed the MSC Certification. That's unfortunate.

MSC is achieved by managing our fishery, not only with governments, but managing our fishery with NGOs, like the World Wildlife Fund. One time, the World Wildlife Fund was seen as, I guess, not a supporter of the fishery but that's different today. The World Wildlife Fund now is a very big supporter of our fishery. They're involved in many projects around the province to help manage and help us attain MSC Certification as we go forward for our products.

Joint management measures would provide influence over decision making affecting the economic and social direction of the province, securing access through confirming the principles of adjacency and historical adjacency. As we move forward, we're going to have many challenges, I think, as groundfish recovers throughout the province.

One of the brightest spots we see in the province today in the ground fishery would be in the Gulf of St. Lawrence when you look at redfish. There's an immature biomass of redfish now in the Gulf of St. Lawrence of about 2.5 million tons. This would be an enormous fishery. If you can imagine this fishery being exploited at a 10 per cent exploitation rate, you're going to see an extreme amount of redfish being landed in this province. It's going to be really crucial that we ensure the harvesters and processors in our province and plant workers are getting the benefit of this resource.

Madam Speaker, the federal government has stated quite clearly that they want to do a better job managing our oceans. We see this in the \$1.5 billion oceans fund that was announced in this year's budget. It is important for us, as a

province, to make sure that we make the case to Ottawa that we're getting our share of that money to ensure that our resources around the province, in the fishery, particularly, are looked after and sustained. We need to work with our Indigenous people. We need to work with every corner of this province.

There are important points where we have to hold the federal government to their commitment, now more than ever, as we go through that transition. I've called on the federal government to listen to harvesters many times and include what harvesters are saying in their decision making. That's so important.

I think one of the biggest frustrations we hear today from harvesters around the province is they don't feel they're being listened to by DFO, and it's very important that they are listened to.

The fishery is a common-property resource, this resource needs to benefit the people of this province primarily, Madam Speaker; closer provincial involvement and significant improvements, and the capabilities of both levels of government to frame policies that complement the industry and promote growth.

The hon. Member mentioned it a few moments ago, we have policies in place today – and I hear from constituents in my district all the time about this, about having to tie on one boat to use another boat to harvest a quota. At this point in our industry, we need to make sure that these policies that may have been effective 25 years ago, vessel policy sizes – the primary reason for vessel policy sizes in history was most of our fisheries were competitive so there was a competitive advantage to have a bigger vessel. There were ranges put on those vessels.

Today, when we look at vessel sizes, one of the most important things I think we need to look at is safety. We've seen way too many times in this province where fish harvesters have really sacrificed their lives to get a livelihood, and it's unfortunate when some of these circumstances, unfortunately, do deal with vessel size.

To date, we have, as a government, had a good working relationship with DFO when it comes to our fishing industry. I'm quite proud of some of the achievements we have made. Again, I

mentioned the All-Party Committee and the LIFO achievement. We've just seen the recent investment in the cod science assessment. We're going to see a capelin assessment again this year.

When you talk about things that affect our fishery, I had the opportunity on Monday to be in Ottawa to have a discussion around seals. If you look at the seal population in this province today of about 7.4 million animals, we're talking about a seal that would eat approximately 1.4 tons of seafood a year, because as a former Minister of Fisheries said they don't eat KFC or turnip, Madam Speaker. So it's important that that factor is also considered here. It's good again to see DFO this year doing a seal count because it's important, as we go forward, to understand the fact that the predation on our seafood by seals.

We have to better understand capelin. If you look at the food chain for cod, capelin is the primary food source. So it's extremely important as well that we realize that capelin has a role here to play. As I said a few moments ago, we do have a commitment this year to a \$2.4 million capelin study by DFO.

Since becoming government, we've seen the creation of 28 science positions at the Newfoundland and Labrador regional DFO office. I believe the actual number now is closer to 40 when you include some of the support staff. Many of these positions were eliminated by previous federal governments.

Just to note, Madam Speaker, I didn't label those federal governments; I said previous federal governments. These investments in science are crucial to understanding what's happening in our oceans, in our marine environment and is consistent with representations that we have made to the federal government on the need for more fisheries research in our adjacent waters.

If you look at, in lots of cases, some of the things that have happened with fisheries science over the last little while, it's interesting to note that DFO just last year accepted Dr. Cadigan's model that he developed at CFER and now they're using that. So it's important that DFO look at the resources that we have here in our province when it comes to that.

Madam Speaker, this government understands the challenges that are faced by our fishing industry. The hon. Member this afternoon in Question Period raised the question of: Where is our Fisheries Advisory Council? I can assure the hon. Member, Mr. Wells was appointed I think it was in early March.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. CROCKER: Yeah, and he has. He was appointed about two months ago.

I can tell you, Mr. Wells has done a substantial piece of work that structures a Fisheries Advisory Council. It's going to bring independent, non-biased information, I think, to this government, to this department as we go forward because it is important that we get these eyes on the industry.

Again, I can assure the Members opposite that this council is something that we will have in place in the very near future. This will give industry stakeholders an ongoing opportunity. This is not a one-shot deal; this will be an ongoing opportunity for stakeholders around the province and in the fishing industry to help move this industry forward as we go forward.

We understand that if we're going to have a successful transition in our fishery, we need to have direct involvement. We need DFO to look at the whole management structure that we see today and make those improvements. Take the suggestions coming from this province, from our harvesters, from our stakeholders to make sure that the best decisions are made as we go forward.

We plan to continue to work with the federal government on behalf of the people, the communities and our fishing industry. The challenging issues that are before us, surely we need a more collaborative approach. Working with the federal government will give us the best opportunity to address these challenges as we go forward.

It's interesting; July 1 will be 25 years from the cod moratorium. I don't know if that's something that should be recognized. I guess we should recognize it in the fact that the mistakes of the past should not be repeated in the future.

This is why we have to look forward as the fishery moves forward.

The hon. Member also mentioned a buddy-up system and I guess a three-for-one combining. These were announcements of the federal government this past Friday where they announced a three-for-one combining in 3Ps.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. CROCKER: Well, three-for-one combining, I say to the hon. Member, already existed in the rest of the zones in the province.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. CROCKER: It did.

But no, what we're going to see is the buddy-up system is a little different. We have three-for-one combining in 3Ps, but there are also measures going in place now for a buddy-up system for this year's shrimp fishery. The two are a little different.

There are other challenges, too, referenced in the Member's remarks earlier. He talked about compensation. There was compensation for the fishers on the Northeast Coast through TAGS, NCARP, and all those programs back in the early '90s, but this government has constantly and consistently pushed the federal government for an income improvement project in 3Ps. In 1992, as the fishery was failing on the Northeast Coast of the province, the 3Ps fishery still was doing relatively well, so there was no income improvement or buyout, whatever you want to call it.

This is one of the things that we've consistently pressured the federal government for. We will continue to do so. As a province we're committed to an income improvement project in 3Ps. I would hope that the federal government comes onside as well and provides their part of this important project.

The Member referenced difficult decisions that will have to be made. There certainly will be difficult decisions. But when I talk to harvesters, processors, and plant workers around the province I think more than ever they're willing

to throw in and have input on this to bring our fishery further.

Just last year we introduced our Seafood Innovation and Transition Program, Madam Speaker. It was, to some extent, uplifting to see the amount of commitment from our harvesters particularly, on wanting to change their technologies.

Our harvesters want to invest in the fishery. They realize the ground fishery, in all likelihood, is the fishery of the future. They're committed to it, Madam Speaker, and I can assure the harvesters and plant workers of this province that as a government we're committed to their future success.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'm certainly delighted today to stand and speak to the private Member's resolution brought forward by the Member for Cape St. Francis. It speaks to the hon. House urging the Government of Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate action to establish joint fisheries management.

My colleague for Cape St. Francis went through, from a historical perspective, some of the dates, times and initiatives since our joining Confederation in '49, not only related to the fishery but related to at times when we embarked on collaborative agreements, initiatives with the federal government that were the stimulus for growing industries in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

He mentioned the Atlantic Accord dating back to – who would have thought back then that the offshore and the original discovery of oil and gas off our coast that we would get to a point of development let alone exploration, and then have something like the C-NLOPB, joint management with the federal government having a say in how that's managed. Obviously,

originally with the Atlantic Accord those resources would be reflective as if they were on land and the benefits and value would certainly be given to the people of our great province. That's important.

That's an example of I think the resolution today of what the Member for Cape St. Francis is suggesting, that it's time to move with our history to a point in time with the fishery in our province and what it's meant for over 500 years. He also referenced the fact that every harbour and cove in Newfoundland and Labrador was settled, if it was, because of an inshore fishery.

Now we've changed, evolved; the fishery has changed. Groundfish; we know what happened in the moratorium in '92, the transition into shellfish industry and where we've gone. Out of natural process that is carried on and there's been downsizing and rationalization based – because the industry did it on its own, it had to happen. We've gone through all of that where we see ourselves today with some of the challenges we face in the shellfish fishery in particular, but in terms of that overall control. It's not only control with the shrimp or the crab; it's control of the ecosystem.

I heard the Minister of Fisheries just mention that time – he talked about seals. The harp seals, in terms of the population, may be 7 million or 8 million, who really knows. We have the grey seals on the South Coast and in the Gulf that's causing huge challenges in regard to the groundfish in 3Ps. We look at what we see in the past number of years in terms of the temperature of water and what that's done or what we speculate is done based on shrimp, the reduction in that resource.

We talk about crab; we talk about groundfish coming back, what the change in temperature of the water has done in regard to those species and where they've gone in terms of their growth or decline. So all that is interconnected in an ecosystem that needs to be managed and it needs to be managed collectively by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and as well by Ottawa.

If we're going to control it and maximize the value to it, we need to sit at the table and have a management structure portfolio method, call it what you will, parameters of how we do that.

We've seen variants of that over the years. We've seen input from here in the province. I know from my time serving in government I had the privilege – and I do say it's a privilege – to serve as minister of fisheries and agriculture in the province. Through that and through my own district which has a long history in ground fishery and cod industry dating well back – you can look at somewhere like the Town of Ferryland, but dating well back and many processing plants over the years from Trepassy to its heyday, right down to Bay Bulls, Petty Harbour, right down through.

So there has always been a strong connection and there are still a lot of harvesters, a lot of people involved in the processing sector and small business in my district. So I hear first and foremost from them on where the industry is, where it is to today and where we need to go.

We've seen, as I said, a lot of rationalization to where we are today. But taking all of that and where we are and getting back to the collaboration, the integration of getting together and managing that collectively so we can maximize opportunities.

The ecosystem is there and we talk about the species we have today and what we've harvested in the past, but there is also an array of species out there. There's research being done on expanding the species that we harvest. That's where we need to get to in terms of a 12-month fishery. I heard the minister speak to marketing. All of those are components that need to be developed collectively. We need a say in that and a control in that.

To have success on that side, you need to have a say in things like quota management, allocations, the regulatory frameworks for the inshore, for the offshore. There was mention in regard to the buddy-up system, buying out licences, buying out quotas. I can't go out in the same vessel and prosecute a particular fishery and get all my resource on one vessel. I have to license them all, I have to insure them all and I have to take turns going out on vessels, so I have to put fuel in all these vessels to go out. The complications and the bureaucracy in that is so overwhelming, it doesn't fit a business model that maximizes the opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We don't make any of those decisions. In Newfoundland and Labrador, we don't have the opportunity to make any of those decisions. That's where we need to get to so we sit together collectively or whatever the arrangement is to get to that point where we can have insight into that and provide an opportunity to come up with solutions for the immediate term, but also long term.

Some of the things over the past number of years we tried to do in our administration, recognizing the lack of science, lack of data, lack of baselines that were available, we invested some of the revenues from our royalties and from taxation we collected to get into fisheries science, to start that process of groundfish knowledge and expertise.

As I often said, through the Marine Institute, we've developed a scientific community here in the province that's probably the best in Canada for groundfish. That's through the Marine Institute. That's a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, masters in Ph.D.s., wonderful programs of the Marine Institute. Programs like innovation, like CFER which, unfortunately, I think the money was cut, but my understanding is the federal government is going to backfill that. We haven't seen that yet, how that's going to work, but those are the innovation programs in the industry that works with the players that allow our industry to grow.

As well, on that side of it, the Marine Institute, I mentioned CFER, working with industry in terms of technology and innovation, but all that needs to grow. That needs to grow in the context of and that expertise with the ability, as I said, to control some of the allocations, the quotas, some of the regulatory frameworks and all of that allows it to move forward.

On the science side, as I said, we invested through the *Celtic Explorer* out of Ireland for four to five years. Again, I think that's discontinued, but that started the process of getting the groundfish data available that allows to start – because if you don't have a baseline, you can't measure as you go forward where you are. But that allowed some of that information to be available and start the process.

I think it was in the Bonavista corridor, the scientists once told me it's an area where traditionally the biomass of Northern cod would congregate in terms of breeding. That's where they do a lot of their work in regard to looking at so much metric tons. I think in our heyday, we were up around 800 million metric tons of cod. I think now we're somewhere in the range of 200 to 300. While we're not back nearly to where we were, it's starting to grow and come back and give a sound basis.

So with all of that in mind and with the science side of it, and I know there's been reference by the federal government in regard to investing in science and starting to rebuild what has been degraded over the past number of decades in the fishery here in Newfoundland and Labrador, they have started that process. We certainly welcome that, but we haven't seen, if you will, the boots on the ground in terms of what you're doing, how many is here, what's the baseline data they are starting to build and how can we put all that in place because that's going to be essential as we move forward.

Specifically to the issue of joint management, if we're going to move forward, we're going to need all players, all stakeholders, everybody involved in regard to advocating to the federal government to make sure that, as a province of this great federation we call Canada, we can play a key role in managing a key resource for us, a renewable resource. The oil and gas is great but that's not – we certainly prosecute that. We want to maximize the opportunities with that for the people of our province, but the fishery is a renewable resource. If we manage this properly, that ecosystem I spoke of, the bounty that comes from that is multi-faceted and will serve us for decades and centuries to come.

We can only do that if we have a say in some kind of joint management in making sure we maximize the opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Not just those, as my colleague said, all over Newfoundland and Labrador because the returns on the fishery are not only in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, they provide sustainability, it provides opportunity. A new, innovative, technology-driven fishery can bring new players to it, succession from family-held enterprises now. People coming up and growing

up can see it as an option, can grow that fishing enterprise.

When you look back to 1992 and the cost of those enterprises, it's enormous from what they were to what they are today. So those are significant businesses, small businesses that need operators, as people retire, people from the family move in and succession, new entrants into the industry. All of that plays a role in the management so we can get to where we need to be.

I know back in October 2015, Mr. Trudeau, the current prime minister, did reference the fact that he's committed to a smarter co-management of fisheries and oceans. Well, at least that's a start. I know it's in the mandate letter of the current minister. I was pleased to hear that he talked about some discussions he had with the federal government in that regard. When he speaks to the Minister of Fisheries there are discussions about how he can move this forward.

I think as part of this, and I think we need something definitively to get this started and to start the process, so why not – I challenge the minister and the current government, let's collectively strike a committee of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that are involved in the fishery, that have been involved in it and those special people, whether it's economists, people involved in the social and economic policy field, people involved with interjurisdictional understanding, people involved with constitutional expertise, all of that.

Let's bring a group together and start the process of looking at how you would go about developing, co-management for the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador with Ottawa, and with all of that expertise and with those stakeholders that are involved today. That, collectively, at least then we're working toward something.

Through all of that data that's collected, create a framework in terms of what something like co-management would look like. Encourage the federal government to be involved from their perspective. If not, we can certainly present our proposal to them in regard to what a co-

management plan would look like, collectively. Whether it's Atlantic Canadian, whether it's Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, what that would look like, and bring it forward to the federal government because it's fine to say let's go, we want something. But it's much more informed and much more credible if we proceed to say here's what we researched, here's what we consulted with. We've looked at other models.

I know when you look at jurisdictional control; you can look at Europe and states there in regard to how they handle natural resources. How the federal European Union works in terms of jurisdictional control. How other states work in regards to their control. We can look at this internationally and come up with a presentation to the federal government that, hopefully, we could start that process of joint management.

Even here, provincially, in Canada, under the constitution, we have various rights and privileges that are controlled by the provincial jurisdiction and those that are controlled by the federal government. We've seen it through CETA in terms of the jurisdictions and how it works and the huge opportunity that allows in terms of our access to markets. But that can all be envisioned in regard to how the fishery is going to work in future and how we can work in partnership with all the stakeholders to make this happen.

So, obviously, we'll be supporting – I will be supporting this resolution brought forward by the Member for Cape St. Francis. It's long overdue, as he said. It's probably best to leave the political side out of it, but say collectively, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as a Legislature, let history show that it was this Legislature that finally started the process to put in place the framework. Whether it's through that committee I spoke of, whether it's through a legislative body, to start looking at what it would be like for Newfoundland and Labrador to co-manage its fisheries with the federal government to make sure we are the benefactors, for today and for years to come, of the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

This afternoon is a great opportunity for all of us in the House to enter into a very important debate on joint management. I've listened attentively to the Members opposite.

While I was sitting here, I received a message from a constituent who highlighted that, I have an individual, Harris Richards from the *Lady Kendra*, who next month will be fishing for 50 years. We all have people across Newfoundland and Labrador that have tremendous amounts of experience on the water, fishing in smaller or larger vessels, and involved in the fishery in various forms whether they're plant workers. These have tremendous value and tremendous experience.

When you talk about the involvement, I would say, Madam Speaker, like many in this House, we have relatives that are in the fishery. My father was a fisherman, my grandfather, great-grandfather and everybody else. I'm the first in the family line that would not be involved in the fishery.

I will say that being in this Legislature and having the ability to talk to fishers, to have influence on fisheries policy and find ways to advance our industry, the fishing industry, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that last year represented \$1.4 billion, the first time that it saw such a significant increase, is important. To work collaboratively with the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources because there are 17,000 people employed in this industry.

I would say that the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources has taken his job very, very seriously. There are lots of things that are happening when it comes to the fishery with the quota impacts, the resource management from DFO. When it comes to shrimp, in particular, that has negative and adverse impacts to harvesters and plant workers because of the quantity of the stock that's available, as well as the reduction in crab in various areas of the province but reflective of where price is.

There are lots of things that are having an impact, whether it's the return of the ground fishery not happening as quickly as we would like, but the minister has been meeting quite consistently with Ottawa, with the industry, with communities. I don't think there's anybody who's reached out to him that hasn't received a return call or an answer to a meeting or availability. That's really important to have a fisheries minister who has that interest in his portfolio.

I want to go back, while we're talking about joint management, it's always been a Liberal Party policy committed to having an increased presence in fisheries management, evident from past Liberal red book policy platforms of 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015, which all sought joint management from the fishery with the federal government as a policy objective.

When we sat in Opposition we asked questions on joint management, co-management of the fishery here in this very Legislature. The Premier had placed this in the mandate letter of the Fisheries Minister, Fisheries and Land Resources, in 2015. These are initiatives that are very important to us because there's a rationale for having joint management, and it's based on goals of improved industry efficiency, decentralized decision making, coordination for economic and social priorities and a more predictable management system. That couldn't be more important than it is today for us to have those shared goals.

We're seeing where we all need to find ways to operate more efficiently. So what are the best policies and practices that can be put in place? It has been referenced around a buddy-up system or different policies that could be implemented. How we look at using the technologies at our plants to make sure we are competitive and from a Workplace NL and health and safety position, that we do have competitive policies in place, because we need to also look at this from a provincial policy, also a pan-Canadian and international when we look at the trade policies that exist with CFTA, as well as with CETA.

With CFTA, we will have a committee that will be able to advance seafood trade within Canada and our Atlantic Canadian provinces. Because we need to find a way to get more value, create

more employment and more opportunity in our fishery here.

There's potential for research and development when we look at the life sciences in nutraceuticals have a very good entity. The St. Anthony Basin Resources Incorporated that's been managing a public resource on the Great Northern Peninsula, a quota of shrimp which has been drastically cut, but they have been pursuing initiatives where they can create value in the economy. Things such as mussel powder and how they go about and create a product that can add value and create local jobs.

There's opportunity through our regional innovation systems pilots. If we look at what the federal government is doing through its Oceans Program and the ability for all the companies we have that are in that ocean space and partnering with entities like the Marine Institute, with CFER, with CCFI, with the Oceans Holyrood Initiative that exists, as well as other entities. There's ability for us to really look a super cluster for oceans and where our fisheries play a key role.

We want to make sure that fisheries management not only includes resource conservation and quota management, but also the provincial matters related to the fishing industry like training, quality of our seafood, licensing of our fish plants, fisheries development and much more such as the marketing.

Closer provincial involvement in fisheries management through joint management significantly improves the integration of federal and provincial government policies. It was referenced by the Minister of Fisheries that a previous premier had put forward a private Member's resolution on this and there was a white paper that was developed by a previous Liberal government to advance this particular matter.

A provincial voice in the federal government's fisheries management decision is really important. It's important for our people, our communities, our fishing industry and our province as a whole. There's opportunity when we look at the return of cod, when we look at the immature redfish, as the Minister of Fisheries

talked about 2.5 million tons, and what that could mean in transition as we're moving from shellfish to groundfish or other resource. Then we have all of our underutilized species such as sea cucumbers, sea urchins, eel and how we deal with the seal and the abundance of seal that's out there in our oceans.

We also have to take a broad look at our transportation and our logistics when we talk about the fishery. Once product is landed at ports, whether it's at St. John's or St. Anthony, how it gets to be processed, where it actually goes. With lobsters, are they flown out live with cargo? Are they trucked 10 hours to a cod processing facility? How do we find the best utilization of resource and capacity that we have on the ground. These are big decisions, and I think having a Fisheries Advisory Council is a step in the right direction with the key players on that council to provide insight and advice.

A good integrated approach is positive. We've seen where working with the federal government has led to success, such as annual scientific assessments on Northern cod, increased research in capelin stocks. These are signs of progress. As well, the \$100 million that's been earmarked for a federal fisheries investment fund to be innovative in our fisheries.

We have investments as well provincially when it comes to the fishery, but I do want to make some remarks from the Member for Ferryland as to what he said about CFER. He talked a lot about investments that the previous administration made in research.

Scientific research is a responsibility of the federal government. We've seen this in other departments in other areas where the previous administration used oil royalties and other revenues from the taxpayer to fund things that could have been funded by the federal government. This as well can be a situation like with CFER.

Given fisheries science is part of the mandate of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and it has increased funding in this area, the province would encourage the federal government to consider funding for a long-term plan for the future of CFER and also applications under the oceans program. There's opportunity to do so

where the federal responsibility, where those dollars are attached, get used for that responsibility.

I think that's important to reference and make that point here because we all in this House, collectively I believe, want to see joint management, would like to see greater influence and input as to how we look at this common resource policy of the fishery because it is so important to our communities all across this province. From the very northern tip of Labrador, to the South Coast of Labrador, to the Great Northern Peninsula, to the South Coast of this province, to even Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, to looking at as well, the East Coast of this province, whether it be in the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources' District or St. John's or the Southern Shore. The fishery touches each and every one of us, all Members in different ways.

I have a significant attachment to the fishery, especially the ground fishery of this province and the shell fishery. There are 10 processing plants that are operating in various capacities on the Great Northern Peninsula and that leads to a significant amount of employment. That's so important when you look at the processing jobs that are attached, the trucking jobs as well as the potential for marketing and R & D.

This is why I feel there's a great opportunity, as the Minister of Industry here in this province, to work collectively with the Fisheries and Land Resources Minister as we work through, not only our CFTA agreements but CETA, to pursue policies and initiatives so that we can make sure that we're capitalizing on the right markets, that we're doing the right research and development. Provincial responsibilities should be funding when it comes to being innovative, when it comes to advancing and dealing with competitiveness and technology for our harvesters, for our companies and our processors.

Mr. Speaker, we toured a processing facility in your district and we had that opportunity to talk about it. They could benefit from having more innovative technologies and we have a provincial program to do so. But the point is here that we must not lose sight. We must make sure that the Department of Fisheries and

Oceans is very much connected to the harvesters, to the people on the ground and having those conversations.

As I started my debate here in the House of Assembly, I talked about Harris Richards who has 50 years of experience fishing in June. Now that's a lot of experience. It's people like him – and there are dozens and dozens and dozens, whether they have five years or 10 years; there are plant workers that have 40 years. These are all valuable experiences that require input in the process.

I talked to MP Hutchings who represents the Long Range Mountains. As she's up in the district and area she's made the same commentary that it's important to have DFO officials be connected, be on the ground, be in the community and have that conversation. I think that we need to have that same ability so that when policies come forward, we can have that input with the federal government.

We need to see joint management so that we can move forward to create the maximum amount of jobs, create the maximum amount of opportunity to not only look at primary processing but secondary and tertiary processing, and looking at all of the waste product that comes with the fishery to add value for the harvester at the beginning. There's a lot of opportunity to be integrated, just like in the forest industry where things are integrated.

As is the case when you look at fur farming or in farming, there's integration of waste product that comes from one area that can go and support another industry. I think we need to have that broader discussion through a joint management process about policies that aren't working, like some of the vessel fleet sizes and things you've seen in the media where people have to cut a foot off their fishing boat or two feet and be in an unsafe position because they need to get to a 39 feet 11 inches.

I talk to fishers on a regular basis. I would think that probably in my district there are more people employed in the fishery directly, indirectly and induced, than anywhere else in the province. It's a very important topic to me and my constituents and we have broad conversations. The onus is on all of us. It's a

collective resource from the community, to the harvester, to the company, to the plant worker: we all have a stake. The onus is on all of us to continue to work on achieving joint management for our fisheries.

I certainly support the motion that's been put forward by the Member opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: It's a motion that's been asked for previously, when we sat in Opposition, when the Fisheries critic at that time asked for joint management. We have a history of acting on that particular matter.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm delighted to stand today and speak to this private Member's motion by the Member for Cape St. Francis. I want to thank the Member for bringing this issue to the floor of the House so we can talk about the issue that he's raised with regard to joint fisheries management for our province with the federal government.

I have to say I'm delighted to hear the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation say that he supports this. The way I look at it, Mr. Speaker, is that this is something I would assume is non-partisan. It's something I would assume all three parties in the House would stand for the same way we worked together on the Northern shrimp and on the LIFO issue. I think we've proven that we all know what's good for the people of the province and especially for the people in communities who are involved in the fishing industry.

I'm delighted that it looks like we all will support this bill and we'll together realize it's something we have to work for. I don't see what I'm going to say today as something that's getting at any party in the House, getting at the government or getting at the Official Opposition.

I want to talk about the main issue that's involved here and realize that no matter how hard everybody works, no matter how hard the current Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources works and no matter how hard other ministers work, we have a system in our country that is problematic and a history that shows how we have suffered from that system that we have in our country.

What I have to say, and I'm sure what the Official Opposition has to say, has nothing to do with how the current government is operating. It has to do with the situation of where our fishery is situated and how this country works.

The demands for joint fisheries management as well as for custodial management of fish stocks off our shores have been proposed off and on for decades. Just from a personal perspective, back in the early 1970s when we were looking at the 200-mile limit issue, I was an activist at that time, a volunteer with Oxfam. I was still teaching, actually, but I was a volunteer with Oxfam. I remember here in St. John's sitting with the new fishermen's union, the new FFAW, and we were talking about these issues – 1973. It's been around for long this issue of us in this province not being happy with how our stocks were being managed.

It's long been our view as a party that an office on 200 Kent Street in Ottawa is not the place to make informed decisions about fisheries policy issues off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. And the one time that we went together as the All-Party Committee to meet with the minister in that building, I have to say it was the most off-putting experience of my life. Even in the way the building is in Ottawa is not a welcoming spot, let alone a welcoming spot to talk about our fisheries.

We have no difficulty whatsoever supporting this private Member's motion. I do have to ask my friends in the Official Opposition why they didn't do something about this maybe when they were government, but let's put that aside. We've got to work together now and I think it's really important that we do it.

Mr. Speaker, it would be an understatement to say that the management of our fisheries under exclusively federal jurisdiction has left a great

deal to be desired. To put it bluntly, it's been a mess. But our own management of those aspects of the fishery that fall under provincial jurisdiction has been nothing to write home about either, so we all have to accept responsibility.

A serious proposal to the federal government for a joint fisheries management regime, a serious proposal, would have to be very carefully thought out so that increased bureaucracy is not the main outcome of the exercise. That's not what we need, that's not what we're looking for.

Before we formally propose such a significant departure from the current arrangement – and to repeat, Mr. Speaker, I am supportive of it – we need to give serious consideration to exactly what it is we want such a new regime to achieve and what kind of decision-making structures would be required to achieve it.

That involves the articulation of clear policy principles that we would expect out of a new regime; enshrinement of the adjacency principle as a cornerstone of access to fish stocks, which we all agreed to; a commitment to the owner-operator principle as a key building block of the inshore midshore fishery. I believe we would all agree to that.

Continuation of the fleet separation policy to keep the harvesting and processing sectors of our inshore and midshore fisheries separate; I think I heard us during the All-Party Committee agree to that. A commitment to sustainable fisheries management; of course we all agree to that. A commitment to protection of fisheries habitat; again we all agree to that.

Ongoing international efforts to develop a robust regime for managing all stocks on the Canadian continental shelf, including those that straddle our 200-mile limit; very, very important, and as I said a minute ago, something I talked about with fishing people 40 years ago. First priority to inshore fleets and access to recovering groundfish stocks; I think we all importance of that. I hope to hear from the other two parties today as to whether or not they support an inshore only approach to the 3Ps cod fishery, in light of expected quota reductions.

I want to point out something that I think all of us are probably aware of. In Iceland, for example, Iceland has regulations to fit every situation that can happen during the fishery. They recognize that you have good times and bad times, times when stocks are in decline, sometimes when they're coming back, that there always all kinds of different situations and they have regulations in place to meet all of those. So you never have to make a political decision about what to do in a certain situation because the regulation is there.

Just imagine if we did have a regulation that said that the first 115,000 metric tons of Northern cod quota will be set aside for the adjacent inshore fleet. In the situation that we're in now with the 3Ps cod fishery, the regulation would say inshore only. So it's not a decision to be made by whoever is in government at the time and not a decision to be made by Ottawa. You put the regulations in place.

That's something I'd like us all to work on. Wouldn't it be great if we did have all of us working together? I appreciate the Advisory Council that the minister has put in place, but I think it falls short of what we could be doing if we all were working together, and we all together, with people with knowledge, and people throughout the province started to look at how can we lobby Ottawa with regard to really making this happen, to really make joint fisheries management happen, to really make sure that in doing it we would have these principles that I just outlines in place.

It's our contention that quota-sharing decisions by DFO on fisheries in the Gulf have not served the fish harvesters and the industry of our province well. That's what makes us different from the West Coast where BC is the only province accessing the ocean. Here, unfortunately on one level, we have the complications of five provinces: the three other Maritimes, Quebec and us, and we have suffered from that.

People in this province who make their living from the Gulf of St. Lawrence fisheries have been poorly served by the current regime. Change is needed. And I don't mean the party political regime there; I mean the fisheries management regime.

One of the things those who propose and those who support this motion would have to think about is how to establish an appropriate management structure for resources that are adjacent to one more province. We can't run away from that. It has to be dealt with, but it can't be something that's just left in the hands of a federal minister.

I won't name names, but those of us on the All-Party Committee will certainly remember the federal fisheries minister who made decisions with regard to access to stock benefit – benefit the industry in her own province while our people suffered. It was awful. It was terrible.

That wasn't the only time it's happened, but that is in our recent history that that happened and it was absolutely shameful. It was unjust. It really was one of the most unjust things I've ever experienced. Not even meeting with us, treating us like – I don't know, I don't want to use awful words here, but having no respect for us; absolutely no respect for us. I think the Member for Cape St. Francis may know the word I was going to use but I won't say it.

We have to look at how we get what we should be getting when it comes to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There are other stocks. For example, the halibut stock from which so little access is given to adjacent fish harvesters in 3Ps. That's unjust. That's not right.

There are many other stocks too that are adjacent to more than one province, and it seems like we lose out all the time when it comes to the access. So a joint fisheries management that would take into consideration – there are others, but they've always been getting it. So how do we get the share as well, and working together to do that, to really present to the federal government we are serious about this and we need to make it happen.

It's complex, it's not simple, but we can't let that stop us. We can't let the complexity of the situation stop us. We can't just continue with the status quo as it is. Things are never going to be different if we do. I'm not saying that people in Ottawa, like the researchers, don't know what they're doing. We have good scientists in DFO. I'm not going to deny that. We've had excellent scientists up at White Hills and had a lot more of

them before the Harper government, and it's something that has to be rebuilt.

That's something we have to be saying to the federal government that we have to rebuild from the damage that was done by the Harper government when we lost so many scientists in general in this country, but especially when it came to the fishery here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There's an old saying, Mr. Speaker: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. But there is ample evidence that when it comes to the management of the fishery here in our province, the present system is broke. So by all means, let's put our differences aside and try to fix it. Let's not our debate or our discussion be the government trying to prove we're doing okay, and this is what we're doing. Us on this side, the Official Opposition and us saying yeah, but you know you got to do better.

I'm not into looking at what the relationship is with this particular Liberal government with the federal Liberal government, that's not the issue here. The issue is we have an age-old problem, and the age-old problem is we have not had the voice that we need to have when it comes to the management of our fisheries. We haven't had that voice.

We know what can happen when we get together and fight for something. We got together on LIFO and we won that situation. We haven't won everything, we know that, but we got together and we won the LIFO situation. As bad as things are right now with the Northern shrimp, it'd be worse if we hadn't saved LIFO, and we did that together.

So I think that's right. I think that's what this joint fisheries management motion is all about. We work together, we gather people in the province. The three political parties work together. We show Ottawa that, number one, it needs to happen, and we show them by coming to an agreement on the points I've raised. We give to them, this is what needs to happen, this is what needs to be done. We know, and we do it together non-partisan, non-political, doing it for the good of the people, showing that we all are the same people here. This is not a political issue, a partisan political issue.

Unfortunately, in Canada the decisions around our fishery are the most political of anywhere in the world. We've got to change that. George Rose talks about this all the time. He talks about how we've got to change it, and he's the one who talks about having a regulation-based fishery. You agree to, what we need to have in place. We know all the different scenarios that can happen. What regulations do we need to deal with the different scenarios at different times with regard to the fishery? Then we have those regulations, we all have created them together, we agree to them and we remove the partisan politics out of the decision making. The joint fisheries management could do that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's truly an honour to stand here today to speak on this important issue. The fishery in the District of Bonavista, as many are aware and most are aware, goes back 520 years when John Cabot first landed in Cape Bonavista, threw the basket over and hauled up the fish. I know that my friend and colleague for Ferryland mentioned the science done off the coast of Bonavista.

Before I get into the main motion of this private Member's resolution, I'd just like to thank the minister for giving us an update on the conversations with DFO and other government departments on the ice and conditions. I'd also like to thank the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi for bringing that question forward to the House of Assembly today.

I know the Minister of Fisheries is sick of hearing from me about that issue, but it is a very important one for the people of my district because right now you have Bonavista and Trinity Bays blocked in with ice. This is preventing fishermen, both crab and lobster fishermen, from getting out, getting their pots out in our area. It's also preventing people from getting the work they need in the plant, especially in the OCI facility in Bonavista. People are hurting right now because you've got

people whose EI is running out or has just run out.

I'd like to thank the minister, again, for the update. I know he'll continue to push Ottawa for a timely response in that.

Getting back to the fishery, I grew in a fishing community called Catalina. My grandparents were fishermen, so I know a great deal about the fishery. When you sit in the House of Assembly and you listen to the Opposition, you listen to Members on our side of the House, you always learn a lot more in – you get facts and details which you didn't really know about.

Growing up in the '80s it was a boom time in my community of Catalina and on the entire Bonavista Peninsula. You saw the Port Union FPI plant running three shifts, 365 days a year. You saw groundfish plants in operation in Bonavista, Trouty, Charleston, other areas as well.

Times were good in the '80s, but leading into the 1990s and into 1992 when we saw the collapse of the cod fishery and the moratorium – which we have the 25th anniversary of that coming up early this summer – you saw a change. You saw an out-migration which we had never seen before. We saw people displaced, people with lots of potential but nowhere to focus on, people who have worked years and years and years in the fishing industry automatically just displaced and out of work. You saw some retraining. Some people took advantage of that, others decided to get into other fishing industries.

In the late '90s into the 2000s, you saw the prevalence of crap and shrimp. The former FPI plant in Port Union transitioned to shrimp. You saw Bonavista go into crab. Those plants flourished for a long time, until 2010 when Igor came through and saw the destruction of the OCI plant in Port Union. That displaced hundreds of people as well.

You see the ups and you see the downs in the fishery, and that's certainly true in the District of Bonavista. That plant hasn't opened yet. We're hoping to do some good things. I know the town is working hard to take over that facility and we're going to keep pushing that forward.

Right now, you've got over 300 people employed seasonally at the OCI plant in Bonavista processing mainly crab. This year there's a bit of a challenge because of the reduction. There is a bit of worry of people getting their hours, getting their weeks to qualify for Employment Insurance. So that's the ups and downs that we see all the time. We saw a boom of the shrimp and the crab in the late '90s into the 2000s, and now we're seeing it peter off again.

What we're seeing as the shrimp and crab stocks go down, we're seeing an increase after 25 years of the cod fishery. One of the good things I saw last year is fishermen actually going out every week and catching codfish. I believe the quota was 2,000 pounds a week. It started off, initially there was a set quota but then it changed to every week, a weekly quota of 2,000 pounds.

The biggest challenge we have right now in the fishery is the amount of places that we have to process this fish. We have Icewater in Arnold's Cove and we have another on the Bonavista Bay side. My friend from Fogo – Cape Freels will be able to better tell me where that is.

MR. BRAGG: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Beothic fishery, but as we see our quotas increase we need to focus and find other processing facilities because the biggest challenge the fishermen had last year – and they expressed that to me time and time again when I talked to them – is they had nowhere to transfer their fish. They were waiting time and time to get it to Icewater, to get it to Beothic.

This is why I like the idea of the \$100 million fisheries fund. That can help processors. They'd have to chip in their own money, upgrade their facilities. As we see cod increase, you're going to see more demand to have that product processed.

I talked about it in my budget speech the other day where we'd love to see some renovations done to the OCI facility in Bonavista. Right now, they're doing crab. I'd love to see that as a multi-species, crab and capelin. I'd like to see that into crab and codfish processing. That's certainly a big dream of mine.

Getting into a little bit of background on joint fisheries management, people at home may not know what that means. The rationale for joint fisheries management is based on the goals of improved industry efficiency, decentralized decision making, coordination of economic and social priorities and a more predictable management system.

As a number of people talked about here today, DFO and Ottawa calls the shots on everything related to our fishery. What this private Member's resolution does today is calls for a joint fisheries management. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador partner with our federal counterparts and we also include industry stakeholders. What a collaborative and integrated approach does between the province, the feds and industry, it supports industry development. You're getting feedback from all the stakeholders in the fishery.

As I mentioned before, as we transition from shellfish to groundfish – and one word I liked today is sustained ecosystem management, where as you see one species rise you have the other one that falls, but you get a balance where you can fish multi-species without the impact on others. I think that's a great approach, Mr. Speaker. I know there's some good fishing up in Baie Verte – Green Bay. Fleur de Lys and La Scie and all those wonderful places have a great, vibrant fishing industry.

One thing that we've had for years in Catalina was seal processing. I know that you've got a seal processing facility there, Mr. Speaker, and only 80,000 seals were taken this year. This is why I'd like to see new players come into the scene and get those numbers up. We've seen the pictures on Facebook where 80-something female crab were eaten by a seal. So if we get the seal population down, we get an expanded fishery, within the seal, looking at new markets, I think that would be a great thing as well.

What we've done as a Liberal Party through the years, you've seen that part of our commitment to joint fisheries management brought up in our red book in 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2015. The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources had that in his mandate letter. So we have been committed to this since 2003. In fact, former Premier Roger Grimes brought a private

Member's resolution to the floor of the House of Assembly about this matter back on May 8, 2003. This issue is 14 years old, Mr. Speaker. It goes back further than that but, as a party, we've been doing work with this for that long.

With our *Way Forward* document, Mr. Speaker, we are putting a new, renewed focus on our groundfish. As the Lieutenant Governor said in the Throne Speech earlier this session, the cornerstone of our economy will lie in the groundfish industry.

I'm just going to read a little bit from *The Way Forward*, Action 1.17: "The provincial fishing industry is currently experiencing changes in resources with the decline in high valued shellfish and increased abundance of groundfish resources. As this change proceeds, the industry will require supports to develop the groundfish industry through quality assurance initiatives and market development opportunities in order to access new markets and maintain competitiveness. Building on investments announced during Budget 2016, our Government will work with industry stakeholders to establish the Fisheries Advisory Council and will assist the Council in its planning and implementation activities for transitioning to groundfish."

As I said, the Throne Speech highlighted this. The groundfish industry will be a cornerstone of our economic growth, Mr. Speaker. We talk time and time again about being addicted to oil. We can't put our eggs in one basket. We did that with the fishery years ago with the cod fishery; we saw that collapse. We did that with the oil industry and we saw that collapse a few years ago. What we need is diversification which will see our province grow economically, and groundfish and other species as well will be a big part of that.

Getting back to *Budget 2017* we are investing more than \$5 million in our wild fishery and aquaculture industries which will leverage significant investment from private sector and the federal government. This includes \$2.8 million for an aquaculture capital investment fund, \$2 million for the Seafood Innovation and Transition Program, \$100,000 for our Fisheries Advisory Council, where William Wells was named the chair and is currently doing terms of

reference for that group. We hope to get that up and running. What that will do is it will take key industry stakeholders and advise government on how best to deal with our fishery, Mr. Speaker.

Also within *Budget 2017* we see \$500,000 for the Fish Plant Worker Employment Support Program. That's those who are displaced from the fishery, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this winter, I had the distinct honour of attending a major announcement at the Marine Institute, the place where I got my education through the Marine Engineering program there and the Bachelor of Technology. It was nice to be back there but it was also nice to sit there with our federal counterparts, Minister Judy Foote, our Premier, to announce \$100 million –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Judy Foote, she delivered \$100 million in a Fisheries Fund that will benefit Newfoundland and Labrador. Contrary to the phantom fund of \$280 million that they didn't deliver, zero they delivered; we delivered \$100 million. And to quote Minister Foote, there's more to come.

As I mentioned before, if it comes from Judy Foote's mouth, I'll believe it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KING: She delivers. She talks about not only Newfoundland and Labrador getting their fair share, but getting more than their fair share. What I also liked about that announcement – it was \$330 million for Atlantic Canada for the fisheries, but \$30 million of that is for Atlantic Canadian marketing of our fishery product. And that is something we haven't seen in a long time; \$30 million will go a long way.

As I mentioned about in my budget speech two days ago, the days of the cod block and the salt fish getting shipped out as the cheap white fish, those days are gone. What we need to do is better marketing of our crab, our lobster and especially our cod fish –

AN HON. MEMBER: We never got it from them.

MR. KING: No, that's right.

Especially our cod fish to get it to market because we want our cod fish to be a high-quality product that gets you the high-quality markets, that gives our fishermen the best value for their product.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this resolution today.

Thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

It is my pleasure to stand in this hon. House today in support of this resolution. Mr. Speaker, as many of my hon. colleagues have talked about thus far this afternoon, this motion is about taking immediate action to establish a joint fisheries management committee.

It's very clear, Mr. Speaker, that we need action now. The fishery is at another critical juncture and it's time, it really is time, that joint management becomes a reality.

The PC Party has long supported joint fisheries management. We've supported it in our policy platforms for decades as I'm sure many other governments have as well. Since 1949 we have not found a willing partner in any federal administration, but perhaps now things will be different. Perhaps now if the friendship that the Members opposite so often celebrate truly means something, then they will have the chance to deliver the role that has always eluded the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Do you know what? If that happens, every person in this hon. House will celebrate it. If we can work together to make it happen, why would we squander that opportunity? If it's in the best interests of our province, why would we let any other interest prevail? What considerations could possibly trump the best interests of our people, our families, our communities and our economy?

Some might argue that the fishery is yesterday's industry, that we've acquired all the benefit out of it that we can expect and it's time to move on to a different future in innovation or technology. Burn your boats, I think was the cry that we heard before. But there is no Member in the House better positioned than I am to challenge that very idea because no district has seen its future transformed by new fisheries opportunities more profoundly than mine has in the past decade.

Mr. Speaker, because of the arrival of aquaculture we now have a strong and thriving traditional fishery and aquaculture industry. Both industries work in harmony. We see fisher persons who are able to work in the aquaculture sector. That sector has shift work; it's usually six days on and three days off. Fisher persons are able to work in both. They can work in the aquaculture sites and on their three days off they can still manage their fishing enterprises. It's truly been a win-win in Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune and it can be win-win for many other rural communities across this province.

My district was one that was in serious trouble because of the decline in the fishery. In fact, our population dropped from a base of 14,000 or so back when the fishery was strong, and it declined as far as 7,000 people, Mr. Speaker. We really needed something to turn it around. The fishery of the future became aquaculture in combination with the wild fishery for us and it has worked.

You visit my region today and you will see a true success story. You will see optimism and confidence. A sustainable future in the fishery is not a fantasy for the people of my region, it's the new reality. Aquaculture is a relatively new approach to the fishing industry and we're still learning how to do it effectively. We're learning from others and we're learning by doing, taking the initiative ourselves. From time to time, yes, there are setbacks, but the positives far outweigh the negatives. We are quickly becoming the mentors that other are looking to for advice.

If you go to Europe or Asia or Africa, you'll recognize that seafood is not a luxury but a staple food that the hungry planet relies on. We see projections that the demand for fish protein is going to continue well into this decade and

possibly be a problem by 2050 if we have not identified other means of sustaining our fish protein. It's also a source of tremendous economic activity for many millions of people. It is our choice whether we are on the producing side and the earning side of that equation. It's entirely our choice.

If we had done nothing here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we would have been left behind – or in the Coast of Bays – empty harbours and empty communities. Today, in other communities we see across rural Newfoundland, there are harbours that are in danger of emptying out. But it's our choice whether that emptying occurs or the community turns the corner into a brighter future by embracing the fishery of the future.

Some people wonder if Newfoundland and Labrador is destined to slip quietly into abandonment while the rest of the world grows, particularly in light of the hard economic times we've experienced in the last two years. But if a hungry world of 7 billion people in need of protein were not opportunity enough for us to seize, then perhaps we would deserve to slip quietly away.

Fortunately for us and some of our communities, we are fighting back against the prophecies of doom and we are turning the corner. This is just the start. The South Coast is not the anomaly; it's the beacon on the hill, the inspiration for others to follow. The new fishery can be a foundation of the sustainable future that our province needs to secure.

Why not the fishery? Who said the fishery is the industry of a bygone era? Don't people still eat fish by the ton? We have just gained entry into the European Union marketplace without the burden of exorbitant tariffs and that is a phenomenal game changer.

Who else needs seafood other than Europeans? Well, we're selling seafood into Asia. Consider the size of that marketplace. Consider the strengths we bring to the sector, centuries of experience, a unique natural environment, a clean marine environment that others can only dream about, trade networks, infrastructure, professional expertise that makes us recognized leaders.

Some of the greatest opportunities are the ones sitting right before our very eyes, but there is something that we need to change first. We need our country to recognize that our exclusion from the table when it comes to harvesting decisions is a wrong that has to be corrected. If it's not going to be through constitutional change, which is nearly impossible to achieve in this country, then let's take the Atlantic Accord route and create the fisheries equivalent of an offshore petroleum board. It works for the petroleum sector and it can work for the fisheries. Now is the moment to do that.

Let's stop pondering about it and talking around in circles, let's get this done. The time for letting others determine our future is passed. This is Canada's 150th anniversary. So Canada here's how you can celebrate your birthday: By granting to Newfoundland and Labrador the save that we require to turn the fishing industry, we brought to this country, into a truly sustainable 21st century enterprise.

Throw off the shackles of colonialism, that's what Canada did 150 years ago and that's what we need to complete now, by taking a seat at the table where the harvesting decisions and quota allocations are made. What a legacy that will be for Newfoundland and Labrador to celebrate Canada's 150 years.

We truly hope that we can all work together with our partners, all parties across this hon. House, all organizations and stakeholders directly impacted and the Government of Canada. We truly do hope we can make this a reality. We are committed to working with our colleagues to make that happen.

I'm going to take my seat a little early because our colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, would also like to rise and speak a bit to this motion here today. Again, strong support for this motion and very pleased to see strong support from everyone who has stood to speak to this very important motion, possibly historic motion here in the House today.

Thanks so much.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm only going to take a very few minutes. First of all, I just want to thank the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis for bringing forth this private Member's resolution today. I think, as has been said, there are times in this House of Assembly when – obviously there are a lot of times when we disagree on various things but there are also times when we all have to work together. This is certainly one of those times for sure.

The fishery is very important to all of Newfoundland and Labrador. While I might represent an urban district in Mount Pearl and Southlands, and the closest thing we have to fish really is the few trout down in Tyrrewits Brook and Powers Pond and so on, that's the reality, but with all that said, I can recall back in the day when we had the cod moratorium and our former federal fisheries minister in very colourful terms, I might add, stated that he didn't take the fish out of the water, didn't take the cod out of the water. We remember the fallout that came from that.

Part of the fallout, surprisingly perhaps to some people, was actually in the City of Mount Pearl because there were a number of businesses in Donovans Business Park, and there are still business there today that are, a large number, that are very much involved with our oceans and with our fishery in terms of supply and service and support and so on.

When we see issues around our fishery, declines in our stocks and so on that impact our fishers all throughout the province, it also impacts all of us. It impacts all of our districts in one way or another and it certainly impacts the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador from a global sense.

It is something that is important to us all. I think it's something that we all need to be working on. So I will be supporting this motion. Anything we can do come together to come up with a united voice, a united strategy, as we've seen in the past with the committee on shrimp and LIFO, we've seen it where parties have worked together on mental health issues and so on. So there is a precedent there. We have had success in the past when we've actually worked

together. This is certainly a time that we need to do that.

With that said, I'll be taking my seat. I certainly support this motion and once again thank the Official Opposition for bringing it forward and thank all parties, the government and the NDP, for supporting it and recognizing the importance that this is to our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I know you listened intently to our talk today because the fishery is important in your district also, as it is important in most people's districts here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It was an interesting day. I want to thank all the Members who took part in the debate here today. It's a good day in the Legislature when we see all Members in the House of Assembly basically agreeing; not all on side with some comments but basically agreeing.

I want to thank the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and the Member for Carbonear-Trinity – Bay de Verde for participating and giving us some good insight into what's happening in the fishery. I want to thank my colleague from Ferryland, another very knowledgeable man in the fishery, also former Minister of Fisheries. I want to thank the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation from St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows. I want to thank the Member from St. John's East – Quidi Vidi who I had the opportunity to serve on the All-Party Committee that was very effective in helping the fishery, especially when it came to LIFO and shrimp. I think we did a good job and we worked well together. I want to thank the Member from Bonavista. I know that historic Bonavista, it's a very – the fishery is huge in that area, it always has been and it's a beautiful district.

I want to thank my colleague from Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune who gave us great insight in the

fishery and who I always enjoy listening to here in the House of Assembly. I also want to thank the Member from Mount Pearl – Southlands. I don't know if there's either harbour in his area or not, I don't think there is either wharf or anything in it, but I thank him for his participation here also today.

It's a great debate. It's a good debate and it's nice to see all hands on side, but now what we need, we need commitments. We need commitments from the government. We need commitments from the Minister of Fisheries. I know in debate today we heard of the talk of a committee; a committee to get together because, as we know, things can be kicked down the road and pushed for periods of time. I think, minister, and the government across the way, this is a time we all can stand together and say this is something that we need done immediately. It's something that we need done.

As was said here today, and was said before, we're talking five centuries of fishing in this province. I'm sure that the talk of joint management has been brought up with all parties in this House of Assembly for many, many years, but now is the time that we know the importance of our industry. We know how important it is to the people of our province, that we need action immediately. That's what this motion was put forward today for, it was asking for immediate action.

I ask the minister – I know it's in his mandate letter – to discuss it with the federal government and that's good. It's nice to see that you do have talks with the federal government. But I'd ask today if you'd put a committee together to ensure that fisheries managements gets put on the table. This is not going to be an easy process; it's going to be a difficult process. It's not just a matter of just saying we want fisheries management and it's done. There are a lot of aspects to our fishery. There are a lot of different provinces.

The Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi said there are five different provinces that fish in our waters and I know that they're going to want their part also. But we have to be firm and we have to stand strong and make sure that our fishery's interests are expressed. We want the management; we want to be able to talk at the

table. The stakeholders in the industry, our harvesters, our processors, our labourers, we want those people to have a voice and say how their industry is run. That's what this is about today.

I'm going to call on the minister again. I want to see a committee formed to go and give to the federal government, this is what we want, this is what we demand and do the process, see what the process is going to be. We need that done. It's no good of just coming here to the House of Assembly and all hands say that's a great idea and two years down the road say, yeah, it's a great idea again. We need action right away. Our fishery is so important.

I know that for my District of Cape St. Francis, the fishery is a major industry in the district. I have a lot of harvesters; I have family members that are harvesters, so it's important. We need to look at all aspects of the fishing industry.

I know a couple of people here today mentioned about the seals. Yes, there's a count going on the seals and we want to know how many seals. The Member for Bonavista said 80 baby crabs. Actually, it was 180 baby female crabs that were inside one seal. We know that the amount of food –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: And the other thing too – and that's an important point that we always talk about science and we agree with science. There's nobody in this House of Assembly that's going to say that science is not a part of it, but I heard only recently that a scientist said he doesn't think that seals eat cod. Ask harvesters. Ask the people in the province that are on the water. Ask the people that see it.

These things have to be done. That's why it's important for us to be at that table to talk. There are a lot of aspects to our fishery. Harvesters and people that are on the water, while I respect science, I respect harvesters also. I respect their wisdom and their knowledge of what the fishery is about. I also respect what they can bring to the table.

Like I said earlier when I got up and spoke, people in this province don't want to see our

fishery gone in a couple of years. It's been here for – it's our history. In most of our families, it's been handed down from generation to generation. And it will be in the future; it will continue to be handed down.

There's something about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I don't know about all of you, but I love being on the water, and most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians love being on the water. I know you do, Mr. Speaker, to be able to have the opportunity to go out and catch a cod and have a day, no matter – it's just the point of having that day. It's who we are as people. The fishery is important to us in so many different aspects.

It's who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's the reason why we came to this province. It's not because of the weather. It's because this province is such a great place to live. We need to make sure that our fishery is sustainable in the future. In order for it to be sustainable, we need to say at that table. That say at the table cannot be shoved down the road for years and years' time. It needs to be done immediately. We need to get people in place right now to have action to make sure that we have some say in how our fishery is run in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

I declare the motion approved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, this House is adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

I will remind Members of the Management Commission, we have an in-camera meeting in

my office – the sooner the better, we can conclude and get out here for the regular part of the meeting and get wrapped up for the evening.

Thank you.