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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we start the proceedings today, I'd like to welcome to the public gallery a former Member of the House of Assembly, Mr. Glen Little.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in our public galleries today we welcome members of the Association of Midwives of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Newfoundland and Labrador Council of Health Professionals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also welcome to the public gallery today Pastor Jeff White of Port de Grave Tabernacle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we have Members' Statements from the Members for the Districts of Ferryland, Mount Pearl North, Bonavista, Mount Pearl – Southlands, Labrador West and St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Jill Curran, owner and operator of Lighthouse Picnics in the Town of Ferryland.

Jill Curran operates her business out of a 130-year old lighthouse in Ferryland, specializing in gourmet lunches sourced from local suppliers along the coast. Meals are prepared, packed in baskets and brought to the people perched on the cliffs taking in the fantastic view of the ocean and wildlife.

Lighthouse Picnics was awarded the Doug Wheeler Award during the Tourism Excellence

Awards gala at the 2016 Conference and Trade Show. This award is presented annually to a person or group which has made a significant contribution to the tourism industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. Jill's entrepreneurial skills have made Lighthouse Picnics a tremendous success, and she is a great ambassador for success in our tourism industry in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of the House to join me in congratulating Jill Curran of Lighthouse Picnics on winning the Doug Wheeler Award and making a significant contribution to the tourism industry on the Southern Shore.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Coffee Matters in Mount Pearl and owners Scott Hillyer and Cyril Peach on recently being recognized by the *Huffington Post* as one of the best bakeries in Canada.

Coffee Matters recently opened one of its newest locations in the District of Mount Pearl North. It is a state-of-the-art facility that is able to accommodate anyone in our community. This business is a prime example of the talent and skill that is possessed by local entrepreneurs.

There's no doubt in my mind that Mr. Hillyer and Mr. Peach and their team have all of the skills for success and will continue to be recognized for their abilities and exemplary customer service. I recommend to anyone who hasn't stopped in to Coffee Matters on Commonwealth Avenue to do so – and if I'm there, I'll buy you a coffee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: That's true.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) and I'll be there.

MR. KENT: Not all at once.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this House on both sides to join me in congratulating Coffee Matters – Mount Pearl and their team on a great accomplishment that they should be very proud of, and wish them all the best as they continue to reach new heights.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the students and staff of Bishop White all-grade school in Port Rexton. World Autism Day was celebrated on April 2 which took place during Easter break; however, Bishop White decided to celebrate on Monday, April 18, to support one of their students – Jaxson Tremblett. Jaxson has autism but that has not stopped him from being an active member of the student body.

Students participated in a number of events such as watching a video on autism awareness, after which they were each given a piece of the puzzle, a symbol of autism awareness, writing what makes them each unique. Jaxson's sister, Emily, made bracelets for each student, distributing them along with buttons, tattoos and stickers provided by the Clarenville chapter of the Autism Society.

The highlight of the day was when ball hockey captain Compton Rose asked Jaxson to drop the ball at the opening ceremony of the regional tournament. Jaxson was unable to stay past the first period of the game due to sensitivity issues, but being a true leader, Compton saw fit to award Jaxson his sportsmanship award.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating Bishop White School.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Mr. Speaker, recently, community leaders and volunteers gathered at the Reid Community Centre to select Mount Pearl's Citizen of the Year. As usual, this year's nominees were all tremendous community volunteers who all share a love for Mount Pearl and an unwavering commitment to community service.

The judges had a very difficult task in making the selection again this year, but in the end they decided to choose a very deserving lady who is the true definition of a volunteer.

Emma Thornhill is a founding member of the Mount Pearl Seniors Independence Group and has played a significant role in helping this tremendous organization grow into the largest active seniors group in the province.

Since 2003, she has volunteered with the group as a board member, Chair of the Membership Committee, member of the Afternoon Tea Committee, member of the Health and Awareness Day Committee and was also a founding member of the Drop in Centre which is a program that helps seniors to become socially active with other seniors in the community.

In addition to her many contributions to the Mount Pearl Seniors Independence Group, Emma is also a volunteer with the Vera Perlin Society, Special Olympics and the Canadian Cancer Society. Newfoundland and Labrador is a better place because of the contributions of people like Emma Thornhill.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating this outstanding individual on receiving this honour and thank her for her unwavering commitment to the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Mr. Peter Reccord on receiving the Bishop's Award of Merit in the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. This award is given to individuals who have contributed significantly to the advancement of the life and work of the church in their parish, diocese and province.

Peter Reccord meets and, in many cases, exceeds all criteria of this prestigious award. He has been a member of the Labrador West parish for the past 50 years, serving on vestries, as warden, Chair of the Joint Board of Management, and now delegate to Provincial Synod. Peter is currently enrolled in the Exploring Faith program and is working toward his diploma of theology.

As for his community involvement, Peter has served on town council, school boards, Recreation Commission and President of Minor Hockey. He is a long-time volunteer with the Labrador West Food Bank and a long-time member of the Labrador West Lions Club.

If the church were to designate a person that exemplifies outreach, Peter Reccord would be the one!

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Peter on being awarded the Bishop's Award of Merit at Synod on April 23.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to salute the Newfoundland Outport Nursing and Industrial Association – or NONIA, as it will be much better known to residents of the province.

Many of us will be familiar with the NONIA store on Water Street in St. John's, but we may not all know its history. NONIA was founded in 1920 and incorporated as a non-profit business in 1924. It originally helped people in rural

Newfoundland access health services by raising money to pay the salaries of public health nurses. The money was raised by selling hand-knit garments.

In 1934, government took over the public health, but the industrial side maintained and continues to operate today, paying approximately 150 Newfoundland and Labrador knitters and weavers for their work and making their wares available to consumers.

The craft of knitting is handed down through the generations and it is not unusual for NONIA to have grandmothers, mothers and daughters all producing for them.

On April 29 – tomorrow – Judy Anderson will retire as store manager of NONIA after 17 years in that role. Keelin O'Leary will succeed her in that position.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Judy for her service, and to wish NONIA continued success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Before we move on to Honour 100, the Speaker recognizes Churence Rogers in the gallery today as well – and I believe, if my eyes are correct, I recognize MP Ken McDonald.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. SPEAKER: For Honour 100 today we have the Member for the District of Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will now read into the record the following 40 names of those who lost their lives in the First World War in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve, the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine or the Newfoundland Forestry Corps. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: Lewis G. Hudson, Peter Hudson, Edward Hulan, Gerald Hulan, Howard Hulan, Hubert Hull, Stewart Hull, Victor Willie Hull, Alfred Humphries, Cecil Hunt, James Hunt, Robert Hunt, Arthur William Hurdle, Robert J. Hurley, Thomas Hurley, Francis Joseph Hussey, Harold Hussey, William Thomas Hussey, Alfred Hutchings, Richard Hutchings, William S. Hutchings, Harold Hutchins, Aloysius Hynes, Harry Hynes, James Joseph Hynes, James Walker Hynes, Lemuel Edward Hynes, Leonard Hynes, Richard Edward Hynes, William Patrick Hynes, Herbert Stewart Inder, Joseph Ingraham, Moses A.C. Ingram, John Alfred Ivany, William Cox Ivany, William Garland Ivany, William M. Ivany, James Ivey, Arthur Joseph Jackman, Bert Jackman.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It just has been brought to my attention, I don't see him, but Councillor Danny Breen, I believe, is in the galleries as well.

Welcome to Councillor Breen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well, before proceeding to Statements by Ministers, last weekend the province did see a tragedy in little Quinn. I'd like to recognize, many of the Members here today are wearing either pink or purple to remember Quinn.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased to rise in his hon. House today to announce the introduction of new regulations that will facilitate the safe and responsible governance of midwifery in our province.

Developed in consultation with practising midwives from across the country, educators, the Association of Midwives of Newfoundland

and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Council of Health Professionals and other stakeholder groups, the Midwives Regulations will officially come into force on September 30 under the *Health Professions Act*.

With the introduction of these new regulations, all practising midwives in our province will be required to meet established educational, exam and other certification requirements and follow established best practices for the protection of all involved. These new regulations have been developed in accordance with national standards and we are pleased to introduce them for the benefit of families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

The new regulations will provide advance notice of the registration requirements to stakeholders, including those currently practising as midwives and expectant mothers.

Ensuring a smooth introduction of regulated midwifery in the province is an important public protection initiative for our government and it is a necessary first step as we continue to work with midwives and other health care professionals to implement regulated midwifery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

On a personal note, I'm delighted to introduce these regulations. My late wife was a midwife who, in her prematurely shortened career, delivered over 2,000 babies.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

First of all, I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. At a time in our province when we're seeing reductions in health care investments and reductions in health care services, it's good to see some positive news today.

We recognize the value that midwives can add to our system. We recognize the importance that regulations can have. We see that all practising

midwives in our province will be required to meet established standards including education, exams and other certification requirements.

Mr. Speaker, I was quite pleased as a former premier that our government initiated the process and moved this process along. I congratulate the minister and the government in seeing it through to the end. This is going to be very important for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. At long last the midwives regulations have become a reality, thanks to the hard work and determination of the midwifery organizations and some very committed officials.

Young families who have been asking for midwives to practice here as they do in every other province will be happy at this news. They won't be happy that this government has decided, unlike every other province, to privatize the midwifery service. It won't be under our health care system, so families with modest or low incomes will be shut out by this government once again.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize that today is National Day of Mourning.

On this occasion we take a moment to remember those who have been lost or injured due to a workplace accident. This is also a day to renew our commitment to improving health and safety

in the workplace and to focus efforts to prevent incidents.

I was honoured to participate in a wreath-laying ceremony today at Confederation Building with the Premier, as we joined more than 100 people who laid a wreath in memory of a loved one or a co-worker. I want to thank the St. John's and District Labour Council for organizing this event.

I am pleased to note that WorkplaceNL has new information that shows the incidence of workplace injury and illness in Newfoundland and Labrador dropped to an all-time low in 2015.

Despite this positive news, there were 24 work-related fatalities in 2015 – a reminder that we need to make safety our focus every day.

Mr. Speaker, promoting safe and sustainable communities is a priority for our government, and we will continue to work with our partners to help to ensure workers return home safe and sound at the end of each day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I want to extend thanks to the St. John's and District Labour Council for organizing this event today. I felt privileged to be there representing the Official Opposition.

It's a very important day when you look at people that presented wreaths here today that lost loved ones. It's so important that we remember them and we also make sure that safety is first and foremost in any workplace. It's important that we educate people and it's important that we have proper training in place. It's also important that we have supervision so that people can go to work and be in a safe workplace.

I saw a little girl there today with a T-shirt on saying that she didn't get a chance to see her daddy. It's so important that we make our workplace safe for the families. Not only for the workers but for the families, so that people can go home to a nice evening with their families after a long, hard day at work.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We all take time today to recognize those killed or injured on the job. Nobody should be harmed or die while trying to make a living.

Today is also a day to push for more safety measures to protect people in their workplace, measures such as presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters, one of government's election promises. Another important step would be to put legislation in place covering front-line worker emergency responders with PTSD and heart disease.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to highlight the strong potential for growth in Newfoundland and Labrador's mining sector.

A total of 10 mineral commodities are produced or mined in the province, and we are pleased to see that, over the last few months, the price of iron ore has increased significantly.

Canada Fluorspar's St. Lawrence project is moving towards construction; ERP Compliant Fuels is interested in Wabush Mines and talks are continuing; and Vale is starting construction of the underground mine at Voisey's Bay this summer.

Just this past week, I visited Vale's Long Harbour processing plant with the Member for the District of Placentia West – Bellevue. The plant has now moved from processing a mix of imported nickel matte and Voisey's Bay concentrate to processing entirely Voisey's Bay material. I was impressed by this massive, modern, innovative facility and by its young, enthusiastic operations workforce.

Budget 2016 is an \$8.48 billion budget that includes a significant amount of investment in the province; for example, our government has committed an additional \$100,000 for each of the next three years in the Junior Exploration Assistance Program to encourage mineral exploration.

Just last week, junior mining company, Rambler Metals & Mining PLC announced that it has secured financing that would allow it to extend the life of its Ming Mine to 21 years.

The mining industry remains a valuable contributor to our economy and our government is laying the foundation for well-planned and well-managed resource development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly acknowledge and thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. We, too, on this side of the House – obviously Newfoundland, historically, have had tremendous wealth generated from our mining industry. Certainly in past years and in the future it is bright in terms of those resources and developing those resources.

It is good to see the Canada Fluorspar project in St. Lawrence and over the past number of years, our administration has worked with those partners and it appears the market is now right to start the development. We're certainly delighted to see that for the Burin Peninsula.

As well, these are traditional industries that we continue to need to grow and diversify. Under our administration we introduced the RDC to look at research, to work with industries like mining, develop innovation, to diversify traditional industries; but also to the minister and the government on the other side, we're eager hear in terms of overall diversification, what they're going to do to drive the economy, because we need that and, to date, we see little details of it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. It is great to hear about the growth in mining but, in reality, government has little control over how this non-renewable resource sector develops. What I would really like to hear is government's long-term economic plans for growth in a sustainable economy not so dependent on the whims of global commodity prices.

We heard plenty of promises about diversifying the economy from them during the last election, but nothing since.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, it is becoming quite clear the people have lost trust in this government. There's growing mass confusion and concern about the Liberal budget, and we're hearing from people every day. We're hearing people every hour. Members of their own caucus are confused.

The Premier was on *Open Line* this morning and couldn't provide any clarity on how they made their choices. It sounded like he was confused on it as well, when asked about the choices that have put our province into a tailspin.

So I ask the Premier: How can the people have confidence and trust in your government when your budget will devastate people and the economy in a budget that contains no hope and no plan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the budget contains a lot of plans, I'd say. The first plan, step one, is to clean up the mess that was left by this previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: That's plan one; that's step one. Without making the decisions that we had to make in this budget, we would have been left with an astounding \$2.7 billion deficit.

Instead, with the decisions that we've made, that has been down now to \$1.8 billion. We know there's a lot of work to be done because there's a big mess to clean up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: I would like to ask the former premier about how he made the decision back in 2007 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: – and his Members to decrease taxes to the highest income earners in our province, taking away billions of dollars of money that could be used today to offset this mess that we're in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Here we go, Mr. Speaker.

Once again he can't explain why people should have confidence or trust in him when all he can do is talk about what happened back in 2007 when I and most of us over here were nowhere near this House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker. It's 2016; he's the Premier of the day. He needs to figure out why and how people can have confidence in him.

I'll ask the Premier this: Has your Cabinet and your caucus – what you call your team of leaders – have they had a say in this budget, or is it simply just a two-person show, yourself and the Minister of Finance?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No, it's not a two-person show. We've engaged a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We have an \$8.48 billion budget sprinkled throughout every department right now. The minister – you just heard her make some comments today about things that are happening, things in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will have a good future, but first and foremost, we have to get the financial house in order. You had over 12 years to do it, \$29 billion; \$25 billion of it related to the oil industry and \$4 billion in tax decreases. Imagine today if you had a plan for the situation that we were in instead of living in the day, living on hope that oil would stay at \$148 a barrel.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I guess he didn't like the response he got after his *Open Line* appearance this morning, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are concerned about this budget. We're hearing from not only citizens but also business owners and entrepreneurs who are concerned about the approach that the Premier and his Liberal team have taken in this budget. The business community is concerned that Liberal choices are already smothering the economy and killing investment.

I ask the Premier: You have positioned yourself as a team of business leaders, how can you justify the measures that you're taking? Only six months in office and you're already killing the economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I would assure you that any business owner in Newfoundland and Labrador, any community, any municipality in Newfoundland and Labrador, they will tell you one thing. If you want to talk about smothering, you talk about smothering Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in debt. That's where you were leading this province. Just one year ago the budget that you produced, you missed the mark not once –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: – not twice but three times, less than \$900 million deficit last year –

MR. SPEAKER: I'm restarting the clock again on the hon. the Premier. I'm asking for order and decorum.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Your five-year plan this year, you missed the mark by three times the amount – by three times the amount. It would have been \$2.7 billion.

I can tell you, as I said earlier when I started my comments to the question, any business owner, any community in this province they know one thing you have to do is get the debt under control. I'd asked the former premier: Is he satisfied that interest costs and debt servicing now outpaces education in our province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, now we know the Premier can't justify the decisions he has made, his own decisions. It is his choices, but we do know one thing, Mr. Speaker. He has lived up to one of promises and his promise to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador is the least, lowest and last. And that's what his budget is going to do, Mr. Speaker. He is going to make sure that he lives up to that promise.

Extra money will come out of people's pockets, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken with a hard-working family man just this morning. He is a man married, two teenage daughters. He is going to have to pay an additional \$1,000 just on the new Liberal tax on insurance – an extra \$1,000 just on his family insurance.

I ask the Premier: How does your decision to put taxes on insurance mean a stronger tomorrow for that family?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I will say and we provided some information to the Third Party – at least they had the wherewithal to reach out and start looking for some of the information. We are still very competitive when you look at the tax rates that

we have in Newfoundland and Labrador, still very competitive when you compare us not only to Atlantic Canada, but many other jurisdictions that we have in our country, and that includes the levy.

I'm very proud to say too, very proud to say, that we have implemented an Income Supplement program for low-income families in Newfoundland and Labrador, for seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador, that is very competitive and will put money back in their pockets, much needed, I would say, Mr. Speaker, and we're still very competitive in all tax brackets. As a matter of fact, lower than we are in all areas in 2006-2007.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

One of the first comments we heard from the Premier on *Open Line* this morning was how important it was to take taxpayers' money out of taxpaying and put it back in the economy. It was a good comment he made this morning – exactly what happened back in 2007 and what we did as a government when we were in power, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: So, Mr. Speaker, I'll let that father of the two teenage daughters know he can come in for a briefing with the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, violent crimes are on the rise in our province. You just check the news any day. Just this morning, armed robberies, home invasions, violent crimes are simply everywhere and we hear it every day. The Liberal budget is going to reduce policing in our province and people are concerned about their safety and they're going to become more concerned when they learn of these decreases.

I ask the Premier: Was there analysis done before you made the decisions to reduce policing, and what impacts on these reductions – what will they have on public safety, Premier? Can you tell us that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am happy to answer this question and actually spent almost four hours last night in this House answering questions from the Member across. So he should know that there was actually no reduction whatsoever in police services in this province with this budget.

In fact, there were positions that were announced last year that they couldn't recruit for and were not filled, and those were the positions that were eliminated. So there's actually no less boots on the ground when it comes to policing in this province.

However, I can say the RCMP has enhanced 24-7 coverage in Grand Falls-Windsor, and they're actually saving money by doing it – and we look forward to expanding that pilot.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, that's correct; we did have a good discussion. I thank the minister and his staff for that last night in Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, the Harbour Grace court is a busy place, and that courthouse and others are closing. So officers in Harbour Grace, in Placentia, the Cape Shore, Whitbourne, Bay de Verde and all of those areas are now going to spend hundreds of hours a year having to travel to St. John's to go to court, instead of spending their times on the streets protecting the citizens they're there to protect and the communities they're there to serve.

So I ask the Premier: Has an analysis been done on how court closures will impact policing in

communities, and will you release those analyses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

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

I'm happy to answer this question again, as I did last night. The fact is that we've got great police forces in this province, whether it's the RNC or it's the RCMP, and we've enjoyed working with them and meeting with them to discuss the challenges we face, challenges that have existed for some time.

Again, when it comes to these court closures, we know that it will face challenges. Again, challenges that the Opposition faced when they were closing courts in this province over the last 12 years.

So, again, we will work with our forces, and they will work with us over the next four months to ensure there is no reduction in policing services to these communities. Again, we had to make very difficult choices based on the financial mess that was left to us, but thankfully, we have great police forces that we'll continue to work with to ensure safety for all the citizens of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, when they're going to be spending hundreds of hours a year, hundreds and hundreds of hours a year travelling from all those areas to drive to St. John's to go to court. Some of them do it on a daily basis while they're working, Mr. Speaker. That is not boots on the ground in all those areas; that's a reduction in policing.

In Estimates last night during our discussion, the department identified there are roughly 120 RNC officers who are eligible to retire today. They're eligible to retire. It's more than a

quarter of the entire force, more than 25 per cent of the entire police service.

I ask the Premier: What is your plan to ensure that policing resources stay strong in the years to come? We know it takes a long time to train police officers; it takes a long time for them to learn their jobs. Instead of reducing recruitment, what are you doing to ensure those resources stay strong?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we discussed last night, we do know that there are 127 officers that are eligible for retirement. This year so far we've actually had two retire; compared to last year when there were 121 eligible to retire and, I believe 15 retired.

I can say since 2005 there's been 151 – sorry, 254 graduates of the RNC program and 246, 97 per cent, are still working with us. Since that same time, 152 retired and we actually recruited 246. I can say that we have more recruits coming in. The Member opposite should know that there's no reduction here.

We have a great working relationship with the RNC. I'm sure if it's a concern for the chief of the RNC, he's more than willing to come and discuss it with me. We'll have this conversation to make sure that our policing continues to stay strong.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of AES yesterday said in this House that it was the PC government that closed the college campus in Springdale. I need to educate the minister. It was actually the Liberal administration under his former boss, Premier Tobin, who closed the

Springdale, Lewisporte, Bell Island and other campuses in the late '90s.

I ask the minister to now outline to the people of this province what additional campuses and programs are the Liberals planning to cut this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe it was the former administration that did cut \$22 million from the College of the North Atlantic. With that big a number, sometimes you can infer that maybe cuts would be coming to campuses. It was the former administration that cut \$22 million from the campuses.

Do you know what? There are a lot of campuses that, as a result of those cuts, are not functioning, in my opinion, to their full efficiency. We're going to work with those campuses to try and build up their strength, unlike what you did.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: With that response, obviously, I'm worried about where rural Newfoundland is going in post-secondary in their second budget that we'll see later this fall.

The Minister of Education in one of his most bizarre comments to date stated that the high adult illiteracy rates were reason to shut down 54 libraries.

I ask the minister: How will cutting these learning institutions in so many of our communities improve our literacy rates? He can't possibly be that out of touch.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, what I said yesterday was that we have had a long-term sustained high rate of functional adult illiteracy. There is a reason for that. The reason is what the previous administration was doing, including not delivering on the adult literacy strategy they promised in 2007. What they were doing was not working.

One thing they were doing was cutting and cutting and cutting the library system and not keeping up with the cost of operating the library system to the point where the library system was undergoing a slow atrophication process.

The libraries that are slated for closure now had an average hour of operation of 18 hours a week, that's all, frequently between 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, when most people in the population simply could not access them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: He should check with those communities that have 18 hours and ask them, do they want to get rid of that? I'll tell you, they'll say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Does the minister think it's reasonable for children, youth and seniors to travel for hours to access books and learning materials now with the new setup?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, what is unreasonable is to continue to cut and cut and cut a system and expect it to operate optimally. That did not happen under the previous administration.

The provincial libraries board, once we started the Government Renewal Initiative in January it became quickly known to me that the public libraries board had been advocating for a number of years to close libraries due to the fact that they no longer could afford to operate them. The cost of paying employees was going up and up with the 39 or so percent increase in wages that occurred over the previous 12 years.

The cost of leases was going up. The previous administration got the libraries board into several leases that were hundreds of thousands of dollars. It just simply could not be sustained.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the minister, who was the critic in the previous administration, was adamant that they should stay open and now he's flip-flopped on that also.

Mr. Speaker, this week the Minister of Education stated that libraries have become a place for seniors to check their email, a remark that have many of our province's seniors highly offended.

Mr. Speaker, libraries provide so much more than books. Libraries are common centres in the communities. Libraries offer services like tax return assistance, reading circles, homework help, public speaking competition for students. For many, the library is their only source of Internet access.

I ask the minister: Will you admit that by closing libraries you are depriving the people of our province from yet another critical service?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: I'm going to tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty evident that it's pretty easy to sit there in Opposition with half the information uttering half-truths. I did not say

that libraries had become a place for seniors to check their email. That's not what I said, and you should check the public record and get your facts straight.

Mr. Speaker, this previous government –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KIRBY: If you don't want to hear the answer, don't ask the question is all I can say. We stand here day after day trying to answer questions that the Opposition is asking and they heckle right through Question Period. I don't think they hear a word over there, Mr. Speaker.

The fact of the matter is the previous government cut and cut and cut around the edges of the library system and expected it to operate without sufficient numbers of funds. What we're doing now is introducing a regional system that 85 per cent of the people in the population can access.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Two years ago the Minister of Education said in this very House, "I believe that the Newfoundland and Labrador government should stop all cuts to libraries" He requested additional funding for libraries.

I ask the minister: Does he stand by his belief or does he blindly follow the orders of the Finance Minister?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I serve in this capacity at the pleasure of the Premier and I'm pleased to do so. I'm pleased to work with the provincial libraries board who had to make a difficult decision the other day around libraries and the continuity of services. Those are people who value literacy, who value reading and want to ensure that the public in Newfoundland and Labrador has reasonable access.

The only glimmer of hope that I could see in what the previous administration did is that the numbers of electronic materials increased. In one of the annual reports it was said to increase by about 25 per cent. It's very obvious that people are accessing text differently. We have to change the system, modernize it so we reinvest in electronic access, the texts, books by mail and other investments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, we along with many others were very troubled to hear the recent announcement concerning cuts to the provincial Breast Screening Program. Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer among women in Newfoundland and Labrador. My family, like most families in this province, has been devastated by this disease.

Understanding the importance of early detection, I ask the minister: How can your government justify making such a significant reduction in the provincial Breast Screening Program, a step backwards in the area of women's health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In 2011, five years ago, the Canadian Task Force on Preventative Health issued new guidelines for low-risk women for breast cancer screening. Those included removing the breast screening clinical exam and removing the requirement for mammography under the age of 50. These were of no benefit to low-risk individuals. If the Member opposite has concerns that she's in a high-risk category, I would suggest she talk to her primary care provider.

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

MS. PERRY: With 20 per cent of women under the age of 50 diagnosed with breast cancer, Mr. Speaker, I say it's 20 per cent too many. We're going to come back to that again in this House.

The aquaculture industry on the province's South Coast is a fine example of how to diversify a rural economy. My district has seen prosperity, population increases and more people working than ever before. But under this Liberal government, I have people telling me that they feel like they are being targeted for just trying to feed their family.

I ask the Minister of Business: What is your diversification plan for rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member talks about the aquaculture industry. This government realizes the value of the aquaculture industry. It's one of the things the Premier had in my mandate letter. It's one of the objectives we will follow.

We've had the opportunity, throughout our short time in government, to work with the industry. I've worked closely with NAIA and we will continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, losing \$500 a month at least plus more in additional taxes and fees is not going to help people eat or feed their families. In fact, it is going to drive them away.

Mr. Speaker, I hear no plan from the Liberals on rural investment. Actually, with their decisions to close support centres and libraries in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, three in my district alone, all I can see are cuts. Our Poverty Reduction Strategy showed that when people have access to these services, they have a greater chance at success.

I ask the minister: As the Liberals rips these services from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, what hope and opportunity is left for our people?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for her question. When it comes to looking at the economy and looking at investment, we have a number of plans and strategies that we have that we're working on.

When it comes to looking at investment in the tourism industry, we're seeing incredible numbers this year already posted. When it comes to planning and attraction of motor coach traffic, our actual numbers on our website are up 16 per cent. We're continuing to work on regional governance and work on that plan when it comes to how we deliver services, like the public libraries.

People will have access to library services within a half an hour – to be able to access improved services with a minimum of 30 hours a week. There are lots of things that we're investing in when it comes to trade, when it comes to economic development, broadband, the list goes on and on and on.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, a lot of people in rural Newfoundland and Labrador can't afford broadband and without libraries, I don't know how they're going to access the Internet. No plan, no investment, no hope. After all, it was the Liberal Premier who infamously described our province as the last, the lowest and the least. Well, another infamous quote that the Premier made and it's currently making the rounds again is if you can't listen, you can't lead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: I ask the Premier if you were listening to the taxpayers of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, when you decided to close the medical clinic in Hermitage, schools in Whitbourne and Conche or AES offices across the province, just to name a few of the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – devastating cuts that Liberals are making to rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for her question. There are certainly lots of investments in budget 2016-2017 when it comes to looking at how we're going to diversify and enhance our economy and also providing services all across this province.

If we look at the tourism industry, we have \$13 million in a marketing budget. We have \$18.5 million in culture and heritage investments in our province. We are also investing in venture capital. We're dealing in infrastructure – over \$570 million is being spent in this budget on roads, on schools, and infrastructure all over. In municipalities, maintaining their Municipal Operating Grants.

There are a lot of good things in budget 2016-2017 –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North, for about a 20-second question.

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the people of Botwood and surrounding communities are deeply concerned with the axing of 24-hour

snow clearing; however, that concern only worsened when they received news those emergency room hours at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Centre would be cut in half with no after-hours care.

I ask the minister: What do you say to these thousands of people who have real concerns about travelling the highway to Grand Falls-Windsor to access emergency care, when they can no longer be sure that the highways will even be cleared and fit for travel?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for his question. As I mentioned yesterday when we talked about 24-hour snow clearing, we know that there were three pressure areas of the province that we provided that. We did not provide 24-hour snow clearing for the entire province.

One of the things that we are doing that will be different next year – it will not be implemented until next winter – is the fact that we will not have a dedicated service to that, but we will make sure that safety is number one. Our supervisors will have that in place so we'll have snow clearing available –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Marine Atlantic service across the Gulf of St. Lawrence was a key provision under the Terms of Union between our province and Canada. Oceanex has launched an action in federal court which could lead to the elimination of the federal subsidy on goods shipped by Marine Atlantic, thereby driving up the cost of goods to consumers in this province.

I ask the Premier: If the province has requested or plans to request intervenor status in this case

to ensure the people of the province continue to benefit from the subsidy that Canada pays on goods shipped via Marine Atlantic?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I agree with the Member opposite. The Marine Atlantic service to Newfoundland and Labrador, which is really the main transportation link that we bring in goods and services, that we all use to support our province.

The current case that's ongoing right now – there is a case management discussion that's happening right now. It's our intention – this case will be heard, we understand to be late fall. We've met with the officials of Justice who are preparing a position for us to be as a province right now.

I can assure you one thing. Our job, working with the officials in Justice, is to make sure we protect the interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that is exactly the position we will be taking.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I think the Premier just said yes. I'm not sure. It was hard to tell.

I want to add then, Mr. Speaker, that the already high cost of food will necessarily go up if this subsidy is dropped. This would add to the increase in food prices, which is inevitable because of the Budget 2016 hike in the cost of gasoline. People are not going to be able to feed themselves.

So I ask the Premier: Will he commit that he will do his duty and ensure that the province intervenes on behalf of the people? I still don't know if that's what he said.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: What I said to the Member opposite – and I thank her for her question, by the way, because it is a very important subject.

Protecting the interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, working with the officials at Justice, realizing that this is a commitment, a constitutional right that we have within our province, we will take a position that benefits Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is the position we will take. This is a case right now that we anticipate will be heard later on this fall.

I want to go back to one other comment she made. There were two questions there. She fails to recognize and fails to accept the fact that we have put a program in place to help those people, those low-income earners, those seniors you're talking about that can't afford the food as you say.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: The fear mongering you continue to do, will you please accept the fact that there are supplements put in place. It is a temporary levy –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER BALL: – that affects Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we will make sure that we protect the vulnerable (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, last week I attended the AGM for Bridges to Hope, the food bank in my district. The number of people using their food bank has tripled in the past few months alone. Many are families who had never used food banks before.

I ask the minister: What is she going to do about the fact so many hard-working people are forced to go to food banks even before they've been hit by her regressive budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the opportunity to stand again in this House and speak about the Newfoundland Income Supplement, which is a program designed to make sure that those people in our province, particularly low-income seniors, individuals, single parents, people with disabilities, have a relief from the revenue measures that we've had to implement as a result of the prior government's poor planning.

Those low-income individuals will have the opportunity to receive income to offset the increases through the Newfoundland Income Supplement. We're also enhancing the Seniors' Benefit program and also making sure that we've provided funds to AES to help those individuals who may be impacted by this budget there as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for St. John's Centre for a very quick question.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, let's look at the minister's Income Supplement. A family of four earning \$36,000 must pay the minister's levy of \$300. They lose the \$250 Heating Rebate, leaving them in fact with an Income Supplement of \$38 a month.

Then they also lose the provincial portion of their HST rebate and get hit with the minister's increases in gas tax, sales tax and her additional fees. So her Income Supplement is no big help.

I ask the minister: Will she table a detailed analysis showing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for St. John's Centre.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Will she table a detailed analysis showing how her Income Supplement is actually going to help hard-working, low-income workers in this province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'll thank the Member opposite for the quick question. I'm actually going to do better than provide her with technical briefings. It's obvious the other side of the House here doesn't want the facts.

I'm going to do better than that. We're going to post online a tool so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are in the low income – and our constituency assistants and their constituency assistants can provide the facts to low-income people as opposed to falsehoods that the Opposition have continued to perpetuate since April 14, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

During Question Period I heard rumblings from the Opposition that I was being unfair with time for answers. I will ask the Clerk to provide to the Opposition House Leader the times for both questions and answers. I've been very clear with the House that questions are 45 to 50 seconds, answers are 45 to 50 seconds. I've cut answers off at 50 seconds just as I have cut questions off. The Clerk will be happy to provide the time.

The only exception to that is when heckling interrupts a question to the point that I stop the clock and reset it for an answer. The same will apply if the heckling is from the other side and I stop the clock and reset it for a question. The Speaker is fair. If somebody wants to challenge the Speaker, I ask them to stand and do so right now.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

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

Yesterday in this House a Member opposite asked me for the detailed description of the status of layoff notices. I would like to table that information in the House for the Member opposite.

I would also like to table for the Members of the Official Opposition the information that the Third Party has been already provided, because we haven't been asked for that by the Members of the Official Opposition, which is the comparison of provincial personal income tax payable for 2017.

I'd also like to provide for the Members of the Official Opposition, who have not requested it, the 2016 Atlantic provinces comparison of personal income tax payable.

I'd also ask the Speaker to allow me to also table for the Members of the Official Opposition, who have not asked for the information, the comparison of provincial income tax payable in 2006 and 2016, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Hearing Aid Practitioners Act, Bill 25.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 2, 2016, and I further give notice under Standing Order 11, I shall move that the House not adjourn at 10 p.m. on Monday, May 2, 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

immediately to make it fairer to
Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever
pray.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance in
Question Period said that I need a primer and
that, in fact, she's going to give us information,
the facts on which to base the calculations for
her wonderful Income Supplement. Well, Mr.
Speaker, that's exactly what I did. I used all the
information that government has given so far on
their Income Supplement.

As I said in my question, Mr. Speaker, if we
have a family of four with one earner making
\$36,000, they are going to have to pay the
minister's levy of \$300. They're going to lose
their Heating Rebate because that's been
disqualified. That means they're down \$550.
They may get about \$900 for an Income
Supplement, but already they've lost \$550. So
that brings it down to \$450 for an Income
Supplement. If you average that out over the
month, that's about \$38 a month.

This same family is going to have to pay 15 per
cent on their home insurance. They're going to
have to pay, with all the additional taxes and the
increase in the taxes on gas, about 20 cents a
litre more on gas. They're also going to have to
pay more to register their car. They're also going
to have to pay a number of other fees. So I'd
say, in fact, that wonderful, great big Income
Supplement will be a great big zero. It will be a
zero or maybe it will be a few cents a day.

We're talking about a family of four with two
adults and two children who are making \$36,000
a year. That's not a whole lot of money, Mr.
Speaker. Their supplement, the supplement that
this minister is so proud of, basically amounts to
nothing.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I bring the following petition to the
House of Assembly:

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

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

WHEREAS the continuation of the Hebron and
Long Harbour projects and the commercial and
residential growth on our region has increased
the volume of traffic on this highway;

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this piece of highway connects
Route 10, the Southern Shore to the Trans-
Canada Highway. Over the past number of
years, it has certainly become instrumental in
regard to just general travel for residents back
and forth between the two regions, but certainly
from commercial industrial activity and
employment. Many residents from my area
travel back and forth to Bull Arm, Long
Harbour, and even commerce back and forth,
even the fishing industry in regard to
transportation of various fish species back and
forth across that piece of infrastructure.

Over the past number of years the previous
administration – we invested somewhere around
\$1.5 million to the various sections of that piece
of highway. It continues to need upgrades, some
maintenance work to maintain it, but very
heavily used.

From an economic development point of view –
and we've heard chatter in this House from the
government on economic diversification. We

haven't seen a lot of details, but from this piece of infrastructure it's extremely important. I certainly urge government and the Minister of TW to continue to have a look, do maintenance and continue to build this infrastructure that's so crucial to the Southern Shore and the access to the Trans-Canada Highway.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand and present this petition on behalf of the people who have signed it. Many people, some of whom turned out last night to a town hall that I attended here in St. John's, a town hall where

people spoke very specifically to this issue of the levy. It is something that is weighing heavily on middle- and low-income people, starting with people with incomes of \$20,000, who just manage to keep things together.

An individual, and sometimes families with that income, are just managing to hold things together. A family earning under \$25,000 and having to pay \$600 because of two people in the house having to pay \$300 each – because it's based on persons – that is an extreme amount of money for them. That family with one or two children is just managing. They haven't got a cent from paycheque to paycheque.

Here on my desk I have hundreds of emails that have come into me – hundreds of emails. That's one of the messages from so many of the families, Mr. Speaker. They live from cheque to cheque. They don't save any money, not because they don't want to, it's because they cannot.

I've had a tweet from a person who said we don't know what else we can do to live as a family of five, with five mouths, a family who no longer has a land phone. They don't have TV. They can't pay for extras for the children like dance classes. Now they are saying how are we going to be able to pay not only this levy, but the increases in fees and the increases in taxes that have been laid on them.

People really don't know what to do. We talked here in this House already today about food and about the need of people to feed their families. If we think the lineups at food banks are long now, it is going to increase. This is not a joke, it's serious. One easy way for the government is to adjust this levy, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much. I'll continue the next time because I have many more.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the federal government cannot justify discriminating against Newfoundland and Labrador when determining dates for the recreational ground fishery;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to be vocal in calling the Government of Canada to extend the recreational ground fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, promote fairness and safety in tourism in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I've presented this petition a number of times. To tell you the truth, I was hoping by the time the 1st of May came along that this would be put to bed and people in the province would know what's happening with the recreational fishery.

It's very important, Mr. Speaker, especially in these times of doom and gloom and everything else in our province, that people can look forward to going on the water and it's safe. That's the main thing I emphasize every time, is safety, that they don't be pushed out on weekends when the wind is high and they're taking chances, and taking chances with their lives.

Also, Mr. Speaker, people are wondering – because a lot of people want to plan holidays and people are coming home. I have a brother that I spoke to last week who said, did you hear anything on the fishery? When is it? Is it going to be the same time? I said I don't know. People want to know because they plan trips and they plan their vacations around this.

It's important that we, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, have the opportunity to go out and catch a fish like we've always done. It's important to all Newfoundland, rural and people in around St. John's. Everybody loves to go out and catch a cod.

I emphasize that these – they brag about their great relationship with their cousins and I know they're speaking to their cousins in Ottawa. Can

they get this done and get it done so the people of Newfoundland can know when this fishery is going to happen.

Thank you very much.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the Deficit Reduction Levy, as introduced in Budget 2016, unfairly targets the middle class; and

WHEREAS the Deficit Reduction Levy asks low-income earners to pay more than their fair share instead of increasing taxes to high-income earners;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately stop the introduction of the temporary Deficit Reduction Levy.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this levy has been a great cause of concern for many in Newfoundland and Labrador. The discussions we've had with people since budget day are truly, truly heart wrenching.

Mr. Speaker, I can understand, I think, how someone who's never done without food or done without heat probably don't realize the impact that this levy is going to have. As a person who has great experience with hard times, and having come from a rural area that has seen some really hard times, I can assure you for a senior citizen or for a single mother with two or three small children, trying to find \$300 is a lot of money. For someone who's working in the oil industry or making millions of dollars, it's probably one less supper at Raymonds.

The people we're talking about don't even know what it would be like to go inside the door of a place, Mr. Speaker, like Raymonds. We have to live in the real world and the real world for many people in Newfoundland and Labrador is middle to low incomes.

Of everything we've seen in the budget – it's all devastating; it's all deplorable. None of it is what the people asked for. None of it is what the people voted for. The most upsetting thing of all we've seen is the levy.

I really don't know who they're listening to, or who they're taking their advice from. Just last Friday night, a former Liberal premier of this province even suggested the levy be done away with. Listen to the people; go with the higher income tax brackets. I don't know who they're listening to. They're not listening to the Liberals. They're not listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

The message is quite clear from every single resident of this province: Stop the levy. It's absolutely terrible. The economic consequences and the social consequences that we are going to see a result of this budget and, in particular, this levy, are quite dire. Time will prove that this is the worst ever budget ever seen in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Orders of the Day. I would call from the Order Paper, Motion 3, Bill 10.

Orders of the Day

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured every day that I stand in this House to speak, an honour that's bestowed on me by the people of Windsor Lake. I'm honoured that I've been asked by our

Premier to take on this very difficult job, a job that I've been asked to do on behalf of the people of the province. I have to say that I'm not pleased to rise in this hon. House today to speak to Bill 10, the *Loan Act, 2016*.

Since January to date, this government has been able to secure five market issues of borrowing totalling some \$1.985 billion. For Members of this House and, Mr. Speaker, for those listening at home, I realize that maybe we need to resolve to Committee because we're in the second phase of this. With your permission, I will sit down and allow House officials to move us to Committee and I'll start over once we go.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole – my apologies for jumping into the debate that I'm so eager to have – on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions and a bill relating to the imposition of tax on the *Loan Act, 2016*, Bill 10.

MR. SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 10.

Resolution

CLERK: That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,600,000,000.

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate the support of the House staff as we move to Committee of the Whole to finish and move through the debate and discussion around Bill 10, the *Loan Act, 2016*. Madam Chair, I'm honoured every day that I stand in this House to speak. It's an honour bestowed on me by the people of Windsor Lake.

I'm honoured to have been asked by our Premier to take on a very difficult job. A job I've been asked to do for the people of the province. I have to say I'm not pleased to rise in this hon. House today and speak to Bill 10, the *Loan Act, 2016*.

Since January to date, this government has been able to secure five market issues totalling \$1.985 billion: \$235 million issued for a term of three years; \$300 million issued at a term of 31 years; \$350 million issued for a term of 10 years; \$600 million issued for a term of 10 years; and most recently, \$500 million issued for a term of five years.

Madam Chair, as I told my young son today while trying to explain to him why the people of the province are disappointed at his mom and why they have questions for our government, the government that she represents, I had to share with him that I am the only person in the province who has had to sign loan documents that would equal mortgages of \$200,000. I signed the equivalent of 9,500 mortgages for \$200,000 based on the debt I've had to accept on behalf of this government.

He understands mortgages and like many parents, we speak to him about debt and why spending more than what you have is not wise. Budget 2016 reflects the very difficult choices we've had to make. Madam Chair, this is what a

person told me: "That was a pretty tough budget but one that was necessary. I personally think you are making the right decisions in the right places. I know it's not easy on the people of the province or myself ... Sorry to say but the province needed this budget"

Madam Chair, I know this has been a difficult budget for people to accept. We have reflected on every single decision and wish there were other ways. The magnitude of the \$1.8 billion deficit that could have been much larger leaving this province, and continues to leave this province, in a very serious financial situation.

Since 2003, governments have spent too much money. They cut taxes at a rate that we could not afford and now we must find our way back. We are going to work with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to get back on track. We all have a lot more work to do, but our government is committed to finding the excess within Government Services, we're committed to finding waste and we're committed to saving every single job that we can save.

Madam Chair, I want the people at home to know that government recognizes how challenging this is and that we are working very hard to find ways to make it easier. We have significant borrowing requirements this year, a total of \$3.4 billion for this fiscal year alone as set out in Budget 2016. That's hundreds and thousands more of those \$200,000 mortgages that my son's mother has to sign on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Money that this government needs in order to have the money to pay people, the money to pay for services, the money to pay former administration's debts, the money we need to pay the bills.

To ensure we can access this money, the money that we don't have, we have to keep talking to the banks, convincing them to lend us money. We need to be active in the bond markets while the budget approval process is ongoing; therefore, the province requires interim borrowing authority. That's why we introduced Bill 10 to establish the *Loan Act, 2016*. The \$1.6 billion interim authority stays in place and will be supplemented by a request for additional authority requested to the passage of the budget.

Our government has had success in the long-term market in spite of the challenges that we've been facing – that are facing our province and other provinces as well in the long-term bond market. These challenges come from things like the sharp fall of oil prices and the resultant impact on the provincial economy, and the further changing of the fiscal situation in the province as outlined in the mid-year.

The recent reaction to this difficult budget by the banks and bond-rating agencies makes me optimistic that we will get the access to the money that we don't have. It is clear that this government's commitment to action to deal with the fiscal situation is allowing Newfoundland and Labrador to secure much-needed borrowing.

Our government is looking to the future and continuing to evolve the relationships with our investors. We must be able to access the money that we need to pay our employees, to pay for services and to pay for the things that the province has a responsibility to provide.

In Budget 2016, we laid out a fiscal plan that allowed our province to regain control of government finances. The choices we have made have not been easy, but necessary to deal with the unbelievable – unbelievable – lack of planning and mismanagement of the former administration. That, coupled with our inability to manage a financial plan, has left our province to deal with unprecedented debt, unprecedented borrowing and unprecedented fiscal pressures.

As I've indicated, we know we will have to borrow in the '16-'17 budget. In order to continue to avail of the market opportunities, we need to begin to establish our borrowing authority this year. The *Loan Act, 2016* will give us interim authority, Madam Chair, to borrow \$1.6 billion to begin and continue our borrowing program for '16-'17.

Our total borrowing requirements, as I've said earlier, for the budget for '16-'17 are outlined in the budget and are \$3.4 billion. Our government is working very hard to make sure the cost of borrowing money is the lowest it can be so we don't need to borrow even more money. A budget is not an easy one for any finance minister, but I can say with confidence that had

we done nothing, the debt of our province would have doubled in five years.

The unprecedented fiscal situation left us – demands that we have a loan bill in place as early as possible for '16-'17. We cannot miss an opportunity, sadly, to borrow funds while the budget approval process is ongoing. The success this government has seen in the long-term market in the last couple of months is a testament to the fact that the Premier has been having many conversations over the last months, as I have, with our financial advisors.

I personally spoke to the major banks earlier this week, as a result of the budget, as we continue to listen to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on their concerns about the difficult nature of this budget. We are giving our lenders confidence that despite the difficulty this budget brings on, that we are beginning to get our province back on the path forward, a path to recovery and a path to getting our province back to stable financial ground.

With that, Mr. Speaker – Madam Chair, my apologies – I will take my seat. I look forward to continuing to discuss the government's financial plan on how to reshape Newfoundland and Labrador's fiscal future, and how I need to continue to explain to my 12-year-old that his mother continues to borrow record amounts of money on behalf of the people of the province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Before debate continues, I will ask the Clerk to read a correction into the record.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,600,000,000.”

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Like the Finance Minister, I'm also not pleased to rise and speak to this bill today, but it is a necessary bill. I thank the Minister of Finance for providing an overview of the legislation that we're debating in the House this afternoon here in Committee.

This bill will authorize government to raise money by the way of a loan to a maximum amount of \$1.6 billion. It's important that we have an open and frank debate about all aspects and all implications of this budget. The need to borrow that kind of substantial amount of money definitely needs to be subject to debate in this Legislature.

It also highlights the concern that I think a lot of the members of the public have, but certainly Members on this side of the House have, about the approach that the Liberal government has taken to this budget. It's very much about taxation; it's very much about borrowing, with no reduction in spending. Overall, in addition to borrowing more money to pay the bills and keep government running, this government is going to spend, in this fiscal year, an additional \$400 million over last year.

I recognize we're receiving some criticism right now as well. I understand people are angry. I understand that people are frustrated. I have to say, Madam Chair, we take responsibility for decisions that we've made in the past, and they haven't always been easy decisions either.

Over the last decade or so, we've seen record investments in infrastructure in our hospitals, in our schools, in our roads, in our ferries, in our bridges. We've seen tax cuts. We've seen improvements to social programs that are much needed. I am prepared to stand here and defend many of those decisions and those investments. I'll also acknowledge that we were far from perfect and we made mistakes. This government will certainly be far from perfect and will make mistakes as I believe, I'll respectfully say, they're making with this budget.

The decisions aren't easy. Facing this complex fiscal challenge that we face is not easy. I would suggest, Madam Chair, the answer can't be simply about increase levels of taxation and increase levels of borrowing, without any real plan to stimulate and grow the economy.

This loan is, unfortunately, necessary, but overall, in terms of the budget, there is a better way forward. It can't just be about taxing and borrowing. Fundamentally, no matter who is in government right now, there are difficult decisions that must be made around the level of government expenditure. One of my biggest concerns with this budget is the Liberal government has failed to make those tough decisions to reduce spending.

Government spending has grown at an unsustainable pace, and those of us who were in government have to acknowledge that as well. I'm very surprised that we're not seeing significant reductions in spending. Instead, we're seeing government tax and borrow. I think it's irresponsible and I think it's unfortunate. I think it's part of the reason why a lot of people are upset with this budget.

We will debate this afternoon Bill 10, which is an Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province. It gives us an opportunity – it gives all Members of this House an opportunity to talk about the implications of this budget and to talk about any other matter that they wish. I think, given the nature of this bill, it is a good opportunity to talk once again about the budget. I hope Members on all sides of the House, from all parties, will take the opportunity to speak and share their views and hopefully, also take the time to express concerns on behalf of their constituents.

The Minister of Finance acknowledged in her remarks that she's hearing from her constituents and she's hearing from people of the province. I also acknowledge that she's in a very difficult situation right now. When I spoke to the budget – unlike most Members of the House, I did take the opportunity to participate in the budget debate on a couple of occasions so far. I hope we'll hear from all Members in the days ahead in this House.

I made a point that I want to emphasize again. You can be angry, you can be frustrated, you can be upset, but there's no need for us to attack individuals and their families. I don't support the decisions the Premier and the Finance Minister have made – I don't – but the personal attacks I don't believe are warranted. I appreciate the frustration of Members who are being subjected

to that at this point. They're taking the brunt of it, but we're certainly seeing those kinds of attacks on our side as well. I think there's a better way to have public debate and discussion about the decisions of government without getting nasty and personal.

People are upset. They're legitimately upset because this government promised a plan and doesn't have one. Taxing and borrowing us to death is not a plan and it's not sustainable. It's actually going to make our problems in this province worse.

We had a plan. One of the things I've heard repeatedly during the last couple of weeks that the budget has been a hot topic everywhere in our province is what was the PC's plan? We campaigned on our plan. We brought down a budget last year and Members opposite have said that didn't go far enough. I recognize that we would have had to go even further based on the further drop in oil prices that we saw later in 2015 and into 2016.

We did have a plan and clearly people of the province made a decision, which I respect. They chose the Liberals. They were made a lot of promises back in the fall and they received a huge vote of confidence from the people of the province. So I respect that the people spoke.

We had a plan. People didn't like it, but at least we were honest about what our plan was, Madam Chair. Was it perfect? No, it wasn't. Would we have had to adjust it based on the further decline in oil revenue? Absolutely, we would have, but we were honest about what we were prepared to do and not do.

Our plan was not simply to increase spending, increase borrowing, raise taxes and raise fees that will impact every person and every family in this province. There is a better way. I hope during this budget debate that will ensue – while we're talking about bills like this, and also in the formal budget debate – that we'll have an opportunity to talk about some of those ideas.

What I'd like to do, as I speak to Bill 10 this afternoon, Madam Chair, is also highlight some of the concerns that I'm hearing from constituents. Not just my constituents but people

from districts right across the province, many of whom are now represented by Liberal MHAs.

The Minister of Finance referenced some of the concerns from her constituents. I have a note here from one of her constituents that was copied to many Members of the House of Assembly. We're all receiving many, many emails.

I'm also receiving a lot of replies to emails from the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island who has mastered the reply all function in Microsoft Outlook. I thank him for being prompt and thorough in his responses to emails. He's definitely responding and it's important to respond.

It's a huge volume. I would say to everybody out there, just because your MHA hasn't responded yet doesn't mean they won't. I know I'm getting dozens and dozens a day that do require a thoughtful response. It's sometimes impossible to get to them all right away. I'm sure Members opposite are facing an even greater influx of correspondence from their constituents, but I hope they will all get responded to.

This constituent from Windsor Lake is writing regarding the proposed 2016 Budget. She says while she finds the budget as tabled to be regressive and overall lacking any vision or innovative thinking, there are two particular points she strongly opposes that I'd like to highlight. One is the Debt Reduction Levy, the Liberal levy. I haven't talked to anybody yet in this province who's supportive of that approach.

We will stand on this side of the House and oppose that levy. We will fight for the Liberal government to eliminate that levy and come back with a better plan, with a better approach. The two points this individual, from the Finance Minister's district, is most concerned about: one is the Liberal levy and the second is the fuel tax increase, which has gotten some discussion during the public dialogue about the budget. There are issues like the levy that seem to be getting even greater attention.

This constituent had left a message with the Finance Minister's office but hasn't received a response. She describes the levy tax as punitive

and says that it should be removed from the budget. It's unfairly implemented to the point of undue hardship on low- to middle-income earners. It's nothing more than a cash grab that will never be repealed.

I think that's where a lot of the concern lies, Madam Chair. The Premier says over and over again, well, this is temporary. In 1917, income tax was temporary as well. I recall other forms of taxation and fees implemented by governments in the past that were supposedly temporary, but people don't believe that. People feel they've been lied to and they don't believe this levy will only be a temporary measure for a couple of years.

Regardless, even if it is temporary, even if you accept that premise, people still feel the approach is just unfair. Frankly, it's just income tax by another name. What's even more frustrating is that at the same time we're going to face this levy, all of us, we're also going to pay increased income tax. So we're being hit twice just in terms of income tax alone.

A fee to live – sorry, I want to make sure I quote the email correctly. This individual feels: The fee to live in Newfoundland and Labrador heralds back to an undemocratic social hierarchy and is governed by a fish merchant mentality.

This constituent of the Finance Minister is saying: As my elected Member, I want you to readdress this issue. I want you to revisit it and come up with a better approach. The astronomical increase in the cost of fuel as proposed will drive significant inflation on goods and services. It will limit consumer buying power and confidence and mobility, and directly hit the tourism sector of our economy. This individual is absolutely correct. It will do all of those things.

The Leader of the Opposition asked a question to the Premier earlier this week about the impact on the cost of food. This individual, in the Finance Minister's District of Windsor Lake, clearly sees the connection that we are all going to pay more for goods and services. We're going to have less buying power. We're going to see growing sectors of our economy, like the tourism sector, impacted by lots of what's proposed in this budget.

This budget was so poorly planned that in anticipation of its economically punishing effects, my husband and I have already cancelled our plans to visit Gros Morne this summer and to attend the Shakespeare By the Sea Festival. Those are the kinds of discretionary spending decisions that many, many middle-class families are already making. We're still trying to get our heads around the full impact of the budget.

As we dig into it, we're finding there are many things in this budget that haven't even received a lot of public attention yet that I think are going to be devastating. The revelation that the Liberal government plans to shut down 54 libraries in our province, it's devastating to small communities, Madam Chair.

I think in the days and weeks ahead the full impact of this budget will be discussed in greater detail. We'll see that as bad as the levy is and the increases on fuel tax, the increases on insurance and all of the other taxes and fees, all of the taxing, all of the borrowing and all of the spending, beyond all of that, there are some other cuts to programs and services that people are really going to feel.

This constituent of the Finance Minister says: I voted for you and it's a decision I now deeply regret. This budget, as tabled, is regressive and it's placed my future as a young Newfoundlander and Labradorian in jeopardy. The Liberal campaign promises and rhetoric of November have transformed into – quoting the Finance Minister's words – a tapestry of bologna and lies. I have no faith in the dismissive governance that I am currently witnessing. As your constituent, I ask you to please review this budget.

When we're voting on Bill 10, when we're voting on the budget and when we're debating the budget in the House of Assembly, I urge all Members of this hon. House to listen to their constituents, to bring those concerns to the floor of the House of Assembly and to speak to them. That's what we intend to do on this side of the House, Madam Chair.

I thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I had to stop for a minute. I couldn't believe that nobody was standing up from government. This is unbelievable.

We are dealing here in this House with a budget that I am absolutely convinced is going to be so hard on low-income people and low-middle-income people, on people on fixed income, on people who have no choices. It's a budget like I've never seen before in the 40 years that I've been involved as an activist, both in community, in social justice work and also politically, through my party and now as an elected person in this Assembly.

I've never seen a budget like it. I cannot believe that nobody on the other side of the House is willing to stand in Committee and explain to us why they believe in this budget, explain to us why they support this budget. I can't believe they are not being accountable to the people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: – of this province, Madam Chair, that they're not seeing their opportunity to be accountable to the people who elected them, to be accountable to the people that they go back and face in their constituencies as I do. I'm in shock.

To have a Minister of Finance stand in her opening comments and paint this as a personal responsibility, what is she trying to do? Once again I ask the question, Madam Chair: Do they think the people who are watching, do they think the people out there are stupid?

What kind of heartstrings is she trying to pull on; how do I explain to my 12-year-old son how I signed a cheque? We're not talking about personal issues here. We're talking about a government doing its work. Bringing it down to that level is completely unacceptable. I can't

believe it. You would think the Minister of Finance had put up her own personal assets for the loan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. MICHAEL: I couldn't believe it. That was unbelievable and unprofessional. That's not the level of a government budget. A government budget is something they are responsible for. A budget is not difficult, a budget is a process.

There's no such thing as a difficult budget. They may have found it hard, but that doesn't make a budget difficult. A budget is a process. A budget is how government looks at how they're going to give the services to the people of the province, how they're going to take care of people and how they're going to find the money to do it. It's not a thing. It's not an object. It's not something difficult.

For the minister to be putting it down to the level of her personal responsibility just completely belittles what the budget is all about. I can't believe it; I absolutely cannot believe it.

She better learn how to explain to her 12-year-old son what politics is all about and what economics are all about because economics is not about mommy signing a cheque. That's not what it's about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: I ask the minister, when the minister speaks in this House about the budget, to please treat us all as adults and realize that people watching are adults. They know it has nothing to do with her as a person and her own personal responsibility for putting her signature on a cheque.

If they want to take responsibility over there, why aren't they all standing up and explaining why they're supporting this budget instead of sitting silently. That's what I ask.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Madam Chair, the bill we're dealing with is asking for us to approve a loan of \$1.6 billion. That's not problematic. What's problematic for me is that this government wants us to approve a loan of \$1.6 billion to keep things going obviously, as a government, and to put in place their budget – I'm not going to call it a plan because it's not a plan – but without really explaining things to us.

I have a 10-page document here, Madam Chair, a document done by government. It doesn't actually say which department of government put it together. I presume it must be Executive Council because it takes every single division of government.

It looks at the measures that are in the budget. It talks about those measures and what you have is the initiative, the measure that's in the budget; you have what the budget was in 2015-16 for that line item; you then have the savings in the 2016-17 budget; the annualized savings, and then you have what's called the rationale.

I was really happy when we were in the budget lock-up to receive this document because I thought it was going to explain to me what the initiatives were all about. In my understanding of English, rationale means giving the reason behind something. Well, when I read through these – what, 12 pages I think it is, 14 pages actually. When I read through this I looked at it and I said rationale? This is the rationale? I had to try to figure out for myself what government meant.

There are sometimes when what they have listed there is a reason, it is a rationale. In other cases – I'm going to choose one; this one is under Health and Community Services. Here's the initiative: "Eliminate the Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of the NL Provincial Drug Program under the Access and 65+ plans." That's the initiative, get rid of the Adult Dental Program.

In getting rid of the Adult Dental Program, government is going to save \$2.5 million. Here's the rationale: "Program will be modified and brought in line with similar programming in other jurisdictions." That's not a rationale, that's just stating a fact. What was the rationale for doing that? Did the government, for example,

look at the situation of people in this province who access this program?

At the town hall we held last night, we had a dentist who stood at the microphone and told us how overwhelmed she was when this program was put in place. What she was overwhelmed by were the numbers of people living all around poverty who were eligible for the program, for the Access and the 65Plus Plans. They were eligible. They were just above poverty, they were in poverty, they were just under. She was overwhelmed by how many people.

As a dentist, she has really been worried and concerned about the fact that since last September – so this happened going way back – her clients, people needing dental plates were coming to her, were waiting and waiting and waiting; waiting for months to have the approval for them to get the dental plates they needed, since last September. We're told there are 1,600 people on a waiting list that now is meaningless. Overnight, the day after the budget came out, she had clients calling and saying, Joanie I've gotten word, I can't get the plate.

She told us about the person who was made public in the media today. She told us about him last night, an elderly man who, for health reasons, had all his teeth taken out with the expectation of having plates put in. He has learned that he can't get his plates put in. Now he's left without any teeth in his head, can't eat, can't chew, just has to swallow mush. That's what's happening. They don't have that in there, do they, as their rationale for getting rid of the Adult Dental Program.

That's what you call a rationale. What was the reasoning there? To make our elderly people suffer? They did no analysis of who was needing this service and what was going to happen to the people who needed the service. Not one person over there is going to stand and speak to Bill 10 allowing us, really, the whole government, to borrow \$1.6 billion.

I see my time is up, Madam Chair. I look forward to standing up again.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is my first go about with budgets, but, you know, it's amazing when the email accounts are full, the airwaves are full. You can't turn. I flicked on the radio this morning, the Premier is on defending it – or the news tonight. No one will get up and speak on the budget or the bills or anything. It's amazing.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's not a budget b'y (inaudible).

MR. PETTEN: Yes, it's a money bill. It's all the same, it's a budget.

Madam Chair, on that note, like I said, it is amazing but I will speak on – the bill is raising – I mean they're raising the loans for borrowing.

As my colleague said, there's been wastage over the years, no doubt. I don't think there's a government ever going to be elected in any province or any country that's not going to be guilty of wasting money from time to time. Mixed with that, what some classify as waste, there's been an awful lot of great investments made. Some not so great, but overall the intent was always there to do the right thing.

It's fine to look in the rear-view mirror and say that maybe this shouldn't have happened or that shouldn't have happened. At a time when – not only this previous government but many governments, when they have the ability to provide different programs, different services, they tend to always do so because when you have people coming it's easier to say yes than say no when you have bona fide, qualified programs or asks, I should say.

The road to hell is sometimes paved with good intentions I guess. When you look around at the great investments that have been made in the last 10 years and longer, it's a job to say many of them are a waste of money.

I had the privilege to get up last week and speak. I highlighted a lot of those so-called wastes of money. I could go through that again, but I have some other items I'd like to speak on today.

We all hear – everyone is talking and all you hear is levy. Everyone talks about the levy. Sure, fair enough, that's after hitting a nerve with a lot of people. The tax on insurance is having an equal effect on residents just as much as the levy is. In some cases it's having a bigger impact.

As my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition had questioned today during Question Period, a family with two teenaged children who have their licence and are in university, trying to keep insurance on their home and their vehicles and whatnot, it's a thousand dollars, which is more than the highest end of the levy. That's an eye-opener. I know from a personal standpoint – the tax on insurance was removed by the previous government and a lot of people were very happy about it because our insurance rates are very high. If you put 15 per cent on insurance, it hits the pocketbook. People feel it.

A lot of emails I get from residents, they seem to be very focused on the levy like I said. I've had discussions with them. When you're back and forth, it's almost like to say, yeah, that's true, they're not really playing into the insurance tax.

The gas tax being another one; there's not a lot of talk about that because there's focus on the levy. When you take all of those together, your insurance tax, your gas tax, your levy, your personal income tax – speaking of the levy and your personal income tax, no one knows how the levy is going to be collected.

I had a gentleman this morning that stopped me out in my district; he doesn't know how you're going to get it from employers. How are employers going to collect this? He's not a rich man but he gets three small pensions. Who collects the money? There is no clear direction.

The Minister of Finance keeps saying that we're all over the place with it and the Premier will say, no, you're going to collect it from paycheques, you're going to collect it in income tax, you're going to collect it in July – but no one really knows the answer.

This gentleman today was in no way – he wasn't pointing fingers, he wasn't nasty. He just wanted to know how is that going to be done.

I've said it before and I'll say it again, Members opposite seem to know all the answers. I have no doubt they probably do but the public want to know the answers as well and they're not getting them. We, as an Opposition, would like to know a lot of answers and we're not getting them.

Maybe if we had better answers to some of these questions we'd be able to help you communicate this because right now the general public are angry. I've never seen it before. I know some of this becomes an email campaign. You'll get groups that will email you en masse but I get a lot of emails from your average, regular family who live in all of our districts. We all get them.

I said it before; a lot of them really pull at your heart strings. One stuck with me today, this lady from my district emailed and she was saying: I feel compelled to add my voice. I cannot recall a time when I have felt so stressed and anxious about my family's future in Newfoundland. How am I going to provide for my children? We don't go to Disney, we do local tourism.

Anyone is welcome to read that email. I have it there. I get a lot of those emails and I'm sure you all do, too. You're not human if you don't read those emails and feel something inside your own self. This is not a party thing and a blame thing. This is a reality. It's a reality we're all living.

As my colleague for Mount Pearl North said, we're getting it on this side too. We get some fingers pointing, but it's a general sense of anxiousness and anxiety. People want answers and they're not getting the answers. They're very frustrated. I told a gentleman this morning, I said we'll try to get you an answer. I was sincere. When we get an answer, we'll let you know. He's just asking out of courtesy. He doesn't know how this is going to work.

That to me, when you add in the stress of the measures brought forward in the budget, you put that on the average families – and we all hear about the levy, but there are a lot more things in there outside the levy that's going to cause a lot of grief to a lot of people. It's going to make life tough on them. Middle income families – it's not cheap to live in our province now as it is. The cost of living, as we all know, is going to make it very difficult.

I really would like someone to provide answers to the people because that's all I'm hearing. I said this before, if anyone wants to read my emails, I'm not into bashing people, I don't. I just try to answer the question or I'll sympathize. I'll say I understand where you're coming from.

That's not me, but I have to say it is pretty frustrating because you're going back to people and you're not giving them the answers they want. You know they're anxious. You know they're stressed. They feel you should have the answer. You're the representative. I agree, but we're having trouble getting it. I don't know maybe Members opposite are having trouble getting the same answers. If they're not, feel free to share the information because I'm sure all Members on this side of the House would love to hear it because I know the general public would.

You flick on the radio – this morning I heard the Premier on. With all due respect, he's on taking calls. That's good. That needs to be done. It's getting your message out there. I give him full credit on that. It's not easy to do, but a lot of these answers are never clear. We say to them sometimes a plan to make a plan, we play politics, whatever you want to call it but they're not clear answers. I don't know if the comments that have been said you make it up as you go, but I know people are pretty desperate, frustrated. They're looking for answers and not getting them. Madam Chair, the public do deserve to have their voice heard.

The time is getting close. I received a lot of emails lately too on another budget items: class sizes, teacher cuts, I guess, peer teaching and I suppose really the full-day kindergarten thing. A lot of people in my district have concerns. There are a couple of schools there that say they're not prepared to handle full-day kindergarten. There are a lot of teachers and parents concerned about the class sizes and the number of students in classes. They don't feel it's the same quality of education. Then on top of that, yesterday, we heard about all these library closures across the province.

It just seems like every day there are new things coming up and it's causing a lot of stress on individuals. I can't be more sincere in saying people want to know the answers. I'd love to

know the answers because, as I said, as the representative I feel it's incumbent upon me to answer their questions. That's what we're elected for. We're supposed to represent our districts and provide reasonable answers.

Until I get those answers, I have no ability to pick up the phone or pick up my Blackberry and give them the answers they require. I really would like to start getting some clear answers so we can message it to our people.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to spend a few minutes on this, Madam Chair. This is a bill for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador to borrow. Of course, I just push it off as a Member who's a rookie, he just don't understand what this bill is. It is to give us to borrow. I'll just give you an example. There hasn't been a Member over there yet who said here's what we need in our district for capital works for roads. How are we going to do it if you don't stand up and say yes, we need to borrow this money? You can stand up as much as you like and rant, but at least speak to the bill.

I was not going to bring politics into it, but the Members opposite are talking about here's what we're doing over here. How about the 1,300 people who were laid off last year? Does that make a big difference? How about the 1,300 – now you're going out to rallies; oh, what a sin. There were 1,300 people laid off, gone out through the door. All of a sudden we're the big, bad bullies. The same people who laid off twice as many as when they were on this side.

Madam Chair, I don't usually get too upset but I can tell you, I know the Member here for Coley's Point – the school – and the Member there for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. JOYCE: Well, wherever he's from – Conception Bay – Bell Island. Here's the hypocrisy. This Member is standing up and saying: How about Coley's Point school? You can't vote for the budget. Where was Glenn Littlejohn for the last three years when the school wasn't done? Where was Glenn Littlejohn? Did you see him standing up and saying, oh, I can't vote for the budget? How hypocritical.

Here's something even worse. Do you know the Minister of Transportation and Works who was supposed to do the design for the school was the same Member who is asking questions, why isn't the school done? The same Member who had it in his office to do the design work for the school for Coley's Point and he delayed it himself personally, and he's standing up now being the big hero for Coley's Point when he personally, as the minister, was supposed to get the design done and never got it done.

Now, Madam Chair, I don't mind in here but when you want to attack someone in this House, especially someone who's coming in and it's the first year and don't have the history that some of us have. I know what this minister did last year with capital works for highways for the Bay of Islands. So don't speak to me about being fair and honest.

Two days before the tender he told the department take back the \$500,000 for the Bay of Islands. There is a place there called Plant Hill, there were two accidents there this winter and he personally got the money and took it back two days before the tender. Madam Chair, do you know how I know that? I went out with orders from the department to measure up what the priorities were. We did that, myself and the regional manager.

When you get in government you can see who did what, and he personally. This is the same Member who was the Minister of Transportation and Works who is now saying, oh, you can't vote for the budget because Coley's Point is not in it, but Glenn Littlejohn stood up, clapped every time the budget came through. This is the same minister who sat right there, Madam Chair, and wouldn't even do the design work for the Coley's Point school. How hypocritical.

Now, Madam Chair, this bill is about borrowing money for the budget. We heard, what's good in the budget? I don't have time to go through it all. I will just look at Municipal Affairs.

I hear the Leader of the Opposition and I hear a few more over there: how about Ottawa? How about Ottawa? I can tell you one thing, this Premier wasn't sitting outside the doors of the Prime Minister at minus 20 degrees because he kicked him out of the office.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Here's what this Premier got done with Minister Judy Foote. First of all, there was \$34.9 million they didn't even sign off on. They didn't even bother – the only province in Canada that didn't even sign off on it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Why not?

MR. JOYCE: They didn't have time. That wasn't a priority, \$34.9 million to the province. Judy Foote and the other MPs from Newfoundland and Labrador have come through with a Canada Build Fund, with a green fund, with a picnic fund, Madam Chair, that there's going to be over \$600 million of capital works in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, this is not a knock. I know the Members opposite, and I sat down with a lot of them and said, what can we do to help your district? I'm not knocking because that's what you should do. This is what this bill is for, so we can do the things.

I know the Leader of the Opposition got up and tried to embarrass us saying: every day they came and asked for more and more and more. Don't you find that hypocritical? How many of you guys have to come over and say here's what we need? But I don't blame you. That's part of being an MHA, but you should tell your leader that. You should tell your leader. That's part of your duties as an MHA, to bring concerns to the government. I applaud you for it. I sit down, I do it. I did it last year myself.

AN HON. MEMBER: I can't wait to get up.

MR. JOYCE: I can't wait for you to get up either.

That's what bothers me. I'll tell you another thing that bothers me, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: When we get in there, Madam Chair, you find out a few things. This is all for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If you want to talk about the mess we have to clean up here on this side of the House, I'll give you one little mess.

There was \$30 million put aside for three years capital works. The Member for Mount Pearl North started it. In two years the \$30 million for capital works was all spent. They sent out a letter to every municipality last year saying we need the letters in by November 3 for capital works. There wasn't one cent in the budget for capital works, not one penny.

Do you know something? The Member for Mount Pearl North, the same one who's over there saying, oh, you broke your promise. Where's the hospital in Corner Brook? You walked out there and said it will start in 2015. You made a commitment and you have the hypocrisy to stand up here and say you broke a commitment. This is just unbelievable.

I don't mind having a debate whatsoever. The Leader of the Opposition is the same one who walked out in Corner Brook, Madam Chair, a year ago when he was Premier and said, we're starting a long-term care facility. When we get in there's not even a design done; not even a design completed to put to tender. Then all of a sudden we're hypocrites.

I ask the Member for Mount Pearl North to stand up. He never spent \$30 million the first year in capital works. Here's an opportunity. I'll table it – \$30 million. It was supposed to be over three years. They spent it all in two years. Had an election coming up, let's push it out, writing everyone and saying put in your money for the capital works, put in your money for capital works – not one cent there. That's the kind of mess we have to clean up for the municipalities

of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's the kind of mess we have to clean up around here.

I have no problem defending the budget. I know it's a tough budget. I'll be the first to say it. I know Barry Wheeler, a good friend of mine, had problems with it. Do you know what the media said? He said: The president of your association says it's a tough budget. I said: I agree with him. It is a tough budget. I'm not to argue with that; it is a tough budget. But when you are faced with the facts that are put in front of you, you have to make tough decisions – you have to make tough decisions.

I will tell you one thing I won't do, Madam Chair, I won't put my head in the sand, let Nalcor be out of control, spend, spend, spend. Have one budget – here's one budget \$2.1 billion and we get in oh, by the way, there's a second pot over here which is another \$700 million that no one even knew was a deficit. You put it all together and we end up with this massive budget. No one knew until we got in and you see this second pot.

I tell you one thing I won't do, and I'm sure I'm speaking for all Members here, we won't put our head in the sand and do everything that everybody wants because it's the right thing to do. We need to do the proper thing. The proper thing, Madam Chair, is get our finances in order. Anybody who says to me it's a tough budget I'm going to say, I agree. I apologize, but it's the measures that we had to take.

But I can guarantee you one thing, Madam Chair, a lot of municipalities are going to be happy when they get water and sewer. A lot of municipalities are going to see when roadwork is done on a priority basis, not because of some political hack don't like you or don't care and so let's see who we can get elected. It is done on a priority basis. That's why I'm proud to stand with this government over here, I'm proud to stand with these Members over here because I have seen personally the stuff that went on.

When you write every council and every municipality in this province and say we are putting in money for capital works and not have none it's just not right. They don't deserve it, Madam Chair. They don't deserve it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Member his time has expired.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Madam Chair, it's a privilege to get up again today to represent the district that I represent. Again, I'm up speaking – every time a bill comes across and it's a budget bill, a money bill, it's an opportunity to get up and speak on the budget.

Now, Madam Chair, I walked into Tim Hortons this morning and a gentleman said to me: Kev, I never thought I'd see you with a pink tie on or a purple shirt. And I had to explain to him why I had it on today. I'd like to congratulate and I think we all should give a good round of applause to the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: – for suggesting people in this House of Assembly today wear purple and pink. She said either purple or pink. I dug in and I found a purple shirt. I didn't think I had one, but I wanted to wear one.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: No, it's not the Member for – he wouldn't fit me anyway. He's too big.

I really commend you because it's a real nice gesture. What happened this weekend affects so many people in this province, not only in your district. It affects a lot of people any time we see a young child who dies for no reason. I think today is good. I'm glad to see so many Members here in the House of Assembly doing it. It's a really nice gesture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: I don't know if I can return the same thing now. Listen, we're all here to do a job. Again, it's nice to see today that we can recognize that little girl. If she liked pink and purple, I'd gladly wear it for her, I guarantee you that.

Anyway, Madam Chair, we're all here and we'll debate. The Member just got up that time and he slammed this Member over here and that Member over here. Sometimes we'll do that stuff. That's what he does and I do it a little different. Everybody does it a little different in the House of Assembly, but I look at the personal part of a lot of things. I always try to look at that lens, the lens that's coming from people who are really concerned.

I had a phone call recently – yesterday actually – from a lady asking me: Kevin, what effect does it have on me? She lives by herself. She's 50-odd years old. Her salary is \$36,000 and what effect – I tried to explain what the taxes were. I told her about the supplement that I think she's going to get. I'm looking at the figures and I think she will.

We heard today about a calculator. I hope the calculator can – because I really want to see this calculator because then I can just take the calculator and show people what they're going to pay. I hope everything's on the calculator because when I spoke to her, we talked about the increase in personal income tax and this is what I had. Her personal income tax – she's in bracket number two – is going to go from 12.5 to 13.5 and then it's going to go to 14.5 the next year. So it's going to go up a percentage point each year. So we figured out how much that was going to cost her.

Then I looked at the gas tax, the extra 16.5 cents a litre. She works 22 kilometres from her house to her workplace. She drives back and forth every day. Now, on \$36,000 a year, you don't have a lot of money to spend. So, obviously, when you do up your budget for the month, you look at how much gas you're going to spend in that month. She could tell me exactly how much gas she's going to spend in that month.

Now it's gone up by 16 or 17 per cent, plus I think there's a little of the HST – I'm not sure on that, if that's going to affect it a little bit even.

But it's gone up 16 per cent I told her. So we looked at her gas bill for the month. She had exactly what it cost her for an average month. Then she has a car to drive. Her vehicle is not a fancy one. It's not a brand spanking new vehicle. It's not an Audi or it's not BMW; it's nothing like that. She can drive it. It's a nice rig that she gets back and forth to work with it, but she needs insurance, so she has to pay for insurance.

Now her insurance bill has gone up 15 per cent. She lives in her home. It's unbelievable the amount of work that she does around her place. Her garden is absolutely beautiful; her yard is absolutely beautiful. But now she has to come up with another 15 per cent to pay for the taxes on her home.

I ask the Members opposite, and I'm waiting to hear from you, are you getting the same calls that I'm getting? Most of you are shaking your heads and saying yes, you are.

This lady says: Kevin, I'm stressed. I'm so stressed over this because I don't know where I'm going to get the extra bucks. And you're getting the same thing. She said: My anxiety, I don't know if I can handle it. That's what we are doing to people. It's too much too fast, folks. It is.

Listen, some people can afford it; some people can't. This lady struggles on \$36,000 a year. She has a car payment and now we are putting all this other stuff – she won't go out and buy a new chesterfield this year because the HST is gone up a couple of extra points. Maybe she can't afford it. Maybe she got to wait until next year. She'll put away a little bit of money and on \$36,000, you can't put away a lot. There is not a lot we can put away, but just think about it –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: What are you saying, we go back to 2007? This is 2016; it's not 2007. In 2007 things were a lot cheaper than they are today, b'y. They're different today, 2016; we're not living in 2007 because in 2007 the price of gas could have been 60 cents a litre.

Get up and talk about 2007 if you want to. It's different. Things are more expensive. Go buy

food. You tell me when you go to a grocery store in 2007 and \$100 worth of food – would you get the same amount of food for \$100 today? No, so don't go talking about 2007 because you don't know what you're talking about.

Talk to the people. That's what that lady said to me last night. She told me that in 2007 I could get \$100 and go to the grocery store and I'd probably come out with four bags of groceries.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, I am talking to you.

This time when she goes to the grocery store now with \$100 for food it probably gets two bags. People have to realize we're affecting people's lives. People have to eat. People have to be in their homes. You can't have people in the cold in the wintertime.

Car insurance; she showed me a bill. Car insurance in 2010 was x-number of dollars. That's gone up by 25 per cent. They're talking about taxes back – we gave everybody a break on their income tax in 2007 so they could spend money and they could go and invest, and they could keep small businesses going which was a great thing. I will not apologize for it. I'm not apologizing for cutting people and saying, listen here, here's more money in your pocket so you can go and spend it on your children, or grandparents can spend on their grandchildren.

Madam Chair, I'm talking about 2016. The Premier today and all week long has gotten up and said, well, we're back to 2007. I'll tell the Premier, in 2007 the average Newfoundlander could live on a lot less than what they can today. We can't go back to 2007. In 2007 groceries never cost as much, gas never cost as much, house insurance never cost as much. People have to live. People have to live and you're taking away.

A person with \$36,000, in 2007 they could live a whole lot better than what they could today, no doubt about it. I don't think anyone over there can argue with that. What are you doing to them? What are you doing to the people who are making low incomes, hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? Why are

we doing it? These are the people who are struggling to survive. They're struggling to survive.

Madam Chair, it's unbelievable that we can even think about what we're doing. I know there are people out there who can afford it but think about the people who can't afford the extra money that you want out of their pockets, because that's what it is. This levy is coming right out of the pockets of people. The insurance on their homes and on their cars and the increase in their fees is coming right out of their pockets.

If somebody can afford to go buy something and the HST is a little higher, well that's it. If you decide to buy that, I can understand that one, but a levy is money that has to come straight out of their pockets. You're asking people to pay for insurance on their cars and you're asking for people to pay extra insurance on their houses. That's coming right out of their pockets.

I ask all the Members on the other side, I really ask every one of you who are after getting the emails that I have gotten and have talked to people – because I know you all have, I get your emails too. I ask you to get up and justify taking money away from a person who makes \$36,000 a year and can't afford to pay what you're asking them to pay. That's the bottom line. They can't afford to pay what you're asking them to pay. So what are you going to do to them? They're going to end up with no insurance. They're stressed out like you wouldn't believe.

That's just one instance. My 10 minutes is up, I know, but that's just one instance. I have 10 or 15 more, so I can get up all day.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Member his time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

Like my colleagues here in the House, it's a privilege to stand in this hon. House, especially given we are here to represent the people we serve, but it's certainly not a pleasure for any of

us to stand here and debate this budget in particular.

Madam Chair, we are debating a bill to do some borrowing. I am a Conservative. I'm a fiscal Conservative. I've been a fiscal Conservative all my life. The budget that was handed down today, as a fiscal Conservative, I could not support. It has no Liberal policies in it whatsoever. I have no idea where the Liberals were when this budget was being developed.

In my mind – and I've said this in the hon. House before – the only person who must be happy with it is Preston Manning because he's an extreme right reformer and this budget is as extreme right as anything can possibly go. Talk about how to kill an economy and how to kill a province, politics 101, look at Budget 2016-2017 because this will go down in history as the worse possible way to address an economic crisis.

For goodness sakes, look to your colleagues. Every time you get up in this House and condemn borrowing, you're condemning the Prime Minister who has run a \$30 billion deficit to stimulate the economy in recognition of the fact that there's a global oil crisis.

You can stand here all day and try and play the blame game. The fact is we are dealing with a situation today and we're trying to improve Newfoundland and Labrador for tomorrow. You misled the people into thinking you were going to be a government that wasn't going to raise any taxes and you weren't going to lay anybody off. Well, look what we have seen just four months later, but the people won't forget.

I'd like to be a fly on the wall when you knock on some doors because there's going to be some interesting conversations, I have no doubt, in 2019; and if we're strong enough in a few weeks' time in 2016, because something has to be done to change this budget.

You don't have to bring your government down, though. You do have the authority within your caucus to negotiate and as backbenchers you do have that ability. I truly hope you raise your voices loud and strong with your Executive Council, Mr. Chair.

Bill 10, as I've said, is a borrowing budget – my seven minutes is going to go way too fast. It's a budget unlike we have ever seen before in Newfoundland and Labrador. As the Member for Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi spoke about earlier today – St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, I'm sorry – in her 40 years in this province, in various capacities, never seen anything like it. None of us have ever seen anything like it, and it's definitely not a Liberal budget. Say what you want about it; it's not a Liberal budget.

I'm going to talk today about just in my district alone – and I'm so furious. My blood pressure was on bust for the last two weeks and I said I'm not going to allow that to happen back in the House this week, so I'm trying to stay calm but as you listen to some of the things we hear in this House, it's incredibly infuriating.

Three libraries, Mr. Chair, in my district and I believe I heard the minister say somewhere along the way – and you hear so much, you don't know what to believe anymore – no library is going to be closing within 50 kilometres. Well, let me tell you from St. Alban's to Harbour Breton it's 102 kilometres, one way. How are the kids in Bay d'Espoir, where 4,000 people reside, going to avail of a library service?

In Hermitage, 70 kilometres away – and not only are you closing the library in Hermitage, you are closing a clinic. It's the only place where someone who's having a heart attack residing in McCallum, Gaultois or Hermitage can be stabilized before being sent on to an emergency centre like Harbour Breton, Mr. Chair, and you're taking away that stabilizing opportunity.

They are going to have to be stabilized on roads that really need to be upgraded. We need a lot more money from the provincial roads budget if you are going to be putting people in an ambulance from Hermitage to Harbour Breton 24-7, then you really need to get the roads done because it's treacherous, Mr. Chair. I fear a great tragedy is going to happen in very short order as soon as you close the clinic.

We are going to do what we can to fight the clinic closure. My residents are having a protest this Sunday and I'm going to be happy to join them. The guts are being ripped right out of rural Newfoundland and Labrador by this budget. It is

absolutely deplorable, and I truly hope that every rural Member stands up and speaks against this budget, Mr. Chair, and makes it clear to their executive that they won't be bullied; they will speak and represent their people in the House of Assembly. You do have negotiating power; you really do. I will talk about that when I get a 20-minute opportunity.

Mr. Chair, I wanted to talk about some Hansard highlights from May 4, 2015, by the hon. Minister of Finance and I quote May 4, barely a year ago, talking about Budget 2015, which was nowhere near as draconian as this one: "... this Budget does nothing to help families, nothing to help the unemployed or seniors. In fact, it makes them worse off." Well, how would she describe her budget? I'd like to know.

Mr. Chair, this government will let you believe there are only two options: tax and borrow. That's what this budget is a reflection of. It's a reflection of tax and borrow. Yet, less than a year later, what does she do in her capacity as Minister of Finance? Exactly that, only worse because not only did she raise the HST, she raised the corporate tax. She raised the income tax. She raised 15 per cent tax now on insurance for cars, 15 per cent tax on home insurance, an extra 16.5 cents for gas. People who have home care now, their financial contributions increase from 15 to 18 per cent. How much money are you taking out of people's pockets?

Oh my goodness, have you done an assessment I would like to ask? If you were worried about HST, how could you impose all these taxes, increase 300 fees, create 50 new ones – make them up – 50 new fees that didn't even exist this time last year have been introduced to this province by the Liberal government who mislead the people and said we're not going to give you any taxes, no, we're going to do – everything's hunky-dory.

A Member earlier spoke about hypocrisy in this House. It's so frustrating when we get up and have to debate these types of things. Mr. Chair, in addition to creating 50 new taxes, they made up a new tax – a levy, unlike anything we've ever heard of before. It is the most absolutely deplorable – the people don't like anything in this budget, but of all the items in the budget, that levy is absolutely deplorable.

Now, let's talk about some more things. I'm not going to get anywhere near close to quoting some of the comments from Hansard last year. She said: Liberals would grow the economy. If necessary, we would borrow over increasing taxes so we do not risk the revenue side of the ledger at a time when our economy is contracting.

Well, single-handedly, the Liberal government is responsible for imposing the largest contraction on the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador that we have ever experienced. As the businesses close their doors and as the people pack up their suitcases and move away and as you redo your budget next year and you see how little you made in taxes –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR (Lane): Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – because nobody lives here anymore and so many businesses have closed down, then you're going to scratch your head and say oh, we made a mistake.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: It's time now to revisit it before this budget passes, before you impose the complete degradation of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I implore you, please, make the changes necessary to ensure that this province can at least limp along for the next year or so. Please God, Mr. Chair, the people of this province will have a new government in four years' time, one that actually is representative of the people it serves.

This is a quote from the minister's speech last year again. "The people of the Province deserve better."

MR. K. PARSONS: The people of the province deserve better.

MS. PERRY: That was her words last year. She also said, we had four months to put forward –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair has asked for order several times. I'm asking all Members to please maintain order.

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

MS. PERRY: I thank you, Mr. Chair, for your protection. It's greatly appreciated.

"The people of the Province deserve better. We have for months put forward the ideas and the priorities of our party for this Province."

Well, we now know that none of these ideas were true and the plan really wasn't a plan at all.

She goes on to say: "Let me be clear – Mr. Speaker ... there is nothing more important for a government than to engage with the people who are the stakeholders in the decision and listen to them. Not listen to them ... but really truly listen to them."

Those were her words, Mr. Chair. I call upon the Minister of Finance and the Premier, all members of the Executive and all Members of government opposite, to please listen to the people. Please cancel this levy and change a lot of things in your budget that more suitably reflect what the people asked you for.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I didn't think I'd get an opportunity to speak so quickly to Bill 10 once again but, unfortunately, government Members are choosing to stay in their seats this afternoon.

You're hearing some noise in the House, and I appreciate your ruling, Mr. Chair, to give the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune the opportunity to be heard.

One of the things that's being shouted across a number of times is: we're not debating the budget; we're not debating the budget. Well, I'd like to remind hon. Members that Bill 10 is, An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money by Way of Loan by the Province.

What the Liberal government will do through this bill is get permission to get a loan to a maximum amount of \$1.6 billion. That's what Bill 10 is about. It directly relates to the budget. It's not the budget bill.

Members are correct that it's not the budget bill, but it directly relates to the budget. Because of the nature of the bill, it's an opportunity for Members in this hon. House to get up and speak as many times as they like about whatever they wish on behalf of the people of the province, particularly their own constituents. It's disheartening and concerning, Mr. Chair, that Members of the government are choosing not to participate because we only have so many opportunities to talk about the budget in this House of Assembly.

I understand we may sit Monday night and Tuesday night. I suspect there will be lots of discussion about the budget. Hopefully, we'll hear from government Members at that point in time, in prime time. So it will even be easier for people of the province to tune in and hear what their representatives have to say.

We are debating the budget this afternoon, Mr. Chair. While the bill is not the budget bill, it is a necessary bill because of the budget. There are a number of other bills that we're going to debate in this House of Assembly in the month of May – and perhaps June – where we will be debating bills that directly relate to the budget. So that's what we're doing this afternoon.

Mr. Chair, following the Finance Minister's opening remarks, one Member of the government did speak. The Member for Humber – Bay of Islands did speak and continued to make irresponsible statements about the history related to the West Coast hospital, the Corner Brook hospital.

Now, Mr. Chair, the Liberal government has now chosen to further delay the West Coast hospital. That is a fact. It's in the budget. There were funds in the budget last year to continue the detailed design and planning for the Corner Brook hospital. The Members quote the millions of dollars that have been spent. Well, when you're designing a project that's costing hundreds of millions of dollars, there is detailed

design that is required. There is a detailed functional plan required.

The functional plan is done. The detailed design – when I left office – was well underway. There's a team called the Corner Brook Care Team that is continuing work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Mr. Chair, unless the Minister of Transportation and Works or the Minister of Health and Community Services, or even the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, can table evidence in this House that shows that work can't possibly be completed in 2016, then I remain convinced it could have been. We did enough work on continuing the work on the detailed design and finalizing the functional plan in 2015 that there is no reason this government could not have called tenders, could not have gone to market and made this project a reality in 2016. Those are the facts, Mr. Chair.

It's fine to point the finger at the former Administration. We would all love to see the West Coast hospital already built. There have been many reasons for delays over the last number of years, but what I can tell you is the functional plan is complete. The detailed design is near completion. There is no good reason, I say to Members opposite, why they couldn't complete the detailed design and go to market in 2016. It's just not true. What's being said repeatedly, particularly by the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, is not true. It may serve him well in his constituency, but the facts will show that there is no reason why they couldn't have gone to market in 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You may not like what I'm saying, I say to the hon. Members opposite, but at least I'll tell the truth. I encourage them to do the same.

I'd like to get back to the correspondence that we've been receiving on the Liberal levy. In my

previous opportunity to speak this afternoon, I spoke about a note I received from a constituent of Windsor Lake District, where the Minister of Finance is now the Member. I think it's only fitting that I share one from one of my own constituents as well.

MR. A. PARSONS: I would like to stand on a point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Government House Leader and I would ask what section of the Standing Orders.

MR. A. PARSONS: (Inaudible) offensive language.

Again, the Member opposite just referenced in his comments and said at least I will stand here and tell the truth, which would imply that the Member he is referring to is not telling the truth, which is unparliamentary. I would ask that the Member retract those comments as they are clearly not parliamentary as per the Standing Orders.

CHAIR: The Chair will take that matter under advisement and report back to the House of Assembly at a later time.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I said I will tell the truth; at least I will tell the truth. There is nothing unparliamentary about making such a statement in this House, and I will tell the truth because the truth needs to be told. I challenge Members opposite to table the evidence that says the detail designed couldn't have been finished in 2016. It's just not true. It's not true. There was enough work done in 2015 that there is no reason that they couldn't go to market if they so choose in 2016.

Now, I recognize the fiscal challenges that the government faces. They undoubtedly faced really difficult decisions about which infrastructure projects would proceed and which ones wouldn't, but the facts are that the Liberal government is now choosing to further delay the construction of the West Coast hospital.

They have some money in the budget for planning. Perhaps less money than was in the budget last year. I recognize that at this point in time the detailed design drawings may not be ready to go to market, but there is no reason in this fiscal year that couldn't happen. There was enough work done previously in the last two years that I know for a fact that it could happen in 2016, which was the intention.

I look forward to seeing the evidence. I know there are multiple ministers involved with the file and if there is such evidence, then I look forward to seeing that, Mr. Chair, but I will continue to stand on my feet in this House and I will continue to tell the truth on behalf of the people that I represent and on behalf of the people of the province.

I'd like to now quote the next email that I've received about the levy. Again, this relates to one of my constituents. He's contacting me about strong displeasure with the so-called Deficit Reduction Levy. Not that I'm happy with the plethora of other tax and fee hits, but this one is absolutely over the top in that low- and middle-income families are hit with a much higher percentage than the richer among us.

He says he is sure that we've heard this from other people as well, and we have, but he asks me to add his family to the list of my constituents that are unhappy with the financial impact of this budget and, most especially, with this levy.

As an Opposition, on behalf of the people that we're hearing from in all districts, we're calling on the government to eliminate the levy; it doesn't make sense and there is a better way.

He goes on to say: I realize the money has to come from somewhere, but a better job could have been done to go easier on people with lower incomes especially. That is a really critical argument as part of this discussion we're having about the budget.

There's a petition going around against the levy. People are organizing protests, and I suspect we'll see more. Members are being called on to resign or to cross the floor, or at the very least vote against the budget and stand with their constituents. This individual in my district says

he'll be keeping his eyes open for opportunities to make his voice heard. What he is saying to me, as his MHA, is anything you can do to oppose this levy and bring about a more equitable sharing of the financial burden would be appreciated.

So we will do our part. We're happy to talk about ideas and we're happy to talk about alternatives that we see because the solution can't simply be about taxing and borrowing. It can't. You've got to address spending and that will require tough decisions no doubt, Mr. Chair. The result of this budget is going to have a devastating impact on low-income families. It's going to have a devastating impact on middle-class families.

I look forward to further opportunities to get up and discuss Bill 10, and to discuss the budget. I hope that all Members will take every opportunity they can to take part in this discussion about the budget, which is a critical one, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

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

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

People are really having a hard time getting used to that new name – everybody, both here in the House as well as outside. It's not Signal Hill anymore; it is St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

I'm happy to stand again, Mr. Chair, to speak to issues of concern with regard to government's rationale for so many of the initiatives that are in the budget. When I spoke earlier this afternoon I referred to a document which is actually 10 pages – I gave a wrong number before – of initiatives and showing what was spent on these initiatives last budget, '15-'16, the savings in this year's draconian budget and the so-called rationale.

There are so many things I can pick out of here. I will choose another one right now. It has to do with the initiative to eliminate the HST point-of-sale rebate on books purchased by individuals.

In other words, Mr. Chair, we are going into a situation where people will now have to pay 15 per cent tax on books.

The rationale given by the government – I guess put together by the Department of Finance because that's the heading that it's under. Somebody decided that the rationale to be put in here for us to understand this initiative, because that's what the rationales are supposed to do, they are supposed to help us understand the initiative, it says: "This decision will reduce program and/or operational budgets."

Now, that really is a mind-blower. "This decision will reduce program and/or operational budgets." So by putting a tax on books, a program is going to be reduced. Now, I don't know what program is going to be reduced there. I haven't figured that one out. I'm trying to get my mind around it.

Maybe it's the process of paying the rebates, but that happens at the point-of-sale. It's not something that people have to send in their receipts for in order to get the rebate on tax. They don't have to do that. It's all done at point-of-sale. So it's going to reduce program and/or operational budgets, and guess what? Government is going to save, in this budget, \$525,000 and overall in annualized savings, \$2.1 million.

I ask again, I would like to know what government's analysis was that led them to this initiative to think in any way that this initiative was a logical thing to do. There are many positions from which to take it. The first one is what happens when you put taxes on books? What is the impact of putting taxes on books? It has been proven in other jurisdictions, one of those jurisdictions for example – well, I have two examples here that I want to use where taxes were put on books. One was the country of Latvia. In 2009, Latvia raised book tax. They had a book tax and they raised it from 5 per cent to 21 per cent. The result was a 35 per cent decline in book sales and a 35 per cent decline in the number of new books published. That's an extremely important point.

Conversely, in 2002 Sweden reduced the book tax that they had from 25 per cent to 6 per cent and the result was a 20 per cent increase in book

sales. So the lesson is that the cost of a book, surprisingly not, is a major determinant to book buying. Certainly, it's a major determinant of literacy.

We have heard from the other side of the House here, and from the Minister of Education, that this doesn't seem to have any impact on literacy, but such is not the case. That is proven in other places. The reality is that not buying books and books not being available is a real factor when it comes to literacy.

First Book Canada, which is an organization that provides access to books for children in need, says the number one barrier to book ownership is price. There's no doubt about that. That relates, of course, to why libraries are important also, because many low-income people don't buy books period, and that is because it is expensive. Many people on fixed incomes find it difficult to buy books even though they may have bought them earlier in their lives, because again, it is expensive.

If we add the tax that's being talked about here by this government without any analysis of the impact of putting the tax on then we are going to be running into trouble. We are going to have what has happened in other jurisdictions. You will see that, number one, the buying of books will go down and there's going to be an impact on the economy because, again, at the town hall that we held last night – I referred to it earlier today – we had a book publisher. That book publisher held up a book in his hand and he said: This book was written by a local writer of this province. This book was edited by local editors. This book was printed by local printers. This book was published and marketed by a local company.

If the sale of local books, in particular – and we have such wonderful writers in this province. If the sale of their books go down, and they're going to – all experience shows that's what going to happen – then the government may save slightly over \$2 million in annualized savings but we will have fewer books being published. I believe that is really true. That's what happened in other countries. That's what happened in Latvia. The opposite happened when tax was taken off in Sweden. More books got published again.

You're going to have fewer writers becoming published. You're going to have people who edit books not having enough work here in this province. You're going to have workers who print books finding they may become unemployed. Keeping to government's promise, this budget is going to add to unemployment in the province. That's what they say on page five of the Budget Speech.

So what is the rationale? What is the rationale, saving \$2.1 million? The rationale has nothing to do with encouraging writing. The rationale has nothing to do with wanting to have writers working in this field earning good salaries. The rationale has nothing to do with wanting children to have access to books. The rationale has nothing to do with understanding literacy. There is no analysis.

The only goal of this budget – which says to me it wasn't a budget; it was a bookkeeping exercise – was cut, cut, cut. Find wherever you can to cut. Don't do an analysis of the impact on our economy. When I say that, we have to understand that every piece I mention is the economy. So having a low level of literacy is a determinant of how strong our economy is going to be. Having writers who are able to make a living and produce good books becomes a determinant of a strong economy. This government apparently did absolutely no analysis. We had the Premier stand yesterday and say, oh yes, they looked at everything. They really made sure.

They looked at nothing. All they looked at was how much can we get away with cutting. That's all they looked at. That is the rationale, so that is what they might have well put down here. The only rationale is cutting to make savings and to hell with whatever else goes on here.

The impact on people's lives, the impact of our overall economy, nothing means anything. That's the rationale: Forget people and save a few cents.

I'll have more to say later on, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for the District of Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I wish you'd say the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis so I would not, because you know I'm going to say it.

CHAIR: I'm sure it is beautiful.

MR. K. PARSONS: You know I'm going to say it.

Mr. Chair, it's a privilege to get up again today, the second time. I enjoy getting up here and talking about things – and there's so much to talk about, it's unbelievable. I have lots of stuff and I'm sure I'll get up a couple of more times.

During Question Period today the Premier mentioned investments in the fishery and talked about the fishery, so I just want to talk a little bit about the fishery. Myself and the minister are after having some great conversations. Actually, I used to enjoy the former member for Carbonear – I used to have some great conversations with him over the fishery because he's down to earth.

He knew the fishery better than anybody in the House because he's an actual fisherman. He was on the water and he knew what it was like to go haul a crab pot. We'd talk afterwards and he'd be telling me where he was to down off Bauline, that's where they used to catch their crab, and how the crowd down their way used to come and set cod traps down off there. His knowledge of the fishery was good because it came right from fisheries.

I'm sure there are a lot of rural MHAs over there that have great knowledge of the fishery. Yes, I'm sure you all do and so do I. Actually, my brother is gone – they left 12 o'clock last night and they should get in, I'm thinking, tomorrow. They're gone to the midshore one, which is about 160 kilometres off. They got –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Speaker is finding it difficult to hear the hon. Member.

MR. K. PARSONS: To understand the fishery and to understand what these guys and ladies do,

because there are lots of ladies out there today fishing on these boats also, they have a time frame that they have to get out to get. So they look at the forecast. Last night was a good time to go at 12 o'clock. They look at the three- or four-day forecasts so they'll know. Can you imagine that is the type of job that it is?

I know the Minister of Natural Resources knows exactly what I'm talking about. They have to wait to get that certain time of day to get out to get the fish. It's a stressful time of the year for them and everything else, to be able to catch their catch. What they do to our economy – this is my whole point. I really believe that the fishery is probably one of the brightest spots that we have.

I'm proud to be on the committee with the minister and Members opposite, with LIFO, and we're going to examine that. I think next week the committee comes to St. John's and it will start on doing what they should do. I'm hoping they revisit it so that our hard-working fishermen really get their just right to be able to go catch shrimp when they can and bring it in and communities survive.

This budget is a lot about survival. There are areas in the budget – I got up the other day and I talked about a lot of good things. I'm not going talking negative all the time. Some of the time I will, but not all the time am I going to talk about the negative things.

The fishery is such a positive thing in our province. I went through Estimates here the other day with the minister. In case people don't know what Estimates are out there, it is just that the department comes in – I'm the critic for the Department of Fisheries, so I get the opportunity to go through the book, which is the Estimates Book, which shows all where they are spending their money and investments that they're making in the fishery and stuff like that. We go through it and see this is what changed from last year to this year and we get a chance – and I have to thank the minister.

I asked the minister beforehand because sometimes you can't ask policy questions; you have to stay basically to the Estimates that are in the book. I have to say I did three Estimates so

far and the ministers – I thank them for it – have been really good to me.

I really believe that in this budget we should invest a little bit more in our fishery. My concern with the fishery is – and I know the union and the processors are working together to make sure that our ground fishery when it comes back – I really believe that the ground fishery is going to save rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I really do.

I can remember back in the day when you'd go down the Southern Shore – now maybe there were too many fish plants. There was one in Witless Bay, there was one in Bay Bulls and there was one in every community down there, but the communities were going crazy. There were young fellows out in the hopper cutting out tongues and I could get a pail of tongues then for \$7. That wasn't the little one; that was the seven-pound one. That's what it was called. It was a fine lot of cod tongues.

It was unreal. I had people down my way say Kev, get me some cod tongues. What I did, when I first started my first job, was driving a fish truck. That's what I did. The very first job I had was driving a fish truck. I met a lot of good people over the years in different communities in rural Newfoundland from Hant's Harbour out in the minister's way. Where's the one down in Twillingate? Herring Neck? We hauled a lot of capelin out of one of the places down there – Comfort Cove and all these places. Rural Newfoundland was so vibrant back then.

I really believe the one part of this budget we kind of missed is our investment in the fishery, because I really believe we have to be ready. I think the cod fishery is going to come back. I think the ground fishery is going to come back, but we have a problem. Our biggest problem with the fishery is going to be marketing what it is.

Today, the markets have changed. What happened years ago, the cod block – what they call the cod block, everything was frozen. Basically, I think most of it went to the New England market. That's where it went, down in that part of the United States. We had no problem selling our cod block.

Since the moratorium, competition for that market has changed so much because there are so many new players. There's Alaskan pollock, there's haddock. There are all kinds of new players. There's the Russian cod. There's Norwegian and different parts of the world.

I know the minister was down recently to the Boston seafood market. He can probably tell you that we're just a very, very, very small part of what's happening in the fishery worldwide. So it's a job to get back in that market again.

The market that's going to need to develop – I think the market we're going to need to see is going to be a market where whole fish is sold at restaurants. We have to figure out how to get that – people will pay. I think they will pay for what the market is but it has to be fresh.

I'll tell you a little story now of how our fishery used to be. I can remember – I said my first job was driving a fish truck, but actually my first job was weighing for the crowd from Newfoundland quick freeze who used to come down and I used to get on the truck. I used to sign the slips and weigh the fish. Do you know what? The trucks used to come down – they were open-back trucks with no ice in them – and you'd send the fish up. You can imagine now, it's about 80 degrees and the fish has been in the back of a truck for three or four hours, what the quality was.

We've come a long ways in our fishery. We got to, because we got to adjust to what the market – the market back then, they could take it and they sold it.

My point is this budget – we talked about it today. The Premier mentioned the fishery, everybody mentioned the fishery. It's a bright spot in our province. It is a bright spot in our province but government has to invest and we have to invest in making sure the markets are there.

The fishery will be back. I'm so convinced of that. I know talking to fishermen, I know talking to other Members who are from rural Newfoundland and Labrador that the fishery – we're all hoping. I'm sure most people who are from rural Newfoundland are really saying: Listen, this is the one thing we can do.

I don't know how many fish plants were around back in the '70s and '80s.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. K. PARSONS: Over how many?

AN HON. MEMBER: Over 200.

MR. K. PARSONS: Over 200. What that did to so many communities. Not only did it employ people in the community, what it did to the grocery store; what it did to the fellow who was trucking fish; what it did to people who were selling different things in their communities.

That's what we need. That's what rural Newfoundland needs is that boost. We need it, but I tell you this government – we have to get ready for it, and you better be ready for it because it's coming. Right now we have the processors, and I applaud the processors and the union. They got together and had an announcement just a short little while ago. They said okay, we're going to focus – marketing was the biggest thing they talked about because they realize how important the markets are.

Yet, what we saw in the budget was very little money put into our fishery, the one resource that brought everyone here to the province. The one resource that we can all – I'm sure everybody can tell a story about fishing or cod fishing or cutting tongues or whatever. I'm sure we all can tell a story of what it was like when we grew up and how important the fishery is. We need to make sure we're ready because the fishery is going to be important again, folks. The fishery is going to be important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador again and more so, it's going to be important to rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

What you're doing with this budget, you're killing rural Newfoundland and Labrador. You're killing people on fixed incomes, low income and hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. But, there is a bright spot. It's not all negative. There is a bright spot, and the fishery is a bright spot. I believe that we, as a government, have to be ready for the fishery. We have to be ready to do investments.

Listen, the investments we do today in the fishery are going to pay off thousands of times over because it's going to bring back who we are as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's going to bring back our young people. It's going to bring back the traditions we remember.

I'm not a great filleter at all. There are a lot of bones in my fillet, but do you know what? I love doing it. So many Newfoundlanders love doing it. I love watching a person who can fillet. There is such a skill –

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair reminds the hon. Member his time has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay. Can I just clue up for a second because I am talking about something I am very passionate about which is the fishery?

I think as a province we have to get ready. It's a tradition. It's who we are.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to echo the comments of my colleague. I, too, strongly believe in the potential of the fishery. I really do believe that as a renewable resource we really need more focus on the fishery. Rural Newfoundland and Labrador does have great potential. Renewing the fishery is the answer, I do strongly believe, Mr. Speaker.

If we have such a great relationship with Ottawa then in addition to seeking some support to helping us with our current financial fiscal situation, then certainly we hope they would deliver results in terms of getting more

ownership and control of our fishery back as well.

Mr. Chair, I'm going to resume where I picked up the last time because when you get up and speak in this House and you're so passionate about what you discuss and what you believe in, the 10 minutes goes by way too fast.

There were a lot of things that I wanted to pull from the minister's Budget Speech last year, Mr. Chair, because I find it appalling. I find it absolutely appalling that someone could stand in this House less than 12 months ago, make these kinds of statements, and then stand in the House this year, in 2016, and deliver a draconian budget like we've seen done right here in this House, one that still has us all in shock. We are still reeling from it, Mr. Chair, and we haven't even begun to see the devastation.

Quoting again directly from the Minister of Finance's speech last year on May 4 – and again, this would be when she was critic, in her role as critic. Her words are: "This government would like you to believe that they have two options: to borrow or to tax. They want you to believe it because those are the only two options they have.

"Government has to ... if necessary, look at borrowing before you increase taxes."

So here we are and we're debating a bill on borrowing. But I would challenge, Mr. Chair, why we aren't borrowing more with a Liberal government, to be honest with you, and why there has been such a devastating increase in every single tax. These are the words of the Minister of Finance from her speech last year, I say to Members opposite: "... look at borrowing before you increase taxes."

When you look at fiscal economy policy, Mr. Chair, any person who truly understands monetary fiscal policy knows that you stimulate an economy by spending and you stimulate an economy by decreasing taxes. This Liberal government have increased spending. We'll come back to that in a minute.

But anyone who truly understands fiscal monetary policy – and the longer I sit in this House I'm not convinced that any members of

the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Party do because they would never have brought down a budget like this if there was a genuine, true understanding of what the implications of these measures are going to be on the economic and social well-being of the people living here in this province. It is absolutely devastating.

In terms of me being fundamentally conservative, I've always believed that the private sector is the engine of growth. Government's role in any society is to create laws, laws that ensure the safety of their people and ensure the well-being of their people. It is not government's job to run businesses.

I would say that a budget of the province is nothing like the budget of a corporation, and you must have social empathy for the people you serve. You must do what you can to help those who are not in a position to help themselves. What this does is drive the knife right through the heart, because there is nothing in this budget that will help people. In fact, there is so much in this budget that will literally hurt people, people who we have been elected to serve. It absolutely devastates me that we are in this House debating a budget of this terrible, terrible calibre, unlike anything we've ever seen.

Mr. Chair, let's go back to that quote again where she said, "... if necessary, look at borrowing before you increase taxes." Just before that quote she had, "Even in this Budget, which was supposed to be where they made the tough decisions ..." – and we did; we made the decision to raise the HST and we made the decision to go with attrition, not job cuts of people who were going home and wondering how they were going to pay their mortgage or buy their groceries or feed their children. We were talking about attrition. Those who retired with a pension, with an income, for every 10 that went out, seven would come back. That was the plan, Mr. Chair, that the Progressive Conservatives brought in and that we were criticized ferociously for by Members opposite. We all know now how that wasn't very truthful.

Anyway she goes on to say, "... where they made the tough decisions, they actually increased spending by 1.7 per cent, \$110 million." Well, Mr. Chair, another thing that has not –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – been talked about a lot yet in this House but will be talked about over the course of this debate, Mr. Chair, and over the course of the coming months is that the Liberals did increase spending this year by another \$400 million.

Now, let's talk about two areas, \$500,000 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Okay, the Members opposite are heckling me and asking why. Let's talk about it; \$500,000 for a new seniors' advocate office. Let's talk about it. Is that what the seniors' resource council and everybody asked you for? I heard the other day when I asked a question, well, you are going to be spending money on marketing because that's what all the groups wanted you to do. There are so many programs and so much out there that people don't know about it. So you criticize us on one day for doing advertisements and you get up the next day and say oh, but we're going to spend \$100,000 on advertisements.

Mr. Chair, I really don't think that's what they meant. What they meant was to improve things, to make it more efficient, not to add another layer.

I'm going to speak very honestly, Mr. Chair. I have no doubt that a seniors' advocate would be a wonderful thing, but it is a luxury as luxuries go, I would challenge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Thank you. I thank you, Mr. Chair, for your protection.

In terms of adding to the bottom line, what have you done? You have created another civil servant. You've created another pension

liability. You've created another person who's going to avail of all the benefits of government. Who's going to answer the phone when seniors call?

Let me tell you, Mr. Chair, I don't know what you guys do as MHAs in your offices, but I know what I do in mine. I know seniors come to my office so they can sit with me because they don't want to make the call to the stranger they don't know sitting in St. John's. They don't want to make the call to the stranger they don't know sitting in Ottawa. They come to my office. So I sit down with them and help them make their calls, Mr. Chair.

Do you really think having another person for them to call is going to help? Five hundred thousand dollars, Mr. Chair, would take care of a lot of Home Heating Rebates for seniors. It would buy a lot of groceries for seniors. I really do hope your evidence-based decision making shows you that this is actually something better for the seniors because I'm not convinced of it, and none of the seniors I represent are convinced of it. So we'll see, but you add into the bottom line and add into the liability of the civil servants, and you're increasing the size of the civil servants.

Now, I'm going to say something that's really contentious because even my own colleagues and I debate this one, but you're adding to the bottom line.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: Thirty million dollars for all-day kindergarten. Again, all-day kindergarten is a great thing. I will say the same as I said of the seniors' advocate office; it's a great thing but in a time of fiscal constraint is it a luxury or is it a necessity?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: I truly ask: Can we afford to be adding \$30 million in new expenditures –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair has asked for order now several times. I'm going to ask Members one more time to please remain orderly. We are debating a bill here, Bill 10, to borrow \$1.6 billion. I ask all Members to please have decorum.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you for your protection, Mr. Chair.

I say they can heckle all they want. I will not be quiet in this House. I will stand up and speak for the people I represent, and I call upon each and every one of you Members opposite to do the same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I just figure I'd take a few moments. I am going to speak to Bill 10, which is talking about the significant borrowing our government has to undertake due to the situation we inherited. Usually when you inherit something it's nice, but in this case we inherited a mess that the Members opposite, including the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, caused.

One thing I'm going to say is I'm glad the Members opposite, including the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, are speaking out because some of them sat on their hands for a long time when they were over here. I'm going to give one example. We want to talk about – I'm just going to provide one example. We want to talk about rural Newfoundland; truthful, factual answers here and information.

I represented probably one of the most rural districts in this province and it's adjacent to the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. If she has any issues with it she can certainly respond. One of the areas I represent, when you go down Route 480, a road that actually collapsed last year and hasn't been fixed because it wasn't

deemed worthy. There are three communities down there. There's Burgeo, Ramea and Grey River. Adjacent to Grey River is François. They are serviced down there, Ramea, Grey River and François. They've seen decreases in their health care coverage for decades. They used to be serviced by a doctor but with out-migration and everything else these things go.

When I got elected they had no actual full-time professional there. What they had was – a nurse practitioner is the position that was there but it was vacant. They were lucky in many cases to get a local. The nurse practitioner is based in Ramea but they travel to Grey River and to François. So they travel to an area outside of my district.

When I got in and had meetings, I used to include the community of François in those meetings because it affected us all. I said I don't care whose district it is, at the end of the day we're all on the same page.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: That's right. So here's where I'm going.

I want to put this out there. If we want to talk, let's talk facts. When we didn't have the nurse practitioner position filled, I said well one of the things I'm going to do is I'm going to work with the Members opposite. I used to deal with the former minister of Health, Susan Sullivan. I won't get into anything here. She's not here. She wasn't the issue.

I said what I'll do is I'll deal with the Member who represents François and together, let's work on this for the betterment of our constituents. I said let's have a chat. I emailed and said let's have a chat about what we can do to get a nurse practitioner to serve our constituents.

AN HON. MEMBER: Good idea.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes. Oh, it was a good idea.

I was told you do what you got to do. You do what you got to do. I was turned down. So when we want to talk about rural Newfoundland and

working together, I say put your money where your mouth is. That's what I would say.

I'm going to put this out here. We're going to get to the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. A. PARSONS: I'm hearing it over there now. The Member for CBS is talking about rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm hearing the Member for CBS – listen, if you want to get up and talk about rural Newfoundland and Labrador you're going to get your 10 minutes. I haven't said a word to you all day. Now, if you want a chance, get up and talk about it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair would ask the hon. Member to please address the Chair.

MR. A. PARSONS: I'm going to continue on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess protection goes both ways.

I'm going to get another chance to speak to the budget. I'm going to talk to the phone calls I've got, the responses I've given, the information I've provided, that we have provided. I'm going to speak about the Department of Justice.

One thing I hear, and it boils me to no end, is when people talk about rural Newfoundland and Labrador and those people haven't been there in their life. In fact, I ran in a district where I didn't see a PC the entire time. Do you know what else? They have that in common with the NDP because they never showed up once – not once. If we're going to talk about rural Newfoundland and Labrador and you're going to talk about the issues affecting my constituents, I would say come out and talk to my constituents.

I say to the Members opposite, as the minister said earlier, we're going to keep working together. You guys are going to ask for stuff. We're going to do our best because it's in the best interest of all of our constituents. The other thing is the Opposition is going to do their job.

Their job is to get in here and hold government accountable.

Now, it's funny. I don't think so much for Members on the other side – they used to get over here when they were in government and say: You guys got it some easy over there. I don't know if that's changed or not. I found it hard work. I used to work hard. I bet the Members on the other side –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: That's right. What I would say is being on each side gives you a different perspective on it. I certainly knew government was hard work, but I've also had the opportunity to work in Opposition and know that is hard work. An opposition's job is to hold government accountable.

I get the political side of this because I've been over there. I get the political side where we talk about the effects on people. Some of it is a bit overblown. There are times when we actually do speak facts – the Members of the Opposition will say this is a concern. Do you know what? We hear. We listen. We do listen. But there are other times too when the stuff that is put out there is factually incorrect.

I heard the Member for Mount Pearl North, he had some good comments. He said do you know what? We're going to do this, but it's not about being personal and nobody should take it personal. I think he was talking about a tax, because we have all dealt with that. What I'm saying too is you're going to continue to do your job as Opposition and that's the proper thing to do because that is your job on behalf of those people. I think good Opposition leads to better government. That's what I think. There have been lots of politicians and premiers who have said that before.

What I would also say is if you do have concerns from your constituents, then feel free to contact us. I have a great example I'm actually going to put out when I speak to the budget about a constituent that wrote to me. I'm going to read it verbatim, if I'm allowed. He wrote to me with concerns; I wrote him back and gave him the answer. I have it here and I will refer to it. I wanted to save it for the actual

budget debate as opposed to the bill here that we're dealing with which is for borrowing. But he came back and said thank you for that information. Do you know what? I'm actually – this is there – I'm actually better off.

There are some people that will see improvements in their life through these measures. That being said, if Members opposite have concerns I strongly suggest reach out – and again, I've seen it on non-budget matters. I've dealt with Members and we've done that for years where you have a constituent issue, you come to us, to our departments, and I've done it before, you say this is an issue, look into it. You always do your best because it's for the betterment of the people we represent. So I'd say the same thing goes here.

I know you're going to do your job in Opposition and question. We know that there's a lot of hyperbole that goes on. We get that and I think the people say that, but at the same time some of the fear that has been created could be alleviated due to us actually getting the information out there. That's our job. That's what we're going to hope to do.

Even when you do that, you're still going to have concerns that there are philosophical differences in where we are on that. You're going to complain about something. We're going to say why we think it is right. I get that, but my big thing is when we talk about – I think we've all seen it; the people actually do have concerns, as they should. The best way to address those concerns is with facts and actual information as opposed to fear mongering.

I'm not saying that in a bad way. I'm not trying to cause a racket, but what I'm saying is if someone has a real concern, then let's work together to figure that out. Do you know what? In many cases they may find out the information they're looking for.

That's my contribution to this. I just wanted to put that out there. I felt I had to make some of these comments in response to some of the comments from the other side. I guess there's always a bit of grandstanding that goes on in here and sometimes we have to respond in kind.

What I would say is the bill we are debating here today is a very large borrowing bill. The reason we're borrowing is to pay for the services we are trying to require, that we need for the people of this province when it comes to roads and health care and everything else. We know the spending is unsustainable. Do you know what? The Members on the other side have known that for years too because the Auditor General said it and the former minister said it.

We are in a tough situation. We're taking the steps we need to get out of it. One of it is Bill 10, which is that we need to require a large amount of borrowing.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand and speak to this bill. Mr. Chair, many of us – I believe probably everybody here in this House – has received phone calls or emails or letters, even hand-written letters from many of our constituents who are very afraid.

Now, I'd like to say that nobody on this side of the House caused that fear. I believe what this government did have created an atmosphere of fear, dependency and uncertainty. The Minister of Finance for months before coming down with her budget constantly talked about how bad the situation was. She constantly said this was absolutely unprecedented, that the province was in horrible trouble. She kept on and kept at it and kept it and kept at it. She instilled an atmosphere of fear and desperation and uncertainty.

What we would have expected and what we would have hoped – because the people of the province voted for the government because this government promised them there would be no job cuts. They promised them there would be no increase in HST. They promised and promised and promised they would have a steady hand on the wheel. They would help navigate through this storm. Instead, they created the fear. I have

people calling my office – as everybody else here in this House has people calling their office – people who are afraid.

Then when the minister presented her budget she talked about – both her and the Premier – how bad they felt, how sad they were, how sorry they were. Instead of having a government who said: We know how bad this is, but we're going to get everyone through this. We're going to make sure that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and we're all going to work our way through this. That's not what they did.

Now, with the looming mini-budget coming out in the fall, people are very afraid. People are very afraid of their jobs, and this government has said that the budget we are debating now is just the beginning. Of course people are afraid. But that fear and that anxiety and that loathing are not from the people, it's what the government has done.

I am hoping that this government can turn it around because it's not right. It's not right to instill that kind of fear into the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador did not create this crisis. The people who least benefited from our prosperity are the ones who will be carrying the heaviest burden in terms of what we're going through right now.

Mr. Chair, the Minister of Finance during Question Period said that she was going to give me a technical briefing on the rollout of the budget and the cuts and her Income Supplement, and I am looking forward to that. I can hardly wait. She also talked about putting an online tool so that people can calculate the effects of this budget on them personally, on their families. I'm really looking forward to that.

I trust that what we're going to see online, this online tool, will be accurate and give people the opportunity to really see what this rollout will be. I have people calling my office whose income is about \$16,000 a year and they're worried about paying the levy, and I'm saying to them no, you will not have to pay the levy. You're not going to have to pay the levy, and people need to know what the rollout is for them because a lot of people are so afraid.

Again, that fear has been fed by the government, by the Premier, by the Minister of Finance who kept talking about doom and gloom and doom and gloom and unprecedented situations. Madam Chair, in the meantime what I did do, the exercise that I did and I put to the Minister of Finance, was I looked at the situation for a four-person family who is making \$36,000 a year. What I did is I used all the information that government has given out so far. I would just like to go through that to show, from what we know so far, what that family is going to be dealing with.

So we have a family of four with one earner. A family of four, the income of that one earner is \$36,000. So that family, that earner will pay \$300 in the levy. That family of four also, previous to this budget, would have been eligible for the \$250 Heating Rebate. So right off the bat there we see they're going to pay \$300 for the levy and they've lost their \$250 Heating Rebate. That's a loss of \$550 right there, just in two situations.

The potential Income Supplement that this family will receive will be about \$900, give or take a few dollars because we don't yet have those really accurate tools available to us. From the information that has been given to us, the potential Income Supplement for that family is \$900.

We are going to take off the \$300 levy and we're going to take off the loss of the Heating Rebate. That means that leaves them to the better of \$450. That's without taking into account any increased fees, any increased gas tax, any increased income tax, any loss of the provincial portion of their HST rebate. So what we have is about \$38 a month. That's what government is going to help these folks get through this storm; \$38 a month for a family of four with two adults and two children.

Aside from that, there are additional financial stressors on the family as a result of the budget. That's not taken into account. Just let me highlight some of those additional financial stressors: Gas tax increase; with the HST added onto that it will be at least 18 cents a litre, at least; the HST increase of 2 per cent. So everything this family buys will be increased by 2 per cent.

They will no longer get the provincial portion of their HST. That will be a loss to this family of \$440; therefore, everything this Income Supplement has given is gone, wiped out. They're now in the negative.

Tax on insurance; if they have a car their car insurance is about \$750, 10 per cent of that is \$75. So that's an additional \$75 financial stressor on them. If they have home insurance – one would hope they would – that would be about \$500. The extra tax on home insurance is about \$50 a year. Plus, their income tax has gone up 1 per cent for 2016 and it will go up an additional 1 per cent for 2017.

They've lost their right to the dental plan. They no longer have that additional source.

The other thing – let me see; \$350,000 cut from the Jumpstart program which helps families like this get their kids into sporting activities and other kinds of leisure activities. That's gone as well.

The over-the-counter drugs, they would have been eligible for the access program in the Newfoundland and Labrador drug program. No longer will they be eligible now for those over-the-counter drugs. So it's a bit of a problem.

What we can see is that, in fact, this particular family is negatively impacted by this budget. In spite of the minister's Income Supplement, this family is in a negative.

I'm really looking forward to seeing the tools the minister will put online. I'm sure a lot of families are. I'm concerned for families who may have been frightened and think they are going to lose even more than they actually are, but as we can see – even though the minister says the Income Supplement is taking care of families – the effect of the budget on low-income families like this, they are in a negative place not positive, even with the Income Supplement.

Madam Chair, I'm happy to have had the chance to kind of clear that up. I look forward to speaking to this bill again.

Thank you kindly.

CHAIR (Dempster): The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: They're started already. I gave them the courtesy of not saying a word – they're started.

I got to say, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, I was out to a meeting and I heard what she had to say and I couldn't believe it. She was telling us that a seniors' advocate is a luxury, that we can't take someone else and make a service of the House.

Madam Chair, just to show you the hypocrisy, I ask the Members opposite: How many EAs, after the last election, were put in the civil service for a 13-week position? Yet, we can't have a seniors' advocate here. How many EAs were put in a 13-week position after you were defeated? Here's the chance. Stand up, because I know how many there were. Now here we are bringing in a seniors' advocate –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – and the government is saying it's a luxury.

AN HON. MEMBER: Not the government.

MR. JOYCE: The Opposition is saying – the former government is saying that it's a luxury.

Madam Chair, the largest growing population is seniors in our province. To say that putting in a seniors' advocate to take the concerns of the senior is only a luxury, we don't need him or her, whoever it may be, that's just shameful. That's just honestly shameful. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune should be ashamed of what she said, Madam Chair.

I know the seniors I deal with have complex issues. They have a lot of issues, and for the Member to stand up and say: What do the MHAs do? That is just shameful. The biggest hypocrisy is saying we can't afford it. A few of them are over there – how many of your EAs were put in positions in government after you lost or before you lost? You appointed them into positions in this government. How many? Stand up. Don't be shameful. Stand up. They won't stand up, Madam Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) two staffers.

MR. JOYCE: What's this here – the former minister of health had two political staffers approved by the Premier of the day. He called the position minister liaison. Yet, we can't have a seniors' advocate in this province of Newfoundland and Labrador because – two liaisons approved by the Premier.

This is what I'd like to ask. We know, by the way, when the election was over on November 30, how many EAs were appointed to a 13-week position to get them in government? Let's talk about hypocrisy.

Let the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune stand up and say they were useless. We didn't need them. Let's see how much guts you have to stand up against your own former Cabinet ministers. Let's do it. Here's your opportunity. I'll sit down, Madam Chair. If she wants to stand up – if this Member wants to stand up and say that we didn't need these political appointments, EAs, after the election to get them in the system, they're more important than the seniors' advocate in this province, here's your opportunity, stand up.

Madam Chair, here's what I'll do. If she's willing to stand up and say I agree there should be no seniors' advocate and I disagree with what our government did by appointing EAs after the election, I'll sit down.

For anybody, Madam Chair, that would stand in this House and say that a seniors' advocate is a waste of money, we don't need them, is absolutely disgraceful. Madam Chair, do you know their problem with that? That's the problem with this budget they take –

MS. PERRY: Point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Member is over asking me to stand, so I just want to point out and clarify I was speaking to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – additional expenditures that they are making.

CHAIR: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

MS. PERRY: In a time of fiscal constraint, they're adding to the bottom line.

CHAIR: Order, please!

There is no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: She's over there laughing at the seniors' advocate. That's shameful.

Madam Chair, let me ask her a question: Was there a fiscal reality when those EAs were hired in December? How foolish is that, saying that we don't need a seniors' advocate now because we're in a fiscal restraint, but December when they lost the election and their EAs needed a job, they started getting appointed. That was all right, though. We weren't in a fiscal problem then. We didn't have this \$2.7 billion deficit then. That only came about after December 15. That's the hypocrisy.

This is this budget – when we bring things out, this is a good thing, a seniors' advocate is a good thing. And here we are getting criticized for doing a good thing in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: This is a prime example, Madam Chair. No matter what you want to do for this province, the Members opposite are going to say it's bad. The only thing that's good here – I even mentioned earlier about the 1,300 people they laid off. They said no, that was through attrition. Are you serious? It's sad to lay anybody off, but if you make the decision that you're going to lay them off and you do because you had to, at least have the courtesy to say we did do it and here's the reason why we had.

I admit this is a tough budget. I make no bones about it. It's a tough budget. Every person I spoke to I said every politician in this House, both sides, Third Party also, want to do the best they can for the people and the information that's in front of you, you make the decisions that are best for you.

Madam Chair, I can tell you, when we sat down before the election and we were talking about a consumer advocate for the seniors, a seniors' advocate, everywhere I went in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador they said what a great idea. We have the Members of the Opposition standing up saying it's only a luxury. But it's not a luxury to hire their political staff and put them into 13-week positions so they can start applying internally. That's not a luxury. That's more important than a seniors' advocate.

Madam Chair, she's over there smirking. I'll let her come out and talk to some seniors' groups and tell them we don't need anyone to look after your concerns. We don't need anyone. If you follow that foolish logic, why do we need the Child and Youth Advocate? That's our job. Why do we need an Auditor General? That's our job to look at the books, isn't it? How foolish is that? That's the mentality of the Opposition.

There are issues in this budget they can say we would have done differently. I understand, I appreciate, I accept that; but when you put something positive in there and you want to make improvements to people's lives, seniors in this province, Madam Chair, when you have people in Newfoundland and Labrador, seniors who say we want someone we can go to, we want someone who can understand our concerns, we want someone who can relate to us.

It's true. It's honestly true. I don't know all the concerns of the seniors. I deal with seniors groups in the Bay of Islands all the time, but they have issues that they can relate. You put a seniors' advocate in place they can go to as a group, they can go to each association that's around. That's what the seniors' advocate is for.

So if the Member wants to stand up – I will give her the opportunity to stand now and say why she doesn't want a seniors' advocate. Let her stand up and say why she doesn't want a seniors' advocate. Let her stand up. I'll sit down and let her stand up. I bet you she can't do it, Madam Chair. That's the opportunity. She can't do it.

Madam Chair, I just want it on the record. I know I'm repeating myself, but I was out there in a meeting and when I saw that Member stand up speaking on behalf of the Official Opposition, standing here saying it's all right for us to give political appointments afterwards, it's not all right for a seniors' advocate in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because it's a luxury, it's nothing but a luxury for seniors –

MR. K. PARSONS: Sad.

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Cape St. Francis – I agree, it's sad what she said. I agree with you. I agree with you 100 per cent.

I don't feel – the Member for Cape St. Francis – you didn't know she was going to say that today and you will have the opportunity – you can't stand in this House and say that a seniors' advocate in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is nothing but a luxury. You can't do it.

MR. K. PARSONS: I can't do it.

MR. JOYCE: No, I know you can't do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Cape St. Francis said he can't do it. I know.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: The Member for Cape St. Francis is an honourable guy. He always speaks his mind. Good or bad, he speaks his mind. I will give him credit. That's why you can't have this kind of stuff come from the Opposition.

There are lots in the budget you can criticize. Lots in the budget you can say you would do a different way. The seniors' advocate is not one and I ask the Members opposite –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: – let's work together to help seniors in the province.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the Member his time has expired.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Madam Chair, again it's a privilege to get up here today for the third time. What was sad – the point I was making with sad was that there are 30 Members over across the way and it is sad that one Member had to get up and speak twice on this budget today. That's the sad thing.

Now, the hon. Member knows what I'm like and he knows who I am and I will tell him honestly anytime it comes to a senior, anytime it ever comes to a senior, the person that elected me or a person that's in this province that's a senior that paid the price for what we have today, I'll stand up for them every single day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Every single day I will stand here and I will speak for seniors in this province because let me tell you something right now, I think that we are privileged to live in such great communities. When we go around through Newfoundland and Labrador, you look at our communities. I come from a small community and I can tell you who the oldest persons are in my community. I can tell you the

seniors; I enjoy going to every function that's there for seniors. A seniors' advocate is a great thing. It is a great thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: But do you know what? I'd rather have money in a senior's pocket and make sure that they weren't hungry or they could pay their bills rather than do the levies and all this tax increases that you're doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: The point the Member made was there's a choice to make. Now the choice to tax seniors on their income tax, choice to tax seniors on what they're paying for their insurance on their house is yours, so the choice was have a seniors' advocate or let's put 15 per cent on the car that seniors drive. Let's ask the senior what they'd prefer.

The minister, I agree 100 per cent with you. We should do everything we can for seniors but why are we taxing them 15 per cent on their home insurance when they are having struggles to survive? A choice that you made. A choice that your government has made to tax seniors.

I agree that I would love to see an advocate, I agree with an advocate, but I'd rather see us –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I'd rather see us not take the money out of their pockets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Now, how about that one, like you're doing? This is what you're doing. You're taxing them to death.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: Listen, I challenge you to get up on your feet, Minister. Come on, get up and challenge her. You want to talk about things? No, you're over there – so you're yeah about the 15 –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. K. PARSONS: What? The Minister of Advanced Education is hurrahing about the 15 per cent that he's charging seniors for their homes that they're trying to stay in, that they're trying to put grub on the table and that they're trying to heat. So you're putting another 15 per cent. Yes b'y, hurrah for that. Yes, hurrah all you want.

Think about the seniors when you do this vote on the budget because you're not thinking about them. The Member on the side of me said it was a choice you made. Here's the choice that you made. You can have a seniors' advocate – Madam Chair, I can't hear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Here's the choice: A seniors' advocate – go to the seniors in the province and ask them what choice they want to make. I guarantee you the seniors in this province don't want to pay 15 per cent on the taxes on their home, on the taxes on their car.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: They don't want to pay \$300 or \$400 on a levy. They don't want to pay you \$300 in extra prices. It's crazy what you're doing to seniors in this province.

You get up and talk about an advocate. Do you know who the seniors' advocate in Cape St. Francis is? It's Kevin Parsons.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I will be a seniors' advocate for them.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Seeing no further speakers I'll now ask: Shall the resolution carry?

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province." (Bill 10)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 6 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 6 inclusive carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

On motion, clauses 2 through 6 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?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 10 carried without amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommended that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred, have adopted a certain resolution and have recommended that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the resolution be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: "That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,600,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: “That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,600,000,000.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

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

Prior to announcing the adjournment for the day – I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the resolution be now read – sorry, Mr. Speaker, I’m learning my job on the job.

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

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader 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: Against?

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, “An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province,” carried. (Bill 10)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 10)

On motion, Bill 10 read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 10 be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 10 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 Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 10)

On motion, Bill 10 read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 10 be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 10 be now read a third time.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 10)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 10)

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

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

Prior to adjourning, I want to announce the Estimates schedule for next week which has seen some changes. I'm hoping everybody will pay attention and that it works to everybody's schedule.

Monday in this House, May 2, at 9 a.m. will be the Estimates for Child, Youth and Family Services. On Tuesday, May 3, at 9 a.m. will be the Estimates for Labour Relations. On Wednesday, May 4, it will be the Estimates for Transportation and Works which will be held at 5:30 p.m. On Thursday, May 5, at 9 a.m. in this House will be the Estimates for Health and Community Services.

I move, seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adjourn?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 in the afternoon.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.