



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

---

Volume XLVIII

FIRST SESSION

Number 23

---

HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA*

Thursday

5 May 2016

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Members' statements today we have the Members for the District of Burin – Grand Bank, Terra Nova, Topsail – Paradise, Mount Pearl North, Bonavista, and Placentia – St. Mary's.

The hon. the Member for Burin – Grand Bank.

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

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

I rise today to recognize a youth organization that truly makes a difference in the lives of young men and women. The Canadian Cadet Movement, with its Sea, Air, and Army elements, provides 12 to 18 year olds with a wealth of skills from rigging sail boats, to flying gliders, to wilderness training.

However, the most practical skills are much more intrinsic. Cadets learn leadership, teamwork, responsibility, the importance of volunteerism and so many more – all skills that help shape character to last a lifetime.

In my District of Burin – Grand Bank, there are six Sea Cadets Corps, Mr. Speaker; five of which I was asked to be the reviewing officer. As reviewing officer, I was struck by the commitment and hard work demonstrated by the cadets. None of this would be possible without the dedication of the officers and volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in recognizing the cadets and officers of the many corps and squadrons that serve Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**MR. HOLLOWAY:** Mr. Speaker, the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada is

celebrating its 30th anniversary of providing wishes to children who are experiencing a life-changing illness.

In 2015, the Children's Wish Newfoundland and Labrador granted 41 wishes at an average cost of \$10,000. The foundation is currently working on a further 127 wishes for 2016. Since 1984, the foundation has granted wishes to over 25,000 children; 800 of which have been granted right here in this province.

Ms. Edie Newton, director of Newfoundland and Labrador chapter says, "When Children's Wish grants a wish, we make a difference by generating hope, joy, healing and bring futures for children and for our community."

I wish to also recognize Ms. Karen Feltham from Glovertown who was one out of 12 volunteers nominated for the Laura Cole National Volunteer Award for 2016; an award given to those who have given above and beyond to the benefit of wish children provincially, nationally and internationally. Ms. Feltham is also the recipient of the 2016 Volunteer of the Year Award for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I commend the Children's Wish Foundation for their great work and I ask all Members to join in congratulating Ms. Feltham for this special recognition.

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

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

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

In 2015, the T'Railway in Conception Bay South was nominated as one of the Great Places in Canada by the Canadian Institute of Planners. There are nearly 900 kilometres of abandoned rail bed that provides the basis for a trail link between Port aux Basques on the West Coast and St. John's on the easternmost edge of the Island.

The Conception Bay South T'Railway spans 18 kilometres of this former rail bed, forming a continuous, non-motorized destination trail in the community. It's a coastal extension of the

Grand Concourse trail system and will soon link into 135-kilometre network of world-class urban walkways and cycling trails in the City of St. John's, the City of Mount Pearl and the Town of Paradise.

The T'Railway links together nine historic rural communities, starting at Spruce Hill Road in the east and continues westward through Conception Bay South and brings users into the heart of the community. It's completely accessible for users of all ages, mobility levels and used every day, all year long, by countless enthusiasts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask Members of the House to join me in congratulating Conception Bay South T'Railway on being nominated as one of the Greatest Places in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize educators in our communities and acknowledge one of many teachers that impacted my education, Mr. Gerard Walsh. Mr. Walsh has taught in Mount Pearl for over three decades and I was fortunate to be one of his students at St. Peter's.

While he now teaches junior high Social Studies, for many years, he led the school band programs. He introduced me to music, and my time in the band program with Mr. Walsh had a profound impact on my development and on my life. He provided us with confidence and encouragement to continue following our passions.

I learned so much from Mr. Walsh. He was an amazing mentor, role model and friend. I recall how much he loved his profession and how much he loved the students, and we loved him. Several of my former classmates have gone on to pursue careers in music, and Mr. Walsh's guidance and inspiration, no doubt, played a major role in that.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in not only recognizing Mr. Walsh for his outstanding teaching abilities and continued service as an educator, but also the other 6,000 teachers in the province. I thank them for everything they do for our young people.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**MR. KING:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand here today to recognize the 130th anniversary of the Bonavista and the 120th anniversary of the Islandview Citadels of the Salvation Army.

The Bonavista Citadel held their celebrations on March 12 with a wonderful roast beef dinner, a slide show with pictures from their 130-year history, bringing back fond memories to all. As well, there were speeches and presentations, including a special address from MP Judy Foote.

The Islandview Citadel, which is located in Musgravetown, held their celebration on April 9 with a delicious roast beef dinner, followed by a church service. This service saw many excellent performances with many smiling faces as speakers recounted stories of the past.

I know first-hand of the great work that the Salvation Army does in the District of Bonavista, just as all Members present here today know from their own experiences in their districts. This includes supporting those in need, being there when disaster hits and providing spiritual guidance.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Bonavista and Islandview Citadels on their milestone anniversaries. May they celebrate many more years of doing God's work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** It's my understanding the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's has leave of the House to present a –

The hon. the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I rise today, Mr. Speaker, to pay tribute to a brave young man with roots in St. Bride's and Placentia. Connor McGrath recently passed away in Edmonton after a courageous battle with leukemia. He was just 13 years old.

Connor's family and friends describe him as bright, full of life and very, very funny. His strong spirit reached far beyond his Edmonton home. Connor's story captured the imagination of many around the world, including actor Ryan Reynolds, who visited Connor in hospital through the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Connor described himself as the world's biggest fan of *Deadpool*, the superhero Reynolds portrayed in a recent blockbuster film.

Reynolds fulfilled Connor's wish by giving him a private, advanced screening of the movie in February. They stayed in touch through text messages and a second visit from Ryan Reynolds delighted Connor.

I am pleased to see my colleagues here in the House of Assembly wearing orange or an orange ribbon in honour of Connor today; orange was his favourite colour.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating the life of Connor McGrath and extend condolences to his family and friends.

Thank you.

**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 Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans.

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

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

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

Lest we forget: William Edward Leshana, Joseph Leudy, Cebos Lewis, Charles Lewis, Gordon C. Lewis, John T. Lewis, Philip Lewis, Arthur Licence, Harold Lidstone, Augustus Lilly, William John Lilly, Francis Thomas Lind, Daniel Linehan, Roland Linfield, James Hampton Little, Redvers Little, Adolphus Locke, Samuel Thomas Lodge, Frederick William Lucas, Henry Luff, Samuel Luff, Henry George Luffman, George Lukins, John Lukins, Herbert G. Luscombe, Thomas Lynch, Allan Lyons, John P. MacDonnel, Alexander MacDougall, Andrew Joseph MacKay, Michael Joseph MacKay, Stuart MacKay, Walter H. MacKay, Neil Charles MacLeod, Richard Joseph Maddigan, William Maddock, John Thomas Maddox, George Albert Madore, James Albert Mahaney, Malcolm Cyril Mahaney.

(Moment of silence.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate Johannes Lampe on becoming the President of Nunatsiavut. Yesterday, Mr. Lampe was sworn in.

Mr. Lampe has a wealth of experience to bring to his role as a former Minister of Culture, Recreation and Tourism and an Ordinary Member for Nain in the Nunatsiavut Assembly. He also is a well-respected elder from Nain.

Our government is looking forward to a productive and open dialogue with President Lampe as he assumes his new role.

As Premier and Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, I will play a leadership role

as our government works collaboratively with the province's Aboriginal people to ensure our programs and our services are reflective of their needs.

At this time I would also thank past President Sarah Leo for her passion, her efforts and dedicated public service. I want to thank her very much and I did call her just a couple of days ago to wish her well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to extend congratulations to Johannes Lampe on becoming the president of Nunatsiavut and on being sworn in yesterday. I look forward to working with Mr. Lampe and all Aboriginal leaders over the next several years.

Mr. Lampe has had a long history of serving the Labrador Inuit. Originally from Nain, Mr. Lampe is a community elder who has served as the representative for Nain, and also was Minister of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank Ms. Sarah Leo for serving in her role as president since 2012.

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 Premier for the advance copy of his statement. I'm pleased to join with the Premier in congratulating Mr. Lampe and in recognizing the wealth of experience he brings to his new role as he follows in the footsteps of the able President Sarah Leo.

I say to the Premier, the Nunatsiavut Government has not always enjoyed a productive and open dialogue with government in this province, so I encourage the Premier to put his words into action by ensuring –

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** – he works with the new president in dealing with the serious issue of methylmercury in Lake Melville.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House to extend my heartiest congratulations to the staff and students at Queen's College on its 175th anniversary in this province.

I had the pleasure today of signing a proclamation with the Dean of Theology, Rev. Dr. David Bell, to mark the beginning of a week of activities to recognize this momentous occasion.

As many of my hon. colleagues in this House know, Queen's College was founded as a Church of England theological college in 1841. Over the years, the college has welcomed other denominations into their programs and today is recognized as an institution that is committed to academic excellence and spiritual growth.

Mr. Speaker, next week the college will confer for the very first time, the degree of Master of Theology (Pentecostal Studies) and in 2017, they will celebrate the first graduates of the Diploma in Theology and Ministry (Roman Catholic Studies).

As Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, I'm very proud to say the provincial government values Queen's College. We are committed to post-secondary education and ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills required to be leaders of tomorrow.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to extend congratulations to Rev. Dr. David Bell, the staff, students, faculty and alumni of Queen's College. The 175th anniversary is a true milestone in this college's legacy and is a testament to the college's academic and spiritual commitment.

Mr. Speaker, over the history of Queen's College, it has joined Memorial University and has grown its program offerings. I would like to take a moment to reference the students of Memorial University. It is our hope that the students from Memorial University will continue to pursue their academic studies and fulfill their bright future.

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, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm very pleased to rise and congratulate Queen's College on their astonishing 175 years providing theological teaching to the people of this province, and branching out in recent times to not just students of the Anglican church, but entering into the Roman Catholic studies as well.

It's hard to think of many institutions who can claim 175 years of service in this or any other part of Canada. I congratulate the current staff who continue to do the wonderful work that they've been doing.

Thank you.

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

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

I rise today to report that the launch of the Provincial Parks Campsite Reservation Service over three days last week was a resounding success.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it took less than one minute for the seasonal sites at Butter Pot and La Manche to be sold out, and the seasonal sites at Barachois Pond and Frenchman's Cove also sold out within minutes. Clearly, our residents are eager to get outdoors and spend their summer enjoying provincial park campgrounds and the natural beauty of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also happy to report that many people are taking advantage of the convenience and efficiency of booking short-term reservations through the online system at [www.nlcamping.ca](http://www.nlcamping.ca) and that there is still availability at parks across the province.

Mr. Speaker, the 13 provincial campgrounds are an important and valuable component of the provincial tourism industry. We look forward to welcoming not only local residents, but also visitors from across the country and around the world again this camping season.

I invite all of my colleagues here in this hon. House to join me in spreading the word about these opportunities to experience our province's incredible natural heritage. If I may, I'd also like to put a kudo out to Mr. Geoff Bailey. He's the manager for the Parks and Natural Areas Division. Together, with his team, they oversaw this amazing accomplishment.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I'm glad, too, that our residents have already booked their sites for the upcoming year.

It's good to see, to get out and enjoy the outdoors.

I will note, though, as a result of the budget the increase in fees it is probably going to ride you an extra \$400 for a seasonal camping site this year, which is going to have a negative impact on the middle and working classes.

I will add to the minister's comment about the staff, they do a great job. I also want to point that out.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Our provincial parks are absolute treasures belonging to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are significant natural areas and several contain delicate ecosystems, housing rare and at-risk species.

The previous government privatized several of our parks and planned to sell 47 of them. It is imperative this government not sell any of our park lands. They rightfully belong to the people of the province. Once gone, there is no getting them back.

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Bravo to those caring for our wonderful parks. I look forward to my summer camping.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question Period.

### Oral Questions

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I understand the president of the Canadian Bar Association – Newfoundland & Labrador Branch has written the minister, following the announcement of the closures of courts in Grand Bank, Grand Falls-Windsor, Harbour Grace-Carbonear and Wabush in Western Labrador. Those who practise family law are particularly concerned.

I ask the minister: Are you concerned your actions will add additional stress to women and children who need access to the justice system?

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

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

I certainly did receive a letter from Mr. Scruton with the Canadian Bar Association, which I certainly expected, because his job as the local president of the Canadian Bar Association is to be in correspondence with me with issues that affect the members of the bar in this province. I've already had meetings with Mr. Scruton as well.

These were actions that certainly weren't taken lightly; actions that when you are thinking about things like access to justice, you always have to be concerned. What I will say is that in many cases, the increased commute that may be faced by certain people is actually less than that which is already faced by many people in this province.

Again, we will continue to work with the judiciary and court administration and any individual that's concerned to ensure that we minimize any disruption.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I ask the minister: Who did you consult with before deciding to close these courts? Was the Canadian Bar Association consulted specifically on the closure of these courts?

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

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

This was a decision that was discussed with a number of individuals; however, I did not discuss this with the president of the Canadian Bar Association.

This was a precedent that was followed by the previous administration, which consulted with nobody when they closed courts over the last number of years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

So you only consulted internally, I think, is what he is saying. But he can explain that further at any time that he wishes.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: How many people availed of the Adult Dental Program last year?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I will get that number for the next sitting and report it in answers on that occasion; I don't happen to have it.

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

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

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

I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, but maybe the minister is aware then, what is the number of people who will not be able to access the service this year compared to last year as a result of the budget cuts? I'm sure he must have done the analysis and he'd have that information.

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

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

My understanding of the dental plan coverage going forward is that there are currently 1,600 people left in the system from last year. They will be accommodated and we hope to clear the backlog left by the previous process, which really wasn't much of a process at all.

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

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, so there are a number of people that applied last year and didn't get the service, a service that is now eliminated. Instead of being improved upon, if there were issues, it is now been eliminated. I know that during the debate and discussions when this new program was developed that Members opposite, who were in Opposition at the time, clearly talked about the importance to people's health and how this would benefit their health.

I ask the minister: What will be the impacts overall on the health of people who can no longer access this service?

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

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

The people on the current Foundation Plan, to which there has been no change, will still have access to the dental program. As regards to his other question in terms of the general health of the teeth of the population, we are working with the dental association and currently the situation



as regards to the adult program is confined to the Foundation Plan.

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

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

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

Well, I think we were all in agreement back when this was being discussed in the House in the past, the Liberals when they were in Opposition, us in government, that improving people's oral health and dental health improves their own general health and well-being.

My question to the minister is: If people can't access dental health, and many won't be able to access dental health now that the coverage has been discontinued, what will be the impacts on their own general health and well-being?

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

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

The Adult Dental plan in its previous iteration was introduced at a time of plenty. That time has long since passed. Opportunities for investment in health at that stage have disappeared. The money has vanished. On a go-forward basis we have taken a decision, a difficult one but a necessary one, to streamline adult dental care in line with other jurisdictions.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, I trust that the minister will provide that information at the earliest opportunity. The Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as many community groups, are questioning the government's decision to make changes to the Prescription Drug Program. They weren't consulted.

Can the minister provide for this House a list of the drugs no longer covered under the

Prescription Drug Program. Can he explain what the impact will be on seniors and on low-income individuals?

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

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for the question. The changes to the Prescription Drug Program under the NLPDP are again taken in line with those from other jurisdictions. We have had a very generous plan.

Specifically to the Member's question about a list of medications that will no longer be covered under the over-the-counter arrangement, I'd be happy to provide that.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, people living in personal care homes in this province used to have coverage for all their medications. This has now been stripped from them. They only receive \$150 monthly for personal use. Many won't be able to afford the drugs they need. Doctors will be forced to prescribe alternatives.

I ask the minister: How will this result in any real savings to the system?

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

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

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

The comments about folk in long-term care being stripped of their drugs are somewhat hyperbole. That is not the case. There has been some adjustment to over-the-counter medications in line with other jurisdictions. That is entirely consistent with practices in other provinces.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, Aspirin, pain medications, various vitamin supplements, creams and ointments, the list goes on and on; over-the-counter medications that were once covered are now the full responsibility of seniors and low-income individuals. The minister knows full well that this will be impossible for some people and the result will be medications not being taken.

I ask the minister: What do you have to say to seniors and low-income families who will no longer be able to get over-the-counter medications they require?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question.

The premise on which that question is based is actually inaccurate. The bottom line is that medically necessary drugs will be available to people in long-term care, have always been available to long-term care. That will not change.

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

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

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps they're upset because they don't want to hear the truth. It's right in the budget documents: "Remove the NL Provincial Drug Program coverage for over the counter drugs/services ...." We're not talking about long-term care homes; we're talking about personal care homes.

The hits to the most vulnerable in our province continue. The long-term care private pay rate will increase by \$190 a month on July 1, making the monthly rate \$2,990.

I ask the minister: What do you have to say to the residents and families who can't afford this rate hike? Why is this government making so

many moves that hurt our most vulnerable people in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

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

In 1986 the rate for care was \$1,510. It represented 70 per cent of the cost of a long-term care bed. It was last altered in 1996 and has not changed since then. The \$190 increment this year is an increase in line with the Canadian price index and brings the cost of a long-term care bed to 30 per cent of cost recovery. The average cost is \$10,000 per month, the payment is \$2,990.

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

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

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

On classroom cap size, can the minister confirm that under certain circumstances additional students can be added to classrooms? Can he confirm that the number of students in an elementary classroom in September could be as high as 30 or more?

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

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the size of classrooms in schools is determined on an individual school-by-school, class-by-class basis. That is the nature of the teacher allocation formula.

The teacher allocation information has been provided to the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District and the French school district. They are in the process now of deploying those teaching units across the system.

Where there are instances where the number of students doesn't exactly fit the cap, administrators will make determinations as to whether or not it is to the benefit of students to be placed in a certain classroom or not. It's not as clear cut as the Member suggests. I suggest he read up on it a bit.

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

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

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

Thirty or more elementary children in a classroom will compromise access to education.

I ask the minister: Yes or no, will there be classrooms in September that could have 30 or more children cramped in one classroom? Yes or no, Mr. Minister?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, there's not a whole lot of difference between the soft class size cap that we have now, between that and the soft class size cap that the previous administration presided over for a period of 12 years. It's highly interesting that I hear this Member talking about that because for the entire time he sat over on this side of the House there was not a single murmur from Members opposite when they were increasing the class size as to that was somehow detrimental to student achievement.

Class size caps aren't a solution to all problems in our schools and that's why we have added special education teachers this year. We have added student assisted time. We have not touched specialist positions at all, unlike the Members opposite who cut that down to the bone.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister, it was this administration that invested more into schools systems, in new schools, in

reducing cap size and in special services to the students of this province.

I ask the minister: Did you consult with the NLTA before you made cuts to education?

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Did you consult with anyone for that matter?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, we did the same sort of consultation on this budget that the previous administration did on all the budgets that they produced.

He says they put more funding into et cetera, et cetera. Over the course of three budget cycles in just two years that administration cut 238 positions from the school system and they claimed that that would not cause a single iota of hardship for anyone by doing it.

I know there are challenges in the school system as a result of the changes that have been made this year. I'm not going to stand here and deny it like all of the Progressive Conservative predecessors who sat here did.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** So, obviously, the minister didn't consult the NLTA.

I'll ask once again: Will there be 30 or more elementary children cramped into some school classrooms?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, as I tried to explain before, I don't think the Member was listening to what I was saying. The teacher allocation formula has been – the information has been transmitted to schools. We are currently in the

process of deploying – the districts are currently in the processing of deploying those resources.

I have not seen any indication at all, at this point, come across my desk that what the Member is suggesting is going to happen. He can fear monger all he wants. Schools do the best they can with the resources they are provided. They will do that this September as they did in all the years the previous administration was there.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Obviously, with the minister's answer there, he hasn't consulted with anybody. I think he should go out and talk to some of the administrators because that's the fear that's out there right now, when they're trying to crunch their numbers.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** I ask the minister: How will combined-grade classrooms be determined? A random draw? Left to principals and teachers? Will parents have a say this time?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the combined-grades initiative is basically adopting a practice that's in place in many other provinces in Canada and schools all around the world. It's an attempt to more efficiently make use of the few resources we have. They have been vastly diminished as a result of the damage that was done to the Treasury by the previous administration.

As the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District has pointed out, they will be providing guidelines for administrators for making those sorts of determinations; but unlike the Members opposite, from what I've been hearing the past few days, we support the

principle of inclusive education. We continue to uphold that value in our school system. That's how all of the classes in our schools are going to be determined. We're not going to be basing it on Member's notion of good students and those with needs.

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

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

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

Well, obviously, multigrade classrooms are offered in smaller schools with declining enrollment. In larger schools, with an increased enrolment, there are some challenges here. That's been said to us by administrations. It's been said by members for the NLTA and being said by parents.

Again, I ask the minister: What are you doing to ensure teachers will have training to move into multigrade classrooms?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, currently – prior to the implementation of the combined-grades initiative – there are 172 multigrade classrooms across this province. So I don't know what the Member is suggesting about the nature of those multigrade classrooms and those teachers. I want to make that straight first.

I was on *Cross Talk* today with the president of the NLTA. We had a good debate about this issue. I've made it very clear that we'll have a comprehensive learning program in place, a training program, for professional development for teachers. Teachers will get professional development on this.

Many of our teachers already have professional development in the area of differentiated instructed which is highly important in this area. Also, many of them have experience in multigrade classrooms because we have had hundreds of them for years.

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

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

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

Obviously, it is evident that what this is here is just an exercise in meeting their budget needs and their budget cuts at the expense of education in this province, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful.

I ask the minister: Will you meet with schools, teachers and administrators who have many questions about how choices will impact their school children? You've had one conversation with the NLTA. Will you meet with the other stakeholders?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, as I have since I was appointed these ministerial duties, I'll continue to meet with stakeholder groups. I've met with practically all of them since I took this position.

It's interesting, after I was on *Cross Talk* today, as I was on the way back, I very quickly got an email from the former president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador saying I don't agree with some of the things in the budget, but I certainly support multigrading and I know that it works. I have experience with it. So the former president of his party agrees with it.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Cape St. Francis.

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

Mr. Speaker, 30 schools in 17 communities, resulting in 37 fewer bus runs servicing the students of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the minister: When will the parents be told what are the impacts of his new busing plan?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I thought I was up – in any case, Mr. Speaker, we have had double bus runs in this province for some time and we know that does present additional challenges for parents. The school district is trying to find the best way to apportion the busing resources that we have. We are investing millions of dollars in funding into busing because the price of busing has skyrocketed; it's increasing on an annual basis.

That's the reason why we have double bus runs. That means there will be earlier pickups in some cases and later drop-offs in the evening in others, but that's not something that people across this province are unaccustomed to. That is a practice that has been in place for some, and under the previous administration, in fact.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, the question was when will parents be notified about the changes in bus routes so they can be prepared for it? Is there something where they can go online? Is there some information out there that they can find so they'll know?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite is just as capable of calling the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District to get that information as I am. Parents are getting that information from the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District as that information is provided to schools. Parents will have ample time.

What is it – today is May 5; parents will have ample time, ample notification to know in advance of the school year whether they are impacted in any way by the double bus runs that are as a result of the skyrocketing costs of budgeting in this province. That is a simple fact. I can't give the Member any more information. Parents will be given the information they need in due course.

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

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** So I ask the minister: Will they be consulted or can he name who will be consulted on these decisions?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Mr. Speaker, parents will be consulted on the apportionment of busing funds and basically the specific bus runs, the routes and the schedules. They will be consulted on that exactly the same way they were consulted on that when the Members over there sat over here. Exactly the same process for consulting with parents about school busing will be followed as it was when those Members were over here for over a decade.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Obviously, Mr. Speaker, he's not going to consult with anyone.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** You're not going to consult with anyone.

The Minister of Finance said that in order for a person to pay an extra thousand dollars for insurance they would have to have a half a million dollar home, boats, cars and an RV. Mr. Speaker, I spoke to a family in my district who have two cars, an average-sized home, with kids that are 17 and 18 living at home, one in post-secondary education but both of them are driving, that will cost them an extra thousand dollars for their insurance.

I ask the Premier: Will you replace the Minister of Finance with someone who understands how the average family lives in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

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

I really appreciate the opportunity to answer the question. The former administration, as we all know through many years, had a revolving door of new ministers in the Department of Finance and many other departments that we've seen in this government.

What the Minister of Finance was referring to when she made the comment would be around someone that would have an insurance bill somewhere in the vicinity of around \$7,000 per year. That's how the number of \$1,000 – that was the calculation as was done.

To your question about replacing the Minister of Finance, no, that is not something right now that the Minister of Finance – this has been a very difficult budget. She has worked extremely hard. She has been –

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

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

**PREMIER BALL:** She has been working extremely hard on behalf of this government with all of us. There is no intention at all of replacing the Minister of Finance.

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

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

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

My question, I ask: Can the minister confirm your government has made a decision to spend \$750,000 this year on a study to build a tunnel to connect the Great Northern Peninsula to Labrador.

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

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

Part of the budget that we put in place on April 14 – part of that was about the fixed link between Labrador and the Island portion. It's part of getting the evidence that's required to make the long-term decisions for our province.

This is connectivity; this is about putting a reliable transportation link that will include Labrador and the Island portion of the province. As we continue to develop the Trans-Labrador Highway it only makes sense, and before we make long-term decisions on how you put in place an appropriate transportation route, it's important that you get the answers on the fixed link. Something I would say was used in your election platform back in 2003 at some point and then the information was done but really not widely shared with anyone.

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

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

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

I guess I found out who to speak to.

I ask the Premier: In time of fiscal restraint, is this the best time to choose to spend \$750,000 on a study?

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

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

The hon. the Premier.

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

Well, it's like this, the fixed link study for connectivity between Labrador and the Island portion of our province is an important consideration because we will make important decisions that impact not only the people in Labrador but indeed people as goods and services are moved into the Island portion of the province.

It opens up a significant tourism opportunity in our province, what people want. They want certainty when they come and want to experience places like Newfoundland and Labrador. Having that option and getting a good understanding, number one, of cost and the other impacts it would have on our province as a whole.

For the Member opposite simply to say that it is a waste of money to give the Labrador portion of

this province the opportunity to see the advantage of a fixed link.

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

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

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

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

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has been promoting multigrade classrooms as a model that is being used throughout the country. He fails to talk about the difference between using this model based on professional teaching principles as opposed to the un-thought out cost-cutting measures he is imposing.

I ask the Premier: What is this government's detailed plan for specialized training that educators identify is needed for the teachers who will be in these classrooms?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm surprised that the Member opposite has so little confidence in our teachers' abilities, but I can say that yes, we have been very clear from the beginning. The combined grade model which is in place in many provinces in Canada whether you're in downtown Vancouver or downtown Toronto, or downtown Edmonton or Saint John, New Brunswick, that same model is being adopted here for the same reason why it was adopted there, because we have finite resources. We don't have an endless source of money to provide to the system. We're trying to do the best we can with our finite resources.

One thing we will be doing before September, we will be working with those teachers who will be teaching combined grades to provide them professional development. That will be before the end of this school year and it will be available in the next school year.

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

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

Before I recognize the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, the level of noise is getting a little loud.

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

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

Obviously, the minister hasn't read the vast literature on what it takes to be a multigrade teacher.

I further ask the Premier: What are the plans for the additional teaching and learning resources, such as specialized curriculum, that educators say will be needed to make multigrade classrooms work successfully?

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

**MR. KIRBY:** As I said yesterday in Question Period, Mr. Speaker, we've had multigraded classrooms in Newfoundland and Labrador since the inception of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's not something that's new to this province.

The current year, we have 172 multigrade classrooms. What we're talking about doing now is bringing in combined grades in fewer than 50 schools and fewer than 60 classrooms. There's no specific multigrade curriculum here in this province. We have a curriculum for each of the grade levels in this province and there is a process in place for multigraded classrooms. Multigraded classrooms are not combined grade classrooms, so we want to separate that confusion. Combined grades are a form of multigrading but it's not all the same as the Member would suggest.

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

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

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

So my question now is: Has this government factored in the need for additional teaching

assistants to deal with issues of an inclusive classroom which will be compounded by what professionals say is a more demanding situation in the multigrade?

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

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

I'm pleased to say, as I have said a number of times – it's unfortunate the Member didn't hear me say this before because I've said it a number of times now. There was supposed to be positions eliminated due to declining enrolment this year. We kept a number of those positions, and 27 new instructional resource teachers are being provided to work with children with special education needs.

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

**MR. KIRBY:** In addition to that, we are providing an additional 115 hours of student assistant time every school day to support children with special education needs. So we are, yes, providing additional resources for children with special needs this year.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, last night at my town hall seniors talked about wanting to do their share to help pull us out of this deficit but they said they don't have an extra penny. The seniors annual benefit increase of \$250 merely offsets cancellation of the Home Heating Rebate and only seniors making under \$16,000 will get an annual Income Supplement of \$266, not even covering the extra taxes, extra fees and hikes. They are dealing with rising costs of heat, food, transportation and they've lost the Adult Dental Program and over-the-counter drug program. They are frightened.

I ask the minister: Will she reinstate the 65-plus dental program and over-the-counter drug program to help lift our seniors out of poverty?

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



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

The Adult Dental Program includes now the Foundation Plan from the NLPDP. It will continue to do so. That will align quite nicely with other jurisdictions. Unfortunately, the previous program was put in at a time of plenty and that has passed.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Time for a very quick question from the Member for St. John's Centre.

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, the Foundation program wipes out seniors. It's only for people on income support.

With so many seniors living in poverty and precariously housed, I ask the minister: Why hasn't she budgeted for more rent subsidies to help seniors on the wait-list for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, we are presently assessing rent supplements.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

#### Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution relating to the advancing or guaranteeing of certain loans made under *the Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957*, Bill 26.

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

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

I give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 o'clock on Monday, May 9.

Further, I give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 11, that this House do not adjourn at 10 p.m. on Monday, May 9.

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 Mount Pearl North.

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

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me in the House this afternoon. I'll read this petition into the record once again. I've received another petition related to Masonic Park Nursing Home and people that are very concerned about its upcoming closure.

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 seniors of our province deserve the greatest level of respect and care; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has a responsibility to act in the best interests of seniors; and

WHEREAS the government has decided to shut down Masonic Park Nursing Home and reduce long-term beds in the region;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reverse its decision and not bring undue hardship upon the residents of Masonic Park and find alternative measures that will allow them to continue to stay at the place they call home.

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

Mr. Speaker, I know I've raised this issue in the House multiple times. I've had an opportunity to meet with the minister about the issue, and I thank him for that. I've had an opportunity to meet with senior officials at Eastern Health, and I thank them as well. Unfortunately, government has no intention of reversing this decision, and there is still time, Mr. Speaker.

In this day and age, in this region, where we have 60 or 70 people today waiting for long-term care beds who are tying up hospital beds resulting in cancelled surgeries and people lying on stretchers in hallways, and backups in emergency rooms, with all of that happening I don't see how you can possibly justify reducing the number of long-term care beds in this region when we have so much demand that is impacting health care for our entire population.

Mr. Speaker, there have also been a number of statements made in response to the concerns that I've raised that are simply not true. It's been said by the minister and government that Masonic Park long-term facility is in a state of disrepair – to use the minister's words. It's simply not true.

It also been said that all residents would just simply move down to Veterans Pavilion at the Miller Centre; also not true. There isn't enough space at the Veterans Pavilion at the Miller Centre to accommodate all of the current residents of Masonic Park long-term care facility.

The minister has also said and government has said we're not cutting long-term care beds. Well, that's simply not true. The beds that are going to be utilized at Veterans Pavilion, there are about 30 or so beds that are going to be reopened that haven't been opened in the last year or so. They are not new beds, but they're being reopened, fair enough. But the government is closing 50.

Reducing long-term care beds right now when there's such a demand is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, and it's affecting the families and the residents that I represent at Masonic Park Nursing Home. I will continue to fight this decision.

Thank you.

**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.

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 government has one again cut the libraries budget, forcing the closure of 54 libraries; and

WHEREAS libraries are often the backbone of their communities, especially for those with little access to government services where they offer learning opportunities and computer access; and

WHEREAS libraries and librarians are critical in efforts to improve the province's literacy levels which are among the lowest in Canada; and

WHEREAS already strapped municipalities are not in a position to take over the operation and cost of libraries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to keep these libraries open and work on a long-term plan to strengthen the library system.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to be able to stand this afternoon and present this petition on behalf of the signatories that I have in my hand. They identify a very serious issue that we have 54 libraries being closed mainly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador – libraries that

have been in the communities for generations, libraries which add not just to the improvement of the life of individuals, but to the life of the communities as well.

This government, without any analysis, without looking at the impact of closing these libraries, ignoring the fact we have the highest illiteracy rate in Canada, ignoring the fact that seniors in the communities where these libraries are use them on a regular basis and need to use them because of the policy of having so many registrations, et cetera, now online, because of doing no analysis of how the schools in these communities also use these libraries, ignoring the fact that in some cases they are closing schools as well as closing the libraries, it is unconscionable, Mr. Speaker, what this government is doing with regard to the libraries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We actually have become ashamed. People across the country are publicly talking about the fact of what has happened here in this province. They cannot believe this government, in light of all evidence that shows the role of libraries and the importance of libraries in people's lives and in literacy, that they have gone ahead and continue to want to close these libraries.

Mr. Speaker, I really encourage this government to listen to this petition, to listen to this prayer and to undo this decision which is in Budget 2016. They can – it's a pittance. It's only \$1 million – \$1 million. Surely the Minister of Finance and her \$20 million and her slush fund can find a million dollars to go towards keeping these libraries open.

I put this to you that we have to make sure that these libraries do not close, that these libraries are kept open.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** 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 policy regulations link snow crab harvesting quotas to length of vessels; and

WHEREAS many harvesters own fishing vessels of various sizes, but because of policy regulations are restricted to using smaller vessels, often putting their crews at risk and in danger; and

WHEREAS the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to make representation to the federal government to encourage them to change the policy ensuring the safety of those harvesting snow crab.

Mr. Speaker, I did this petition last week and I spoke to the minister afterwards and he was in full agreement with me and he said it is something that we should be doing because it's a safety issue with –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) to tell the truth.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Pardon me?

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** No, no you are talking about the wrong thing. I hope he apologizes for that. I'm talking about the size of vessels and snow crab harvesting.

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

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Anyway, Mr. Speaker, this is very important to the fishermen in the province, especially the people involved in the crab fishery. Again, like I explained last week in the crab fishery, there are a lot of different vessel sizes that people use to go catch crab inshore, midshore and offshore. What's happening and we have seen it in the industry that in the inshore fleet usually a 35-9 size boat is used for that and midshore it's a little bit larger and the larger ones go out.

What happened last year in this province, we saw a tragedy when people went out to go fish

they went out in a 29- or 30-foot boat to catch crab and they capsized and lost their lives, while they had a larger vessel tied up at the wharf. We just have to think about our fishermen and what they go out in every day. We're in the North Atlantic; it's very rough and it can change from time to time.

Because of a policy that is done by the federal government, not this government, I'm asking them to lobby their cousins in Ottawa to change this because it's so important. We're putting people's lives in danger. We're putting fishermen that are going out on the water and working hard – they always look for a time to go out because of the weather we have. We're here in the North Atlantic and it can get very, very rough.

I, myself, don't like out on the water when it's rough, but they're forced to go out in small boats. There's a simple solution to a lot of it. The solution is just change the policy so that fishermen can go out in a boat that's safe to catch what they have to catch.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon –

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** On a petition?

**MS. C. BENNETT:** No, a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board on a point of order.

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 49 of the Standing Orders, I would ask the Member for the District of St. John's East – Quidi Vidi to refrain from using the term slush fund when we're talking about – \$20 million slush fund when I tabled in this House yesterday the details, clarification of that \$20 million.

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** It's quite offensive, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's a disagreement between two hon. Members. Unfortunately, that is not considered unparliamentary language.

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

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

It's an honour to present a petition here related to the budget impacts on Beachy Cove Elementary.

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 current 2016 provincial budget impacts adversely and directly the education programs of Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; and

WHEREAS parents request a one-year delay in the implementation of full-day kindergarten at our school until September 2017 when at such time the new five to nine middle school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's will be open; and

WHEREAS the student population of Beachy Cove Elementary is growing exponentially and the growth is sustainable into the future; and

WHEREAS parents request the reinstatement of the previous teacher allocation formula for Beachy Cove Elementary for this year and subsequent school years to service the growth in enrolment and be able to provide all students with equal opportunities to enrol in French immersion programming;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the previous teacher allocations and delay the implementation of full-day

kindergarten in order to provide the children of Beachy Cove Elementary the right to quality education.

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

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour last night of attending the parent reps public meeting on the issues around education at Beachy Cove, particularly the impact this budget is going to have on them. The hundreds who attended – it got to a point where the fire department had to come and control who could get into the building. It was that many people, that many parents who were concerned in that community about where our education system is going and particularly the impact it's going to have Beachy Cove.

They've talked about the capacity in the school system. A school that was built for 400, added on over the last number of years and now has a capacity of nearly 800 people – or 800 will be enrolled. They had issues around the busing, issues around parking, particularly issues around the teacher allotments. They also had major issues around blending classrooms, extreme issues around that, the number of issues that we had talked about today around teacher training around those areas, how it's going to work, how the students are going to be selected.

They had some major issues around the French program being dropped, that kids who are on a list would not have an opportunity to get into the advanced French immersion program. No process of who gets into that. Where's the fairness. Is it picked out of a hat? How is that enhancing our education system?

I might note, and I should note that the parent reps who put this off did an extremely professional job. They had a full PowerPoint where they outline the whole structure of the school system, the allocations of the particular makeup, what issues around blended schools and that would be about. Their issue is they're not going to let this die, Mr. Speaker, they're going to be lobbying, and this petition is phase one in their lobbying to ensure the changes take place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we have hundreds and hundreds, adding up to thousands of petitions coming in, people's signatures coming in on this petition. I also have in my receipt right now a copy of over 18,000 signatures that people did online. Now some people may say, oh, 18,000 signatures online, that's meaningless, but most of these people not only signed the petition online, the electronic petition, they also wrote comments. Some wrote some pretty substantial comments.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province know that this levy is hurting them. It's hurting people who have prospered, who benefited the least

from our prosperity. That's who it's hurting the most.

I've said in the House again, if you look at one family where's there are two income earners, two people in the household making \$45,000 each, they end up paying \$600 each for the levy. That means that one little household which probably has all kinds of bills and they're paying mortgage and child care. That means \$1,200 out of that one little household. Their next door neighbour who may be making \$350,000 is only going to pay \$900 if they are the sole earner in that household. It doesn't work out, Mr. Speaker. It just doesn't make sense.

Do you know what? The people of the province know it doesn't make sense. People have been going on the minister's calculator online and the calculator is not giving them a real reading on what are the financial stressors, the additional financial stressors on them because of this.

People don't have a slush fund where they can take money to pay for this levy. They just don't have that. Most people don't have that extra money, particularly if they're low-income and middle-income earners. It's a horrible burden on them.

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Before I recognize the hon. the Government House Leader, all Members of the House have gotten to know Raylene Mackey. Today is her last day. She's moving on.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm sure as the day goes on Members will have an opportunity to bid her farewell and wish her well in her new endeavours.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

### Orders of the Day

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 6.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, that Bill 6, An Act To Amend The Professional Fish Harvesters Act, be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 6, the *Professional Fish Harvesters Act*, be now read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 6 be read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Those against?

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Professional Fish Harvesters Act. (Bill 6)

**MR. SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that Bill 6 do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Professional Fish Harvesters Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 6)

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, third reading of Bill 24.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill

24, An Act Respecting Insured Medical And Hospital Services In The Province be now read the third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 24 be now read a third time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion that Bill 24 be read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

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

Just a point that I would like to make that I have raised in Committee. It had to do with section 4(f), in particular, and it's about the exceptions to who may have access to information under this act. I did ask a question as to why we would put in that information may be given to a person employed by the government to enforce support orders under the *Support Orders Enforcement Act, 2006*. I got the explanation that this was something that was asked for by the Attorney General and given the reasons for that. I asked the question of whether or not this was a practice elsewhere in the country.

The Attorney General did stand and say that he would seek information to see if this actually happened in other places in the country. I'm hoping that perhaps he has an answer for that today because I think it is important. I still have a real concern about peace officers for the purpose of reporting a suspected offence – if the offence has something to do with health, I can understand it; but the issue of enforcing support orders under the *Support Orders Enforcement Act*, I still do have problems with that and hope the Attorney General has been able to get an answer to my question.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, certainly I did get an answer to that and I was trying my best to find it

there furiously. I will endeavour to actually forward that answer to you.

It is not in legislation across the country but it is done in practice similar to – they're using the information in other jurisdictions when it comes to – they do this, but it's not actually in the legislation. But it is a practice that is done.

What I will do is ensure to forward that information to you. I will make sure that the answer gets to the Member opposite. I don't think it will prevent passage of this bill. I understand that she has concerns. I can say the concern being addressed will not change our position on going forward, but I think she's taking the opportunity to put it on the record. The answer that I give her, she's certainly free to put on the record as well.

Again, I apologize for not having it here, but I will endeavour to get it to you today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House to proceed and to adopt the motion that Bill 24, An Act Respecting Insured Medical And Hospital Services In The Province be now read a third time?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Respecting Insured Medical And Hospital Services In The Province. (Bill 24)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Bill 24 has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Insured Medical And Hospital Services In The Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 24)

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

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

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

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

It's good to rise today to make a contribution to this budget debate. I've listened to the other Members who've spoke, with interest, to hear their various perspectives that have been put forward on this budget. It's interesting to hear the different perspectives and what people have to say.

We are a diverse group here in this House, a lot of different backgrounds, a lot of different experiences that bring us to the House. But there are a few things that we all have in common here, Mr. Speaker. We all have been selected by the people in our district. We all went through the same process, so we're all equal in that respect. I think that's a basis for mutual respect and understanding as we go forward.

Another thing I think we have in common is that we are all motivated. The reason we came here was to make a positive contribution to this province, to make this place better in the future and to make our areas where we were elected better in the future as well.

So I think those are some things that we have in common. We have many things that we differ on, Mr. Speaker, but we have those things in common. With that mutual respect and with that sort of will to do the right thing, I think there's much that we can accomplish here in this House as we serve our time here and serve the people of the province.

So it's great to rise and make a contribution to the debate. Madam Speaker, before I begin to get into my comments, I just wanted to sort of, for the purposes of any viewers at home, give a little summary of what the budget process is because I think it's important that people understand the budget process, how it works, what we're actually doing here in the House and things like that.

First of all, it sort of starts in this House with the Budget Speech on budget day. Of course, the minister gets up, she reads the speech, and documents are provided to Members of the House and to the public as well. But this is sort of like the accumulation of many decision meetings that lead to the budget and this is the start of the process here in this House.

The next thing is the budget debate begins here in this House. People bring forward their views and they speak on the debate. The Opposition usually, almost always, brings forward a non-confidence motion in the government. Also to extend the debate, they often bring forward amendments to the non-confidence motion to give them more opportunities to get up and speak and to participate in the debate. So it's a tradition that we bring forward a non-confidence motion that that be debated.

While this is all happening here on the floor of the House, also there are Estimates Committees that meet in the morning and in the evening. These Estimates Committees basically outline the expenditures in each department and how money is allocated to each division within the department. So it's a very detailed examination of how the money allocated in the budget is actually spent.

That's the whole process that we're going through now as we debate this budget. It's important to note as well that the budget itself and, indeed, any finance legislation is a confidence motion in this House because it's assumed in Westminster parliamentary democracy that if you can't pass your financial legislation, then you don't have the confidence of the House. So it's sort of a very important principle of a parliamentary democracy. So that's some information about the budget process that we're going through and how we're doing it, Madam Speaker.

In my comments on the budget today, I want to start off by giving you some questions that I intend to address as I speak today. I want to look at what is the current state of the provincial finances. How did we get to where we are today and what is the path that led us to where we are now?



Madam Speaker, I want to do this, and not in the sense of a blame game or any type of political game, but I just want to look at that a little bit in terms of getting better informed, to get a sense of how we can make better choices in the future. I also want to discuss some of the choices we are making here today and how they are limited by the choices that were made in the past. That's some of the things I want to do in the time I have available to me today.

Madam Speaker, if we look at our history and the financial state of the history of this province, even back hundreds of years, the history of finances in Newfoundland and Labrador, it's never been bright. It's never been a rosy picture. We've been primarily dependent on one staple economy in our early years, the fishery. Our economy was sort of determined by the ups and downs of the fishing industry and international markets. So we have a history of dependence on one staple economy.

Back in the 1930s, when we were an independent country, we came very close to actually going bankrupt. So we've had a history of rough financial times in the past. We have a number of challenges as a province. We have a sparse population over a huge geographic area. Our settlement patterns in this province were determined hundreds of years ago as people settled in various locations to pursue the fishery and that has had many consequences on the cost of delivery of government services in our province. It's the way population patterns arose, Madam Speaker.

For example, we have less than 500,000 people spread over a space that is three times as big as the three Atlantic Provinces put together, Mr. Speaker – Madam Speaker. Sorry, it's going to take a while for me to get used to Madam Speaker, but I will.

It's a very difficult problem. We have a small population spread over a huge area. On top of this, we're faced with harsh climatic conditions, harsh geography that makes it difficult to build roads. It makes it difficult for us to move around to do other things, provide other government services.

To summarize, it costs us more to provide roads, transportation facilities, to deliver health care

and education and other government services, Madam Speaker. Some economists have gone so far as to say we're an ungovernable place. We're a place where it's difficult to provide services.

Madam Speaker, this geography and this climate has played a big part in shaping us as a people, who we are as a people. These difficulties we face have shaped us in many ways. Very few places do you have people who are as emotionally connected and socially connected as people in Newfoundland and Labrador are connected to the place where we live. These realities have made us a tough and resilient people, and determined to survive in this environment.

To get back to the finances of the province, the potential of oil and gas was believed to change this dependency from one commodity. It was billed in the early days as something that would solve all the problems we faced and make everything right.

Now, just a little bit about oil exploration in Newfoundland and Labrador. First oil exploration in Newfoundland and Labrador started under Smallwood in the 1960s. Right from the beginning, jurisdiction was an issue, Madam Speaker. Smallwood, in his flamboyant fashion maybe, the one thing he did to make Newfoundland's point was he hired some divers to take a Newfoundland flag and place it in the seabed off our coast to demonstrate and to claim this territory as Newfoundland territory. So it's interesting to see.

The first well was drilled in 1966. In the 1970s more wells were drilled with the assistance of the PIP program, tax incentives from the federal government. Hibernia was discovered in 1979. That was the sort of time when optimism started to rise in this province.

We can all remember the famous words of Brian Peckford: "Some day the sun will shine and have not will be no more." But to give former Premier Peckford his due, he was very instrumental in putting in place the Atlantic Accord which benefitted this province in many ways.

The mood of the province with the discovery of Hibernia, which was eventually developed, some

stops and goes in terms of the challenges that the government of the day faced as Hibernia was being developed. It was the beginning of the oil industry in this province.

The history of our management of the oil industry in this province is not such a happy story, Madam Speaker. If we look at some of the warnings of the management of our oil resources, there are many warnings that there were problems in the way our oil revenue was being managed during the time of peak oil and top oil prices.

The AG's reports over this period, Madam Speaker, demonstrate problems with the way we as a province managed this oil revenue. In 2012, the Auditor General issued several warnings. The AG talked about growing the economy between the rich and the poor and also between regions of the province. He noted there was very little diversification in the province and the economy away from the energy sector, the over dependence upon the energy sector, Madam Speaker, and also our overall reliance on oil.

Madam Speaker, here's a quote from the AG's report: "Given its lack of control over the factors that impact oil royalties, and its increasing reliance on this revenue source, Government has to carefully consider the degree to which it can rely on this revenue source to fund its programs and services in the future." That's a clear warning from the Auditor General. The person who sort of critiques the government finances and how government spends money, the independent AG's office, that's the comments the AG was making at that time.

Madam Speaker, that wasn't in isolation. Other people, other commentators and journalists were making comments about the growing size of the civil service, about the spending spree that was happening. That was also evident at that time.

Also, if an examination of the experiences of other jurisdictions that had discovered oil was done, it would have shown that in many cases places that have won the resource lottery often end up worse off than places that didn't discover oil, Madam Speaker. So if we had to have managed that \$20 billion to \$30 billion we were getting from oil revenue better, we would have a much different story today, a much different

budget today than we do. That's an important point.

I think we still have time to get this right, Madam Speaker. We still have time to change the way we manage our resource revenue. We still have a lot of potential in oil and gas off our coast. We've had some new discoveries; we also have many areas that are still untouched in terms of exploration. I'm confident we will get a second chance. We'll get another chance to do it right if we learn from the mistakes we made in the past.

Madam Speaker, I've had an opportunity to talk to many people from my district about some of the provisions that are in the budget. I've talked to people by phone, by email, on Facebook, met them in their homes, went to rallies related to the budget and talked to people individually. I want to thank the people who've contacted me. I want to thank the organizers for various events.

I think it's important to have that type of dialogue in our province about where we're going in the future, and to be able to bring those concerns to our caucus table. That's what democracy is all about. It's about listening to people, engaging people and bringing their concerns forward. It's not about people yelling insults at each other or some sort of "got you" politics. It's about really engaging people and hearing what they have to say. It's about meaningful engagement, Madam Speaker. The path we're taking is not an easy path, but I think it's a necessary path; a path that we have to take.

I was interested in hearing the comments from the Member for Corner Brook a few days ago when he talked about kicking the can down the road or kicking the problem down the road for our children to deal with. It's interesting that we've reached the point where if we don't deal with this situation now, in the future – not the distant future but the near future, within six years – we will be in a position where we'll have to take much more drastic action to deal with the circumstances we find ourselves in. I think we can move forward and deal with the situation we have now, Madam Speaker.

I started off by talking about the two things we have in common, Madam Speaker: the fact that we're all here and selected by the people in our

district, and also the fact that we're all here motivated by the will to do good things for this province and our district. I think working together and taking those two things into account, we can treat each other with respect and we can solve these problems we face.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

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

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

I'm pleased to have an enthusiastic cheerleader with me today in the Opposition benches. I'm not sure I'm going to get a lot of cheers from the other side of the House but you never know. Stranger things have happened in this hon. Chamber.

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to have a chance to take part in the budget debate. I think it's imperative that all MHAs stand and be counted, and have a say during this budget debate. This is the third opportunity in this formal part of the debate that I've had to speak. There will be other opportunities, not necessarily as part of this formal part of the budget motion, but there will be Concurrence debates, and there will be debates on bills that relate to the budget. So I thank the Member for St. George's – Humber for giving people a bit of a sense of what this process looks like and feels like because it can be somewhat confusing.

Before I get into my remarks, I do want to pay tribute to a group of students and educators in my district and in my community of Mount Pearl, and also in Paradise. Last night, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and I had an opportunity to attend the *Etcetera* show which is put on by students of Mount Pearl Intermediate and Mount Pearl Senior High school. Students from the feeder elementary schools also take part in *Etcetera*.

The reason I'm raising it – and both the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and I at least once a year, at some point in this House, will congratulate the students on an amazing *Etcetera* performance. The reason I'm choosing to make special mention of it during my limited time today, Madam Speaker, is that it was the 30th anniversary of the *Etcetera* show – 30 years.

I want to salute the Goulding family. All members of the Goulding family are intimately involved in the production and have been since its inception. In particular, Carl Goulding, who is one of the music teachers at Mount Pearl schools, has been running this show for 30 years. It involves hundreds of students taking part in a musical production each and every year. If you haven't seen it, I say to hon. Members and also to people in the region, it's on until Saturday night. There are tickets available each night. It would be well worth your while to go to the Mount Pearl Glacier and see our young people in action.

It's not just a small group of choral students; hundreds of students take part in what is an amazing theatrical musical production. I want to commend, particularly, Carl Goulding, but the entire Goulding family for their tremendous commitment and leadership.

I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands will join me in extending congratulations to them as well. It was an amazing production again last night. My family enjoyed the show. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and his family enjoyed the show as well.

The song he was most impressed by last night was a song called "Jolene". I don't know if any of you have heard it before, but we were both toe-tapping together last night at the Glacier.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Sing a verse.

**MR. KENT:** I won't sing it. I say to the hon. Members, not now. Maybe at the next karaoke fundraiser in Mount Pearl but not here in this hon. House.

Madam Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't comment on the previous speech by the Member

for St. George's – Humber. I want to commend him in recent days for standing up for his constituents and raising concerns in local media in his district about the closure of libraries and how that's going to impact communities he represents. I believe Stephenville Crossing is in his district and I think there's a library closing there. I believe there's one other in the area. I know there's a library closing in – four libraries in his district. There's one in Piccadilly, in the neighbouring district that's closing as well.

I commend him for speaking out, but my concern – and I say this respectfully – is he just had an opportunity for 20 minutes to take part in the formal debate on the budget where we're debating the budget motion to adopt the budgetary policies that have been presented by this government and he didn't mention it. I think that's rather unfortunate, Madam Speaker.

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

**MR. KENT:** I know I'm being heckled. That's fine. This needs to be said.

The challenge I'm having with this entire process is that people are saying one thing and doing another. So it's fine to go to Facebook or go to your local newspaper or whatever and raise concerns on behalf of your constituents, but you also have to stand in this House and be counted. We all have a responsibility to raise concerns on behalf of our constituents. I hope in my time today I'll raise some of the concerns they have with this budget.

I commend the Member for speaking out. I hope when the time comes to formally stand and be counted, when we vote on this motion, that he won't support this budget and the impact that it's having on his district.

It's not the only impact. The libraries are not the only negative impact on his district. I also believe there are Child, Youth and Family Services offices, at least one closing in his district. There's one closing in Stephenville Crossing. I believe there's one in Piccadilly that's closing as well. This wasn't mentioned in the minister's budget speech. There was reference to offices closing in Port Saunders and Gambo, but the ones in Stephenville Crossing and Piccadilly didn't get mentioned for some

reason. I don't know why that is but it's unfortunate.

I'd encourage Members – and I say this sincerely – to not just take to the local media and empathize and sympathize with your constituents when you're talking to them in your communities, but also stand in this House, take the opportunity during the various debates on the various aspects of this budget to raise those concerns, because that's what we're elected to do, Madam Speaker. That's why yesterday's recall motion was so important, because that would have created another opportunity for constituents to have a greater voice and have more of an opportunity to hold their constituents accountable.

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

**MR. KENT:** He has lots to say now, Madam Speaker, but he just had 20 minutes and didn't raise one single concern.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** He didn't raise one single concern on behalf on his constituents. He gave a very informative talk about budget theory, but he didn't raise concerns on behalf of his constituents and I think that's rather unfortunate.

So I do want to raise some concerns on behalf of mine, but one of the interesting challenges we're having over here these days is that there are seven of us representing seven districts and the New Democratic Party represents another couple of districts, but we're hearing from government districts as well. We're hearing from people who have concerns about what's going on in their communities, but when Members stand they're not hearing those concerns being brought to the floor of the House.

One that I was asked to bring to the floor of the House, and I suspect the Minister of Justice will participate in the debate at some point today and he may be able to answer some of the questions on the issue I'm about to raise. It relates to the closure of the court in Wabush, Labrador. I'm going to share with you some of the concerns

I've received directly from people in Labrador West.

I haven't been able to validate every single one of these concerns. I suspect the minister does have the information, though, and he has been in the past very willing to answer questions and provide information. I'm not raising these concerns to be argumentative or confrontational. I've been asked on behalf of constituents in Labrador West to bring these concerns to the House of Assembly, which is what I'm now going to take a couple of moments to do.

They say the closure of the Wabush court cannot be justified in their view. Now the Justice Minister would have access to different information, of course, than some of the folks who would be raising these concerns and they would bring a different perspective to it as well. So he may be able to shed some more light on why the decision makes sense in his eyes or in the eyes of government.

One of the points that has been made is that the physical building where the court is located won't be closing, and there will be costs of maintaining that building that will be more or less the same. So there are no major savings as a result of shutting down a facility related to the court.

Interestingly enough, the building that these court services will basically be relocated to in Goose Bay is a rented facility. So the one in Wabush is a government-owned building and the one in Goose Bay isn't. Now I would argue given the distance between Labrador West and Happy Valley-Goose Bay that there's a need for two courts and for two locations. The minister may be able to shed some light on that for us.

The suggestion has also been made, and perhaps it's even been said, I'm not certain, that the province will have to pay relocation costs for a number of employees. They will be placed in a rented building. They'll be flown back and forth to Labrador West for circuit court. So there will be travel costs associated with this. There'll be hotels, flights and per diems. Effectively, for a couple of weeks a month, these staff will go back and sit at the very same desks in Wabush that they're sitting at today.

The other thing I've been asked to raise, Madam Speaker, is that the jobs being relocated to Happy Valley-Goose Bay doesn't provide a solution for many families in Labrador West. We're not talking about communities that are close together. We're not talking about St. John's and Mount Pearl, or Conception Bay South and Paradise; we're talking about communities that are hundreds of kilometres away from one another.

So moving to Goose Bay isn't an option for many of these families. They have families in Wabush or in Labrador City. They have spouses who are working in Labrador West, and many are locked into mortgages. Frankly, given the downturn and given the closure of the mine, it isn't a great time to be trying to sell your house in Labrador West.

I know there are efforts being made to get the mine reopened in Wabush. I'm hopeful the future for IOC and Labrador City will be bright, but right now it's a very tough time to try and sell real estate in Labrador West.

Now there are people on the ground in Wabush who are saying that when the decision was made to close the court the minister didn't have the information that the family court actually took place in Wabush. I don't know whether that's accurate or not. The minister is saying it isn't, and I respect that. Again, what I've been asked to do is raise concerns that have been brought to me by constituents in Labrador West and I know the minister appreciates that.

It's been stated as part of the debate on this issue publicly that a lot can be done via the Internet today, and I'll acknowledge that. The Member for St. George's – Humber mentioned that we have a vast geography to cover. I know during my brief time in the Department of Health and Community Services we were constantly looking on how to better avail of Telehealth and modern technology to better connect people in the province and to provide them with a similar level of service, no matter where they live in the province.

I acknowledge that the use of technology to better provide services to rural areas is important, no doubt, but it's a two-way street. Perhaps if there are some services that are being

moved to Goose Bay, perhaps people in that region could also, through technology, access those services if they were to be maintained in Wabush.

Another argument that's been put forward by the people of Labrador West is that it makes sense to have a court located near the border of our province in Labrador, near the Labrador boarder. I think that's an interesting point that needs to be raised as well.

One of the most emotional arguments that's been presented by people I've talked to in Labrador West is they can't afford to lose any more jobs. The region has been hard hit. I know the previous administration was working with the region. I know the new administration is working with the region to try and ensure a strong economy for that region of our province which generates incredible economic activity that benefits not just that region of Labrador, but of course the entire province. So it's a region right now that can't afford to lose more jobs.

On a related note, another question that's been asked to me by people in Labrador West is about some jobs that are being eliminated in other departments. Apparently, there are some vacant positions in Natural Resources that are being cut. There are some safety officer jobs in Wabush that are being cut. So at a really critical time for the Labrador West region, these cuts are taking place.

I know government has really tough decisions to be made and some of those decisions probably feel impossible, but these concerns that are being raised by the people in Labrador West, I feel, are ones that are worthy of consideration.

I have some other notes here that were sent by another resident of Labrador West. Some of them are the same, so I'll try not to be repetitive, Madam Speaker. There was concern about the statistics that had been presented to support the decision to close the court in Wabush.

What's being suggested by people close to the court in Wabush who don't wish to be identified because they perhaps are employees of government or employees of the court, they're saying the numbers look so low for the Wabush court because some of the activity of the

Wabush court is being logged under Happy Valley-Goose Bay. What I mean is some of the video conferencing that is being done by the Wabush judge has been logged under the Goose Bay court.

I push back on that point because I have no doubt there would never be a deliberate attempt to misrepresent the facts and figures, but the people providing me with this information seem very confident that this is the case.

Any circuit court completed by the Wabush judge and staff is logged under Goose Bay's court. So of course if that's happening on a daily basis or a weekly basis, it's going to look like the Goose Bay court is far busier than the court in Wabush, if some of Wabush's activity is being logged under Goose Bay's.

Along with the judge and the court staff, as I mentioned previously, the sheriffs will also have to travel to Wabush. There are currently two sheriffs who are scheduled to lose their jobs in Wabush. So maybe there's a better way forward to make that work, and the minister may be able to comment on that as well, if he does get an opportunity during the debate today or next week.

Wabush also has a heavy load of transcription work that's being completed, often for other courts throughout the province. So again, that may not be reflected on the number of cases on the docket in Wabush, but I'm being told there's a considerable amount of transcription work being completed by the Wabush court that would benefit the whole court system throughout the province. So keeping that work in Labrador West is good for everybody, potentially.

People have been wondering where the new staff will come from for the new judge and where the files will be stored. I don't know if the minister will be able to comment on that level of detail at this point, but again I'm raising the concerns that have been brought to me on behalf of people in Labrador West.

So, overall, people are feeling it hasn't been demonstrated there will be significant savings as a result of some of these issues that are being raised. Someone even said to me the numbers

are being cooked to make Goose Bay look busier than it is. I don't believe for a second that the Department of Justice would do that; I honestly don't. But perhaps because of how those numbers are being tracked and administered that there is a legitimate issue here, and that the numbers that are being presented don't really paint the full picture of the level of activity at the court in Wabush. The concern is that the workload is not properly being reported when speaking about Wabush.

Anyway, I thank you for the opportunity to raise those concerns on behalf of the people of Labrador West. I appreciate the Justice Minister's attention. He has been taking notes and listening as the concerns have been raised, so I'm hopeful that we'll be able to get some answers for the people in Labrador West.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I only have a couple of minutes left, but I do want to raise some concerns on behalf of yet another school in my district that has been brought forward. The building is not technically in my district – I'm sure the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands will correct me, but a good percentage of the students that go to St. Peter's Junior High feed into the school from my district. The students from Mary Queen of the World, for instance, all go to St. Peter's Junior High. They're French immersion students at St. Peter's Primary and Newtown Elementary that would ultimately feed in.

The school council and the parents at St. Peter's Junior High have a number of concerns. I'll raise them again next week because I only have a couple of minutes now. I'm looking at the clock if the people watching are wondering what I'm doing.

The junior high changes to class-size caps are causing a real concern. There's a fear that will significantly impact curriculum outcomes and classroom-management issues. As well, there's a concern about whether junior high students will be adequately prepared to enter senior high based on these changes. Junior high doesn't have the option to stream students, nor are there online distance education options available. Junior high is a very challenging time in students' lives, as I know all Members of this House would appreciate.

The school has some real concerns about inclusive education. Class-size changes combined with the lack of resources that have been allocated to inclusive education will further impede the success of children in our school.

I'm not going to blame the Liberal government of under-resourcing when it comes to inclusive education. This budget makes things far worse, no doubt about it, but I would acknowledge that resourcing inclusive education in our schools has been a challenge for a long time, through various administrations of government. It's a real issue that does need to be addressed, given some of the changes to education that are now being made.

Teaching units are being eliminated that were used in a curriculum or a support manner, including in intensive core French and French immersion. Those programs shouldn't be cut harder than the rest of the system. French programs in our schools are under-resourced as it is. There's no new investment in pervasive needs or the IRT allocation, no change in guidance counsellor supports and much more.

Madam Speaker, I'm out of time. Next week, I will raise more concerns on behalf of people in my district.

I want to wish all mothers in the province and those who play a motherly role in the lives of people a Happy Mother's Day this Sunday as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you.

I think this would be my second time rising in this hon. House, my first time speaking to the budget. I have yet to give my maiden speech which I look forward to doing I guess sometime before we close our spring session.

Before I start off, I would like to acknowledge the folks in Alberta and Fort McMurray. As mentioned here previously, this province, of

course, has a deep connection with those in Fort McMurray. A lot of my constituents' family members are currently there. I spoke with a constituent this morning, her daughter and her husband and two small children, of course, had to travel a significant distance and are now staying in other accommodations.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Can I ask Members to take their conversations outside so we can hear the speaker?

Thank you.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you for your protection, Madam Speaker.

Yes, as I was saying, I'm also happy and proud that our minister and our government have made contact with the Province of Alberta to let them know we have resources, personnel and equipment on standby upon request.

It's really interesting, Madam Speaker, hearing all the budget debate, hearing the Opposition Members and whatnot and the pleas they are putting forward. I do believe that it's important to go back and review some of the very recent actions of the government, the previous administration.

I want to bring us back to Bill 29. As we know, Bill 29 –

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** That's right. Bill 29, as we know – How long ago was that? It was two to three years back for Bill 29. If I'm not mistaken, I believe it was the longest filibuster in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. There was severe opposition by the Opposition Parties, by the members of the public and even the media for that matter. It was said that Bill 29 put us back in the category of Third World countries with regard to rights and access to information.

This went on for some time. We know some big legislation was pushed under the cloak of Bill 29 such as Muskrat Falls. Again, it blocked access

to information because legislation was put forward.

I ask over there, despite the pressure that was received from constituents and members of the public, how many Opposition Members now, which were government at the time, stood up and voted against Bill 29 despite the pressures they were hearing? How many I wonder. Madam Speaker, I wonder how many.

The Opposition is so keen now to stand on a soapbox and say: Stand with your people and vote this way, vote against your government, stand up.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** A voluntary recall.

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Absolutely, but you know I'm very confident that every elected Member in this House is here for their constituents. I can speak for myself. I am in touch with my constituents every day and every evening. Since the budget has been discussed here I have been on the phone until about 10:30 or even later every evening.

Not only that, my weekends are dedicated to my constituents and the activities going on. I'm a very big part of the community and I support them 100 per cent. That is exactly why I got involved with politics in the first place. It was always part of my long-term plan at some point in my career to put myself up for public office.

Prior to my journalism days, I studied political science and completed my political science degree at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax. Following this, I went on to complete the radio and television arts program in the Annapolis Valley for the NSCC with a major in journalism. I guess, given my schooling, it was about a decade in the journalism profession. Then, of course, I made the leap

I was actually approached to get involved earlier than when I did. At the time, the timing wasn't right. It was, of course, during this time which I'm here now. I'm very grateful for my constituents who put me here as their representative. I will represent their concerns.

Being on the phone with them every night, meeting with them; I've been having meetings



with smaller groups because I find that to be very productive, to meet with crowds, smaller crowds, organizations and town councils to hear their concerns. I am bringing their concerns back to the ministers and back to the Premier. That's what we do as a team and I will do that. They're my first priority in this and you can mark that down. Every day and night as the day is long that will be my priority, to represent the people of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District, the 15,000 constituents that I represent. I will certainly continue to do so.

Every day I get a chance you'll hear the words Coley's Point Primary in this hon. House because this is a top priority for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. As I mentioned here recently in a petition, with some research we found a letter dated back in 2007. It was a recommendation by a consulting firm that the current building had exceeded its usefulness and that it was a top priority and a recommendation to replace this building.

This is in a community. We have an expanding population. The school, Coley's Point Primary from K to 3, services children from Port de Grave, Bareneed, Coley's Point, Bay Roberts, Shearstown and Butlerville. Currently, we have over 350 students attending Coley's Point Primary.

As mentioned, this school is a 60-year-plus facility, a 350 student population. I've been to the school many times, especially getting involved on my political journey. These students currently are using closet space. There is no cafeteria in Coley's Point Primary. The children are eating on their working desks. We all know at that age with crayons, the pencils and leads, the germs that are there.

I understand, with all due respect, with the oncoming of all-day kindergarten that students in other areas of the province will now have to use their classrooms as eating spaces, but unfortunately, this is what the students of Coley's Point have been used to. That's all they know, actually.

I will continue to work with the minister on this. We know there's been money allocated for Coley's Point Primary in multiple budgets. I ask the Member opposite: Where was the priority for

Coley's Point Primary? It was listed to be replaced but what happened? It got shuffled down the list.

Every child in a school deserves to learn and grow in a healthy, optimal education facility, but I have to ask: What happened with the children in Coley's Point Primary? Where was the former Member on Coley's Point Primary in the past three budgets? For years to come – this is a passionate issue. I will not give up this fight for Coley's Point Primary.

Also a big concern I am hearing in my district, obviously, is the slated closure of the courthouse in the Town of Harbour Grace. We know there have been court services provided since the 1800s in this town. It services districts such as Harbour – Port de Grave, Carbonear – Trinity – Bay de Verde, Placentia – St. Mary's and Harbour Main. Some 50,000 people come through the doors of these court services. The concerns are being brought to me, and I will continue working with the minister, and representing and voicing the concerns of my constituents. There is work to be done and I am 100 per cent committed to that.

Of course, going back to the list of things I also want to bring forth because I really believe – since the Members opposite are so adamant about educating or informing the public, not necessarily factual information is being put forward. Before I leave, let's talk about Bill 29. Finally, they caved after the public pressure. They hired a panel at the expense of taxpayers, and a whopping million dollars plus, unfortunately, to then remove legislation that was put forth. It was then removed, after the work had been done, mind you. After Muskrat Falls had been pushed through it was removed, at a cost of a million dollars.

I also have to bring forward now – we can't forget the infamous Humber Valley Paving fiasco. What happened at Humber Valley Paving? Is it a coincidence, Madam Speaker, that Humber Valley Paving had a direct connection to one of our candidates for – the candidate for the PC leadership? What happened?

I understand Mr. Bill Barry, a big player in the fishery here in the Province of Newfoundland

and Labrador, was also interested in running, putting his name forward here for the PC leadership. That didn't happen; however, Mr. Coleman graciously came forward. We do know hours before that paper was submitted, magically the contract for Humber Valley Paving disappeared, but it didn't disappear for free. It disappeared at a cost of \$19 million to taxpayers' money.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How much?

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Nineteen million dollars. Right there, that is the cost for Coley's Point Primary school. We were looking at our Coley's Point Primary school in comparison to Humber Valley Paving.

**MS. MICHAEL:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. P. PARSONS:** That's right. The Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi is vocal as she always is. We appreciate that, Madam Speaker.

Again, the \$19 million – and there's something else, too, that we want to bring forward – I stand to be corrected on this, Madam Speaker, but we were due in the legislation in 2016 to review boundaries changes –

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MS. P. PARSONS:** – for the electoral districts because we know this was something the then Opposition leader, now the Premier, of course, committed to reviewing; but as we know, the Members opposite, the government of the day, jumped the gun on that one and oh, yes, at this time now we need a boundary change. We need to slash – eight seats were slashed in the Legislature. Absolutely, the districts were removed.

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** I wasn't in this government at the time last year. The hon. Member who I admire, by the way, I wasn't here to vote on that one; but, as we know, all of a sudden this became very urgent to do this. This came at a hefty cost, unfortunately. As I said, eight seats were slashed. Each Member has now taken on

significantly more constituents; however, I'm grateful for the district I represent.

Magically, the Town of Harbour Grace got moved to the Port de Grave District. They have never been in the same district in the time of history in Newfoundland and Labrador, to have Harbour Grace grouped with Bay Roberts. They're both large centres; however, Harbour Grace has a special place in my heart. It always will. I was educated down there in the Catholic system at the former St. Columba's Harbour Grace Primary. The support that I continue to receive in Harbour Grace is phenomenal. I appreciate their support. As a matter of fact, I work closely – I'm touch with those constituents daily. I spend a lot of my time in beautiful Harbour Grace.

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Which, I add, was slated to be the capital of this province at one time. It would be wonderful if that was the case today.

Also, in the dying days of the government, the previous administration, there was no question there was \$25 billion in oil royalties over the past decade came through. Where's that money now? Where was the diversifying of our economies?

We were born and we live on the fishery here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The fishery is paramount here in this province. Where was the diversification for our natural resources when we were flooded, when we were rich with oil money? Where is it gone now?

I really want to point out that it's important, of course, to voice the concerns of all constituents, but I would have much more respect and more peace of mind if the Member's opposite would please take responsibility for where you've brought the province's finances. It's an insult to the electorate to stand there waving and bringing up claims and pleas that have never been mentioned previous until now when you find yourself in Opposition.

Back to the fishery, this is definitely a difficult budget. It's an ugly budget. I'll call it an ugly budget. I continue to get concerns daily. Again, I will voice the concerns of my constituents with

the ministers and with our Premier. But it is encouraging that amid the spending reductions in other areas, we are investing \$2 million in the Seafood and Aquaculture Innovation and Transition Program with the aim of supporting technology innovation in this critical part of the economy.

So ultimately, it's an entire investment of \$18.2 million and that includes aquaculture, innovation, licensing, enforcement, industry renewal and marketing. It's important to note again how important the fishery is. It's very important to my District of Harbour – Grace Port de Grave. The name Port de Grave, we can't say Port de Grave without thinking about the fishery. I have about 200 inshore fishers throughout my district and believe you me, it is very important and I will certainly stand with them and to support them at any cost, and will voice their concerns in what we need for the fishery.

I also have to mention – and it begs to question – at this time now in our history we have Liberal federal government, as we know, and a provincial Liberal government. But I have to ask again, the fishery and search and rescue being so important to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, where were the Members opposite when the Harper administration closed our Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre at a cost savings of only \$1 million? We couldn't get a meeting, but where was the fight, though? We didn't see any fight. There was large rally that was held down on the waterfront from members of the public who took the initiative to drive that, but where were Members opposite on that on with the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre?

But I am happy now that at least the Trudeau administration is committed to reviewing this, and I certainly hope that we have those search and rescue resources back in place. Again, it goes to reiterate how important search and rescue is and I'll take you back to the time of the tragic, tragic death of Burton Winters, and how at the time those services failed that young man. Again, it has to be criticized how the previous administration, the premier at the time, Premier Dunderdale, with all due respect, did not so much have a meeting with the grandmother of Burton Winters. So we have to think about our people.

Please, don't get up there and stand on a soap box saying this and this and this. Also, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Third Party here. A lot of respect for my friends over there in the Third Party; we all know they fight for their constituents but it is disheartening to see them now link arms with the Opposition. This time last year, they were highly critical of what they were seeing but now all of a sudden they're dance partners. They're over there dancing and beating on the drum together. It almost looks like an endorsement of the previous actions. Is this the case? Madam Speaker, I ask, is this the case? I'm telling you, politics, never a dull moment.

I did take the time to prepare some notes. Again, I want to emphasize the importance of the fishery and how this budget does support our fishery, which is very important here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The most recent statistics show that Northern cod biomass is at 27 per cent of its historical might. This is a very significant recovery but there is still much more work to be done, because it's still quite not enough to commence a commercial cod fishery but, as you know, we are very committed to that. We must push Ottawa to get the cod on and other fisheries on a recovery path and establish targets and timelines. For without a healthy resource, there is no industry and there are no communities. We know how important the fishery is.

Ottawa also needs to get back to investing significantly in fisheries research. Without the basic research, we cannot properly manage our resources. Ottawa needs to ensure that our fishery is built back to where it once was. And with investments, commitments and care, a sustainable fishery can happen and I'm confident to say it will happen.

Remember, a sustainable fishery is not just one that can be fished forever, but one that also sustains our communities. Ottawa much also give us a fairer food fishery. We need a fair food fishery here in our province. Ottawa must also address the important point of contention with the federal government. It must respect and implement the principle of adjacency. It is very important to Newfoundland and Labrador. This will ensure communities will stay alive and thrive.

We have no future if fishing communities are disconnected from the fish that swim by the door of adjacency. To quote a former President of MUN, Dr. Leslie Harris, either there are fish or the community dies. There is no middle ground.

Ottawa needs to get their cod on and that means they have to look, address our concerns, accept our solutions and look to the other countries such as Norway and Iceland who have thriving fisheries. I was reading recently about a small town in Norway that employs 300 people around the clock to process 180 to 190 tons of fish daily. Again, the fishery is very important and I'm happy to see this investment in our fishery for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, I want to reiterate the importance of Coley's Point Primary. This is a very, very important topic in my district. Since 2007, when it was recommended by a professional consulting firm that this building be replaced it got looked over. We know in the past several budgets, there was money allocated in three past budgets –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How many?

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Three past budgets, when there was a Member here – when the oil money was rich, but it did not happen. I will be standing by Coley's Point Primary. I will be standing by with my constituents on the topic of the Harbour Grace courthouse, and I am here for each and every constituent.

My office number – and anyone can call at any time to our constituency office, and I will commend my constituency assistant, Ms. Eileen Smith, who works tirelessly to help our constituents. Anyone can reach us there at 786-1372. For those calling long distance – I welcome all calls around the province, Madam Speaker – at 1-866-729-1594. You can reach us there.

Again, we're here to help the people of Alberta. I wish my mother, my grandmother a very, very happy Mother's Day. I certainly wouldn't be where I am without their support.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

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

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

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

I have stood and I've spoken to the budget twice, and this is my third and final time. I want to say what an honour it has been to stand in this House and speak to this budget, and what an honour to sit in this House and to hear my colleagues on both sides of the House talk about their impressions, talk about their opinions about the budget. Some defending the budget in its entirety, some partially defending the budget, some outright rejecting, basically, most of the budget, but that's the work we have to do in this House and sometimes it's difficult work.

One thing about the budget debates for me is that it's so important. We all know this; I'm not lecturing. We all know we are here representing the people who have elected us, and they have put their trust in us. They are asking us to bring their voices, to bring their experiences, to bring their opinions here in the House.

Our jobs as elected MHAs are – we hear all kinds of conflicting ideas, conflicting opinions. So our job is to somehow discern what is being said and try and make decisions based on what we are hearing from our constituents. Our job is to distill that information and try and make decisions that are in the best interest of our constituents.

After that process of listening with the real intent to hear, then we make decisions about how we will express the concerns and the ideas and the demands and the opinions of those we have been elected to represent. Of course, we have such a vast array of opinions coming at us, but, again, our constituents have elected us because they trust that we will put their best interest before all else. Sometimes it's a really difficult exercise to discern – to hear all the conflicting voices and discern really what's going on in our districts and what the best things are for the people in our districts.

This week I was humiliated by my government. These are the most troublesome words I have

written in a very long time, and I have written many words in my time, most of them about a homeland that I care for deeply. These are the words of award-winning Newfoundland writer Kevin Major: This week I was humiliated by my government.

Kevin Major wrote this letter to the Premier, to the Minister of Finance and to the Minister of Education. He goes on to say: It is a homeland I wish to see grow spiritually and intellectually. One I wish to see prosper, as you do, no doubt, but taxing books and forcing a mass closure of libraries is absolutely not the way to go about it. The citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador are in a financial quagmire, and true enough, it is not the present government that put us there but it's the Members of government who must demonstrate our priority as a society as we struggle out of deficit and debt.

Mr. Speaker, what Kevin Major is stressing and what many of us have talked about here in the House over the past few weeks since the budget has been presented to the House and to the people of the province, is that the task and exercise of making a budget is about choices.

I talked about that the other day in my second speech to the House. In that speech I talked about, we have very little control over our life. I had said even no matter how much we pay for that ultra-mega-hold gel to control your hair, for that ultra-hold, that ultra-control, no matter how much you pay for it we have no control. What we do have control over is how we respond to what is presented to us. Mr. Speaker, that, again, is what the budget process is about.

We were creamed. The province was creamed by the crash in the oil industry. In the oil and gas industry we were hit hard. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. One of our problems is we were so reliant on oil. Rather than really, truly developing our other riches. Rather than truly investing in our people.

We were creamed on the commodity market around some of the mining processes in the mining industries. Also, we don't have some of the best royalty regimes in the world. We certainly don't even have some of the best royalty regimes for our natural resources in the country, but we got creamed in that area as well.

So here we are after years of prosperity dealing with an incredible fiscal, financial crunch. We have a growing debt. We have a huge deficit.

Do you know what? Speaking with the people of the province, listening to our constituents, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians we're realists. The people of the province know we're in a financial crunch but they also know how we deal with it is what we do have control over, the decisions that we make.

I don't think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are unrealistic. We certainly aren't. Nor have we overreached, but some of the decisions that were made – aside from being creamed in the oil industry and being creamed by our commodities in the mining industry, the previous government, the previous administration made some decisions that also creamed us, decisions about tax cuts, decisions about corporate tax cuts, decisions about cuts to personal income tax.

I truly believe that people in Newfoundland and Labrador are willing to pay taxes because they know what the taxes are for. They know that it's important to pay taxes so that there are roads leading to our communities, roads that are safe, roads that are safe for our children when they're going along roads in school buses. They're willing to pay taxes to ensure that there is great medical care for our seniors, great medical care for our young families, making sure that when the baby is born that the mother is safe. People know – people are willing to pay taxes because we have grown up in a culture where we know how important it is to take care of one another.

When you look at the fishing communities in our province and the men, predominantly, would go out to the water, the women and children would stay on land and they would work together. They would salt the fish, they would do that whole operation and we all supported one another because we knew that the fishing industry, the fishery only worked when we did work together as a team.

So I believe that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are more than willing, have been more than willing to roll up their sleeves, to get to work and to get us out of this tough financial situation that we find ourselves in.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, I had a town hall. There were about 175 people there. What I did was invite community activists from all over the city and some of our community leaders who had expertise in different areas. I think there were about 15 of them and they all spoke for three minutes about their particular area of interest, whether it was education, whether it was labour, mental health or seniors.

They only spoke for three minutes and then the whole group of people sat down at tables, they got to choose whatever table topic they wanted to sit down at, and then that community leader and expert simply facilitated a conversation. But the conversation was about what can we do. It wasn't just about telling bad stories or telling about how difficult it is, although that's part of it because there are a lot of people who are really being impacted by this budget, who are getting really hit hard by this budget.

People worked hard; the buzz in the room was palpable. People were so willing to work together to look at what do we do about some of these situations. The table where there were a number of seniors – there was a lot of seniors there who were really afraid. They were afraid because they knew that the over-the-counter drug program has been cancelled, that the Adult Dental Program has been cancelled except for people on income support.

They knew that some of them – even though they were on very limited income, they would still have to pay the levy because the levy is for anybody making over \$20,000. They also know they have to pay more for their car insurance and their house insurance. They also know they have to pay more for their fees to register their car. They know they're going to have to pay more HST and they are already so up against the wall. There is no scrimping. There's no money left. There's no money left for them at the end of the month.

The gentleman who stood up and reported back to the large room – because that's what we did at the end of the evening; I had to stop them. People wanted to keep working; they wanted to keep speaking to each other. It was incredible to watch.

The gentleman, who's a senior citizen, who stood up to report back to the big group about what was being said at the table where people were talking about seniors' issues – he said, we want to help with the financial situation that we are in. He said we want to pay the levy if we could but we can't. We don't have any extra money.

I found that very telling. Imagine so many of those seniors – because they called me over. They said can you help us figure out what we're losing, what we're going to have to pay. They're so afraid, particularly widowed women, single women. They're so afraid. Some of them have pensions, but their pensions haven't increased in years, although the price of food has gone up and the price of transportation has gone up. They said we want to help get us out of this financial situation.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador know the tough situation we're in. Nobody denies that. When we put together a budget, when government puts together a budget, it's about values; it's about decisions. That's where this government has fallen off the rails.

They said everything was on the table. Mr. Speaker, we know that not everything should be on the table. Budgets should not be about line-by-line cutting, budgets should be about what are our values. What is so important that we can't do without? How do we make sure that we build that? How do we make sure that the people of the province have what they need so that everybody can prosper?

Two days ago, Mr. Speaker, when I spoke to the budget, I talked about what we would have differently. That's available in the Hansard if people would like to see that – but just a thumbnail sketch of what we would have done differently. We wouldn't have imposed the levy. We wouldn't have to revoke the levy; we never would have imposed it. That is such an unfair tax.

Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? The people of the province know that. The people of the province know that a levy –

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleague across the floor if he would just give me a chance to speak, I'd be happy to hear anything he has to say.

An unfair tax like that that is so disproportionately unfair is not the route to go. The thing is the people of the province know that. Many of the people in the House here know that. Many of my colleagues know that. That's not the route to go. We would have built our budget based on certain principles and values.

I know that every single Member in this House cares about the people in their district. I know that; we all know that. We all want our province to prosper and we want our people to prosper. I believe, as do many people in this province – because we're all hearing from them – is that there are problems with this budget.

We should have done what Alberta did – and I know the situation is very different. They were also hit with the drop in the price of oil. They lost 60,000 jobs in such a short period of time, and I know they don't have the same debt load that we do and I know they have a higher population, but what they did is that they decided to do a budget that would get people working, that would invest in their people, that would invest in green technology. And that's not what this budget did.

This budget is cutting jobs. What is the effect of cutting jobs? More unemployed people. It also means there's less money being spent in our communities. I know my colleagues here in this House know what the effects are going to be in their communities when stores are not making money, when they cut government offices, when they close courthouses. We all know what the roll-out effect of that is.

So what kept going on in my mind, Mr. Speaker, looking at some of these cuts I would say, to what end? To what end? What is the roll-out? Has government really, really done the analysis of what is the roll-out, what is the down-the-road effect of some of these cuts? Because they're pretty negative. I'm sure that's not the intention, but that's what's happening. Mr. Speaker, that's the sad part of this budgeting process. The people know this, because there are so many people up against the wall.

What's happening as well is that we're seeing a negative impact, not on the most vulnerable and the lowest earners and whether people are on Income Support, because that's always a problem, how we make sure we leave no one behind, but we're seeing a negative impact on working families, on middle-income earners. That's what we're seeing.

I'm looking forward to the technical briefing the Minister of Finance has offered me, to look at what the roll out is on all the cuts and extra fees and higher taxes.

This bitter medicine that we have to swallow – as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we have had to swallow bitter medicine over the years. We sure have, but I don't know what the positive outcome of this bitter medicine is because we're losing jobs. People are more financially strapped, and now waiting for the six months for the next budget hit, people are sitting on their wallets. They're afraid. Who wouldn't be? Because this government keeps saying it's so bad and the doom and gloom.

One would have hoped government would have marched into this room, into this House of Assembly, proudly proclaiming: We have a budget that is going to get us back on track. We are going to make it possible for people to work. We are going to invest in infrastructure spending. We are going to do the best to make sure that this province moves forward.

It's not what happened. People were looking for that leadership. Government has done nothing but invoke fear and doom and gloom. I believe that wasn't their intention – or maybe it was, I don't know. I truly believe the people of the province are still looking for leadership.

Another thing, we never would have doubled the gas tax. We would have looked at looking at a carbon tax based on polluter-pays principle. There are so many wonderful, modern ways of digging ourselves out of this hole. That's not what has happened.

For those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I can't support this budget. The people of my district have asked me to not support this budget.

I am encouraging all Members of the House here that there's going to be a huge rally of people Saturday here at Confederation Building at 12 o'clock. I know many of my colleagues will go back to their districts, but those who are in the vicinity; I encourage them to join the people and hear what people have to say.

One of the spinoffs I think, Mr. Speaker, of what has happened here is that we have seen the people of Newfoundland and Labrador become active and are insisting that they be heard. They have not lost hope. This government may have lost hope, but they have not lost hope. They're asking for strong leadership to instill hope and to help pull us out of this financial situation that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, have not lost hope.

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

I remind the hon. Member her time has expired.

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

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for the District of Burin – Grand Bank.

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

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

I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House today and speak to Budget 2016 presented by the Minister of Finance mid-April. There's no getting around the fact that this is a difficult budget, Mr. Speaker. None of us on this side of the House are smiling about it. I certainly take absolutely no pleasure in this either.

In years to come, no one on this side will look back at this budget with fond memories. The essence of this budget is to chart a course out of the quagmire that we have inherited from the opposite side, Mr. Speaker.

We are in this position now because of 12 years of poor planning and mismanagement from our predecessors. Year after year after year, this

former administration went wild with the province's chequebook. Even while they were preaching caution and putting a freeze on discretionary spending, the taps were kept open and the money was still flowing freely.

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

**MS. HALEY:** Newfoundland and Labrador had some good years in there, Mr. Speaker, some years where the province was flush in cash from oil royalties and Atlantic Accord payments. Even with the influx of that money there were years and years' worth of increasing deficits. Indeed, for fully half of their years in government, six of the 12 years they were in power, the Conservative government ran up these deficits.

Let me restate now for the record, Mr. Speaker, they presided over the biggest boom in the province's history, the biggest influx of cash we've ever seen, yet they couldn't balance the books half the time. Even with all that black gold they still managed a red bottom line. It's absolutely shameful – absolutely shameful.

They borrowed and they spent and they kicked the can of the public finances down the road again and again. They put us further and further into the red, Mr. Speaker, until the provincial debt is now approaching a staggering \$15 billion. Can you imagine?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How much?

**MS. HALEY:** Fifteen billion dollars; half a million people carrying a \$15 billion debt. Let's do the math here, Mr. Speaker. That's roughly \$30,000 of debt for every man, woman and child in this province.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How much?

**MS. HALEY:** Mr. Speaker, \$30,000 of debt for every man, woman and child. It's crazy, an unacceptable situation; a situation that cannot be allowed to continue.

If their spending patterns went unchecked, we'd be staring at a debt of \$27.3 billion in less than 10 years' time, Mr. Speaker. That's a debt we'd never get out from under, I can assure you. Our province will be crushed under the weight of



that. Our credit rating would sink and we'd be paying even more than we are paying now in interest on that enormous debt.

Money spent on servicing our debt is money that should be going to providing the services and programs required; money that should be spent on looking after our infrastructure needs, money that should be going into a legacy or heritage fund, Mr. Speaker. Future generations would be crushed under the weight of an uncontrolled debt, generations that bear no responsibility whatsoever for this mess. If left unchecked, that would be our legacy to them, to future generations. Not a legacy fund as we should have implemented long before now, but instead a legacy of failure. That's the truth of it.

Our government now has the unpleasant task of undoing the damage and getting this province back on track. Back on track for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians today who deserve a province where they don't have to face every waking day worried about their future, Mr. Speaker. Back on track for seniors who are deserving of a good quality of life after their years of helping grow this province. Back on track for yet unborn generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to follow so they, too, will not feel stung by the backdrop of a prohibitive provincial debt.

For 12 years, Mr. Speaker, the previous administration gave in and took the easy way out. That strategy has resulted in an outright financial disaster, unsustainable spending and reckless borrowing. That's what brought us here. That's what got us here today.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Shame.

**MS. HALEY:** It's shameful, exactly.

Failure to plan and an unwillingness to save for a rainy day, that's what brought us here. All the spending and nothing to show for it – so little to show for it.

It's not like they didn't have the opportunity to address the situation. They had ample opportunity. They had 12 years, Mr. Speaker. They had years and years to make the changes to our spending and to our borrowing. They had time, but they didn't have the political will.

They were more interested in saving their own jobs than in saving the province from this financial crisis. Let's not soft sell this. This is a crisis and crises do not appear just by ignoring them.

Mr. Speaker, the worst part is they were fully cognizant that this crisis would one day come. They could see it growing larger and larger and uglier on the horizon, big enough that there'd be no way for us to steer around it. Their bureaucrats would have been telling them as much each time the budget rolled around. You didn't need to be a financial wizard to see this coming. You didn't need to be clairvoyant to see this coming.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Or a rocket surgeon.

**MS. HALEY:** Or a rocket surgeon. There you go.

That makes the situation so much more disturbing, Mr. Speaker. If the deficit were born of unavoidable catastrophe, there would be room for understanding, but, no, such was not the case. They simply chose to ignore. They chose to spend recklessly. They chose to defer action in favour of scoring political points. That's what they did. It was full steam ahead with no one on watch on a foggy night.

We must set a course where spending is brought into line, while still maintaining the services and programs we need as a people, Mr. Speaker. Our government will do both. One does not have to be sacrificed for the other. We will move ahead until we can provide our province with balanced budgets. While doing so, we will still provide those programs and services to a progressive and caring society.

We know prosperity is possible, Mr. Speaker. If the Opposition was halfway competent when they were in government, we'd be prosperous now. A resource-rich province like ours, there's no excuse for not being prosperous. We will fix this mess and we will do it in a reasonable time.

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

**MS. HALEY:** Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated our commitment to correcting the financial situation. In our very first 120 days in

office we have found savings of \$243 million for 2016-2017. This was simply after a line-by-line review of government expenditures. It will annualize to \$251 million.

Where we see wanton waste we will intervene and eliminate it, Mr. Speaker. When we waste money we aren't wasting government money, we are wasting the people's money. We are wasting the money of individuals who work hard to provide for themselves and their families, individuals who don't mind contributing their fair share to the common good, but not to have it squandered, not to have it wasted. The waste must stop. We will provide the scrutiny necessary to ensure just that.

We have heard much about this budget. I'm getting the calls and the emails. This is indeed a tough budget, but let me tell you it isn't without its positive news for the residents of this province. We have undertaken to provide funding to take care of the most vulnerable members of our society, Mr. Speaker. We have allocated \$76.4 million for helping the vulnerable by creating a new Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement and by enhancing the seniors' tax credit.

We have committed \$500,000 to fund the creation of a seniors' advocacy office. We owe much to our seniors, Mr. Speaker, and we will do our part to ensure they have the resources they need to have the fulfilling lives they so justly deserve.

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

**MS. HALEY:** We're investing \$2 million to make sure rural areas of the province get broadband access, Mr. Speaker. A service that is considered basic in much of the province must be extended to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want to avail of it. This investment will provide a healthy start for reaching that objective.

We're investing \$2 million to fund innovation in the fishery, including \$100,000 to establish a fisheries advisory council, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. HALEY:** It was the fishery that brought us here, and even with a diversified economy, it is the fishery that will keep many of us still here.

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

**MS. HALEY:** Even as we prosecute the traditional fishery in areas of the province, we also need to explore the new possibilities for this. Our flagship industry, Mr. Speaker, and this fund will help drive the move to innovative ideas, such as we are seeing developed in Lord's Cove in my District of Burin – Grand Bank.

We will be investing \$570 million in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. This includes projects in transportation, the health sector, education and housing. This investment will provide Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the infrastructure they need while stimulating the construction industry.

We still have municipalities in this province where needs as basic as water systems are lacking, where during a dry summer wells go dry and water has to be fetched in five-gallon buckets, Mr. Speaker. This happens in communities in my own District of Burin – Grand Bank; this, in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2016. We will work to remedy such situations by being mindful of infrastructure needs.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member representing a Burin Peninsula district, the District of Burin – Grand Bank, I feel I have a reason to be optimistic about the future. We were, for generations, an economic success story in this province. We had employment rates to rival any part of Eastern Canada. But for some years now so much of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, the economy of the Burin Peninsula, has faltered and some would say even collapsed. Now we see signs of rebirth on the Burin Peninsula.

Since being elected, I have spent weeks working with Canada Fluorspar Inc. and other stakeholders on restarting the fluorspar mine in St. Lawrence, Mr. Speaker. That's a venture that has the potential to change the dynamics, not just of St. Lawrence, but the whole surrounding area.

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

**MS. HALEY:** It's that sort of venture that will serve not just the Burin Peninsula well, but will directly impact Newfoundland and Labrador. Now, unemployed and underemployed workers who have nowhere to turn during these economic doldrums will once again be able to take up well-paying jobs, Mr. Speaker; job benefits that will spill over to aid the service industries, helping as much in spinoffs as in direct benefits.

I know the people of St. Lawrence are excited. I'm excited for them, Mr. Speaker. Because of years of starts and stops, the mining industry is on the verge of once again becoming a major player in that area.

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

**MS. HALEY:** The good news doesn't end there. I will continue to work along with my colleague for Placentia West – Bellevue to ensure that Grieg Seafarms NL Ltd. can set up shop in Placentia Bay, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. HALEY:** We are working to mitigate the risk to ensure this exciting venture provides stable employment and benefits for the region for decades to come. It's an industry that will not just benefit a few communities dotted along a shoreline, but the whole of the Burin Peninsula, and indeed the whole province, Mr. Speaker; another industry where the spin-off benefits that accrue are as important as the direct benefits.

If you're a welder, an electrician, a carpenter or a practitioner of any other trade skill, you see hope on the horizon, Mr. Speaker. If you own or work in a convenience store, restaurant, hotel or any other business, you see hope on the horizon. All is not doom and gloom, not for the Burin Peninsula, Mr. Speaker, and certainly not for Newfoundland and Labrador. We will not sit on our hands waiting for oil prices to rebound. We will plan for the future and that future is today.

There's no one happy about this budget. The people who are responsible for bringing us here to this grim point are sitting on the opposite side of the House. They're the same crowd who are heckling us with cries of shame, shame. It is

shameful, Mr. Speaker. That is purely shameful. The fact that they're sitting there blaming us for this mess that they themselves created is the real shame.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, responsible government takes on a whole different meaning than it used to have in this province. Responsible government now means a government that takes the business of running this province seriously. Responsible government now means a government that understands it's unfair to burden future generations with debt perpetuated by unchecked spending and want and waste. Responsible government now means a government that will take off the cruise control, Mr. Speaker, and instead steer us to the prosperity that will come with economic diversification.

We will not stifle where stifling is not warranted. We will continue to roll out plans with measures to move this province forward, Mr. Speaker. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, heirs to a province with a vast wealth of natural resources that would be the envy of so much of the world, deserve and indeed demand no less.

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

**MS. HALEY:** Mr. Speaker, often the best lessons for families, for individuals and indeed for governments can be learned by revisiting the chronicles of history. Go back to the roaring '20s and the Great Depression that followed. Most historians will now tell you they were not independent events.

The attitudes that permeated so much of the '20s, very much begets the terrible depression that followed. Now we are watching a similar scenario play out right here in our own province, Mr. Speaker; years of a carefree attitude towards our finances followed by the financial crisis we are now facing.

It's like the aftermath of a party, Mr. Speaker. The revellers are gone and someone is left to clean the mess. That's what it is, but the commitment is there to clean up that mess because that's the only way forward. Cleaning up someone else's mess is never pleasant work

but if we work together, we can have a province that provides a bright future for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from many people in the district I represent of Burin – Grand Bank. Constituents are welcome to contact my office anytime. I will be there to answer their calls and be available to discuss their concerns. They can reach my office by calling 832-2530.

In closing, again, Mr. Speaker, I, too, like many of my colleagues, would like to take this time to wish my mother a very Happy Mother's Day because without her, I would not be here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Lane):** The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

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

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

It gives me pleasure to follow my caucus colleague, the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, who clearly raised a message that speaks volumes of the people on this side of the House; how we are ready to step up and how we're willing to co-operate and work together to solve the issues that exist in our economy, to work to create jobs; how she talked so eloquently about her district and how she will partner with her neighbour to the north to look at where jobs can be created, to look at partnerships.

These are all key things that we need to do. We do need to have that collaborative relationship. As the Minister Responsible for Business, I'm clearly offering my support and engagement in that opportunity when we look at partnerships with things like Grieg –

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

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** – or when we look at the investments that can be made in tourism with our francophone counterparts in St Pierre and Miquelon, looking at the investments being made in new ferries to St Pierre and Miquelon

and the opportunity that presents when we look at the EU. That is an opportunity for all of us.

When we look at Budget 2016, there's a tremendous amount of money that is being invested: \$570 million in key infrastructure areas such as roads, schools, health care facilities and municipal infrastructure projects. This will all encourage and stimulate economic growth and will also assist in leveraging federal funding. This is all important when you look at building a diversified economy to make sure you have key, critical infrastructure in place.

Mr. Speaker, \$63.7 million for widening and paving of the Trans-Labrador Highway, a critical investment when we look at the infrastructure needs, when we look at the economy in Labrador and the activity that's happening in mining. The Minister of Natural Resources spoke earlier about the activity that's going to be happening with Vale Inco.

There are lots of investments that are happening: \$23 million for the continuation of the Team Gushue Highway; \$13.5 million for vessel refit; \$9.3 million for the completion of the Placentia lift bridge; and there's \$5 million for heavy equipment replacement.

Economic diversification in difficult financial times, we need to really reiterate, encourage and foster that economic climate for the private sector to really step up and make those investments to be competitive and be productive. We have those opportunities because we're strategically positioned.

When we look at the CEDA agreement, when we look at access to the European market and ports that we have in Argentia and St. Anthony to look at doing international shipping, and we look at our airports and our direct link, we have more direct link now to the European marketplace. When we look at the two flights direct to London and to Dublin, this is an incredible opportunity to build on those partnerships. As well, we look at our other airports that are regional and international in Gander, Deer Lake and Stephenville. We look at ways to find those opportunities to grow those links where we can create new commercial activity and new passenger activity.

We're currently doing our exit survey this year so we can have a better understanding of the visitation that's coming into the province from out-of-province travel, where they're spending the money, what experiences they're having. So market research is key as we look at planning for the future when it comes to our tourism and cultural assets and how we formulate ways to get to \$1.6 billion in spends.

The tourism sector represents 18,000 employees and 2,500 businesses. Eighty-two per cent of those are small businesses and they're generating over \$1 billion in revenue. That's incredible when it comes to looking at the job creation and growth and the potential that we have to build upon those strategic clusters. I had the opportunity to be in Bonavista and on the Bonavista Peninsula with my colleague, the MHA for Bonavista, and meet with tourism stakeholders. They're very ambitious about their future this summer.

Next week is going to be Innovation Week and we have lots to celebrate here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The current sector represents just under 4,000 employees and complements a \$1.6 billion revenue for Newfoundland and Labrador, so it's very high-value, high-yield jobs. We, as a government, have continued to commit to venture capital, seed capital funding for tech sector companies. I've had the pleasure to make venture capital announcements for three companies right now that have added new jobs that are getting into markets into the US and other areas.

We're going to continue to foster and encourage companies and investors to help fuel our ecosystem that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador because we do have a lot of assets and a dynamic ecosystem for research and development and for new technology and start-up companies. Whether it would be through the Genesis Centre at Memorial University, whether it would be looking at Common Ground, or looking at the Research and Development Corporation, which has just under \$19 million to help invest in academic and commercial research and development to really help leverage new dollars and foster an innovative economy.

I'm going to have the pleasure next week to address Innovation Week. I invite everybody, all

Members of the House to become involved in the activities that are happening from Canadian manufacturers and exporters, looking at the activity these people have, the impact they have in our communities and our economy. I'm looking forward to going to Harbour Grace and areas looking at the manufacturing activity that's taking place there. Whether it's Restwell Mattresses or other companies, there's a lot of manufacturing that's happening right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Looking at companies in sawmilling and looking at their opportunity, such as companies like Sexton Lumber and what they want to do to grow. There's potential here to create new jobs and to create high value and use research and development and new technologies in ways that can build a stronger economy. That's exactly what we are doing as a government.

What we are doing under the leadership of our Premier, we're looking at ways in which we can fully diversify the economy across all sectors, placing focus on our renewable sectors such as the forestry, and also in agriculture. We're going to have a new agricultural growth strategy. We're working with the Federation of Agriculture, and Budget 2016 provided an additional \$60,000.

We have so much potential, and we saw that co-operation. When the Minister of Municipal Affairs got up earlier he talked about all the opportunity and the willingness to partner when it comes to Crown land. Unlocking assets that we have as a province to create the value, economically that it can create new jobs, new opportunities, because we have food security issues here in the province.

We also have a lot of ability to export when it comes to the cranberry development. We're getting very near the ability of having a cranberry production manufacturing facility here in province versus looking at exporting at the lowest cost. So we are moving forward on that initiative.

We also have a fur farming industry. We have the potential for when we look at the egg industry, and we look at new entrants and the opportunities that exist there. There is a

program, and we encourage people to become involved.

When it comes to trade, we are looking at a multi-year international, business development plan. Right now, we've actually undertaken new research capacity here in the province to look at all the companies. We have a number of companies that are currently exporting or export ready.

While the Minister of Natural Resources is looking at the OTC conference, there was a company, GRI Solutions that was able to ink a deal with Brazil and other South American countries. This is tremendous for companies we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador and the work and the partnerships they have. We're developing leading edge, state-of-the-art sensing and remote technology.

I had a meeting with the Ambassador of Korea yesterday and we talked about our competitive edge. We talked about the innovative opportunities that exist here. We talked about our esteemed post-secondary institution that the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills is leading; leading that edge there when we talk about an innovative strategy and how we can create those opportunities.

This is a government that is working collaboratively. We're looking at the opportunities of how we can get more out of the economy in terms of our entrepreneurs investing, creating new jobs and adding value. This is why we as a government maintained the Small Business Tax Credit at 3 per cent. We have the third most competitive in all the country, and this helps small business develop. We also kept the payroll tax at the threshold that it is which helps businesses ensure they can have a number of employees.

When we look at health care in this province, there's over \$3 billion in Budget 2016 for health care to provide support so people can access the treatment and care they need. There's \$2.5 million for further planning and design of a new facility to replace the Waterford Hospital. There's \$2.6 million for completion of a PET scanner at the Health Sciences Complex expected to be operational in 2016. There are

positive investments in the health sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In fact, I was in Grand Falls-Windsor when the Minister of Transportation and Works and the MHA for Exploits were there. There was a significant investment looking at the hearing loss in our population, looking at genetic research, life sciences, and that's an area where we have a tremendous potential for growth and development. That leading edge research is happening right in Grand Falls-Windsor. We have a lot to celebrate here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have to talk about the successes we have in entrepreneurship in municipalities. Our municipalities in this budget maintain their operating grants and have the ability to look at economic development. We have a regional economic development fund of \$8.5 million. We're also investing in broadband infrastructure of \$2 million.

When you look at the tourism budget we have, it's at \$13 million to help that sector of the economy. We also have \$18.5 million in the budget to give and help develop the strong arts and heritage and cultural industries that we have in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're quite excited about that. We're very proud that funding is in budget 2016-2017.

We have tremendous community investment here in the budget; \$72.7 million in approved projects under Multi-Year Capital Works, Municipal Capital Works and the former Building Canada program. We've got \$20.4 million in order to leverage new federal funding under the New Building Canada program and \$5.5 million to modernize and renovate public rental housing. These improvements will help sustain our housing stock over the long term.

This is a big thing that we saw. We see the ability to partner with the federal government when it comes to social housing and the needs that exist, the demands that exist in social housing. We're very proud to see the federal government maintain its commitment. We're there to support the federal government. The Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is working very diligently on those matters. It's very important

that we make sure that we have adequate housing stock.

As well, I want to point out that as a government – government has the responsibility to ensure that it is doing all it can to look after those that are most vulnerable in society. This is why we have developed the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit, and a program to ensure that seniors, lower-income individuals and families and people with disabilities have supports in budget 2016-2017. We've developed tools to get that message out there.

I want to say there are instances where seniors in budget 2016-2017 – such as a single senior that's on GIS, that's receiving \$16,000 – will get an Enhanced Seniors' Benefit of \$1,313. They will also qualify for the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement; and federally, because they are on GIS and on that level, they will get another \$947. This is a significant amount more this year than what they received last year.

So there are good things in the budget. We have to look at across governments municipally, provincially, federally about what the overall programs, what the overall offer is across governments and what the impact is. We also have to balance our social programs and our social spending to make sure we're providing services to the people of the province. That is really critical and at the core of any government.

We also have to develop economic policy that makes sure that we're developing the economy, we're creating all of the opportunities that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador to grow and we're willing to do the hard work here in Newfoundland and Labrador and, as a government, to make decisions that are in the best interest of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As we've seen on the opposite side, we've seen decisions that had spent exceptional amounts of money that did not put public money to best use. That did not save for that rainy day. That had \$25 million in offshore oil royalties and Atlantic Accord money, made decisions to give the rich a tax break when oil was at peak and that cost the Treasury \$4 billion.

At a time when you're past peak and it's raining, government should have saved. The past administration should have saved for a rainy day. They could have made better decisions and we would not be in the situation to have to make these difficult but necessary decisions in order to ensure that we build a stronger tomorrow for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This is core to what we're doing. We're working very hard, as a government. We're going to work with all of our colleagues here. Everybody has to be part of the solution in order to solve the fiscal situation.

I would appreciate from colleagues opposite that they put out the accurate information when it comes to our seniors, when it comes to the programs that exist because the misinformation that is being spread is not helpful to seniors. It's not helpful to people on lower income. It's not helpful to people with disabilities to be spreading misinformation about the programs that do exist to help them. Putting people who are vulnerable in society in a position where they have the wrong information creates fear and unnecessary stress where it doesn't need to be.

We all need to be responsible, as Members of this House of Assembly, to ensure we're working to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador is well positioned for growth and the opportunities, and that we're providing the services adequate to meet the needs of our population.

I want to say that I see tremendous opportunity in budget 2016-2017 when it comes to looking at the opportunity for our fishery, working with my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, to look at and serving on the All-Party Committee for shrimp, looking at the seafood advisory council and also looking to make significant investment into the fishery here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Also, we work collaboratively with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture when it comes to looking at the aquaculture assessments and looking at the economic opportunities.

We also see tremendous opportunity in our tourism, our cultural and artistic industries and heritage industries, and that's why we've invested and continue to invest in them. I'm looking forward to working with all of the artists

in Newfoundland and Labrador as we develop the status of the artists and engage with them. I've already met with a number of them. My colleague, the parliamentary secretary and MHA for Terra Nova, is going to be actively engaged on the ground and encouraged with what we can do there.

We have so much opportunity to look at regional development, to look at innovation and to look at trade and really grow our economy and create jobs right here in Newfoundland and Labrador and not focus on the cyclical trends of oil, that we can budget based on other factors and ensure that what we do as a government is responsible and is sustainable, that we're making decisions for the long-term. And that's where we get into multi-year planning, multi-year budgeting, doing things that make sense, like the early tendering that the Minister of Transportation and Works has put forward.

We were elected on November 30, all of us, as Members. As ministers, we've been around only since December 14 and we've done a tremendous amount of work for the people of the province, and we're just getting started because we have a lot more to do and we're going to get this done.

Under the leadership of this Premier, under the Finance Minister, under the Cabinet and under the caucus here, this government will make Newfoundland and Labrador a great province, and have a stronger tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and take a few minutes and talk about Budget 2016. But I want to start, Mr. Speaker, by recognizing the ongoing tragedy in Fort McMurray. Like many others in this House – and I guess everybody in this House – there are many people in my district that are affected by the wildfires in Fort McMurray. I just want to reassure our constituents that are in Fort McMurray that our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Mr. Speaker, just on April 11 in my district, there was another fire that caused another great tragedy with the destruction of Quinlan's processing plant in Bay de Verde. When the Finance Minister started her speech back on April 14, she spoke about the resilience of a people and compared the tragedy in Bay de Verde to many of the things that this province is going through when it comes to devastation and remaining united and community helping community and neighbour helping neighbour.

Albeit, Mr. Speaker, that this budget is certainly a difficult one – and I've heard many concerns from my constituents. I can assure you, it doesn't fall on deaf ears. We realize that the decisions we've had to make in the early days of this government are not easy, but we need to get on the right track. We need to get back so that we preserve a future for our children. We just cannot keep passing the buck.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to come back to that. I'll just talk a minute about my district. The resilience in Bay de Verde is amazing. As a government, we're going to be there for the people of Bay de Verde, no different than the previous administration was there last year for the people of Cottlesville.

The MHA for the district is representing his district quite well actually, Mr. Speaker. He's working for the people of Cottlesville. We can assure him that there was money in Budget 2016 for us to step up again this year to help the people in Cottlesville.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things in my district this year that I would like to highlight. First of all, this year will mark the 150th anniversary of the successful landing of the transatlantic cable in Heart's Content. It happened on July 27, 150 years ago. I invite everybody in the province this summer to take some time and visit Heart's Content during that week and see what is known as the eighth wonder of the world.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would remiss if I didn't point out that this coming summer the Carbonear Volunteer Fire Department will mark their 175th anniversary. So again, Mr. Speaker, a major milestone for that community.



Mr. Speaker, when we talk of infrastructure there are lots of great commitments, but I'll come back to infrastructure on a greater scale a little bit later. When we look at infrastructure throughout my district, our government committed in Budget 2016 to the completion of the Carbonear long-term care facility. We have secured funding for road upgrades on Route 80 in Winterton, bridge replacement in Sibleys Cove and work on the Veteran's Memorial Highway. That's one of the busiest roadways in the province outside the Trans-Canada Highway.

Mr. Speaker, I'm fortunate. My district is represented by two Members of Parliament, Minister Foote and Ken McDonald. I can assure you that working with both Members of Parliament, we are working hard to ensure that as a province we work with our federal counterparts to bring benefits not only to our province – which I can assure you Minister Foote and the other six MPs are doing a great job with – but specifically to our districts in their ridings. I'm sure the other Members of Parliament are doing the same for their ridings along with their MHA counterparts.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to move to the fishery for a minute and talk about this very important industry. In my mandate letter from the Premier it was very clear of the commitment he has to the fishery and the commitment this government has to the fishery. The fishery is what brought us to this province and it is one of the bright spots on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, one thing I have found with the fishery and this portfolio is that it often transcends party lines. We're working on a committee now, an all-party committee, with regards to the LIFO policy and our desire to have that policy eliminated. Just this week the All-Party Committee met with the federal minister's advisory panel. I can assure you we will move forward to protect our inshore shrimp fishery.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Cape St. Francis is a great advocate for the fishery. Over the last little while he's raised a couple of petitions. I'd just like to quickly address two of the issues that he raised. One of the issues was around the recreational fishery. I can assure the Member on every occasion I've had to speak to Minister

Tootoo or Minister Foote it's an issue that we raised. It's actually raised in my mandate letter from the Premier.

We take it one further. Just a week or so ago, I had the opportunity to meet with tour boat operators in the province and we talked about the tourism aspect of fishery. There's a role for tourism in our fishery, all respecting the commercial viability of our fishery with that being said, Mr. Speaker.

The Member also raised, today in a petition, vessel size. I think there's full agreement in this province, and even within our Members of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, that vessel size is an issue that needs to be addressed before there are more tragedies. We saw a tragedy last year with regard to vessel size. Again, it's a very important issue and one that we're committed to pursuing with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, the fishing industry in this province last year was \$1.2 billion; \$161 million of that being aquaculture and \$738 million in landings. Those are new dollars. Dollars that are paid to harvesters and that's money that circulates through all rural communities. We see that, and it adds to the commitment of this government with regard to the fishery.

One of my mandates as minister is to form a fisheries advisory council. This council is going to put a lens and specifically take a hard look at cod recovery and how we face that challenge. It was very pleasing to see – it'll be two weeks ago tomorrow the FFAW and a number of processors in this province formed a fisheries advisory or groundfish advisory council of their own to proceed into recovering the ground fishery in a manner that will benefit all of the people of our province.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2016 also identifies \$420,000 for oceanographic research. This research is going to be used to help expand our aquaculture industry, an industry with so much potential in our future. When we look at the South Coast – and I know there's interest with the oceanographic research on the Southwest Coast of the province where there are lots of opportunity for expansion, as also in Placentia Bay.

Mr. Speaker, also in Budget 2016 we were able to budget \$2 million over the next two years for a new Seafood Innovation and Transition Program. This program will look at innovation in our industry, but there will be a lens applied to transition. We're hoping to leverage this fund with other partners to help our harvesters and our processors adapt to a recovering ground fishery. There will be a lens on this fund that will specifically look at transition for harvesters and processors, whether it's in handling, harvesting and many other aspects of a new ground fishery.

Mr. Speaker, next year will mark 25 years since the collapse of the ground fishery. When we look back 25 years, many things have changed. The world market for cod has changed. We're going to have to adapt and adapt quickly to satisfy the needs of that market.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, Budget 2016 and our fisheries advisory council – Budget 2016 commits \$200,000 over the next two years for the establishment and running of this council. I very much look forward to the Independent Appointments Commission getting up and running so we can get the appointments done to the fisheries advisory council and we can start the important work and research into a recovering groundfish.

Mr. Speaker, Member's opposite in their role of criticizing – I respect that role, I was fortunate enough to spend a year in Opposition. There are a lot of things that the Opposition are not being clear with when it comes to the budget. The Member for St. John's Centre earlier this afternoon said there was no money in the budget for infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, there's \$570 million committed to infrastructure in this province in 2016-2017. That's half a billion dollars that this government has committed to infrastructure throughout our province.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, that money will be leveraged with Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, some of the things we've been able to achieve in our short time in government with the government in Ottawa – there was a restriction on roads.

Previously, federal infrastructure road money needed a 10,000 car count before the federal government would become involved. Our minister and our Premier, we've negotiated with our counterparts in Ottawa for the elimination of that policy. Now we have the Government of Canada willing to invest 50 per cent in all of our roads, no matter where they are in this province.

A commitment to the Trans-Labrador Highway; when you think that it's 2016 and there are parts of our province where we're talking about paving the road for the first time, Mr. Speaker, our government is commitment to infrastructure in this province. We're committed to working with our colleagues in Ottawa to ensure that we get whatever we deserve.

You look at things over the past years when it comes to infrastructure in our communities. We were able to maintain, even in these tough times, the operating grants for our small municipalities and municipalities in general. Mr. Speaker, \$625 million total investment in municipal infrastructure this year.

We were able to – and I think it would be the first time in history, early tendering for roadwork. We see roadwork already happening in this province. That's unheard of. My past experience with roadwork has been September, October and November just pushing it out and piecemeal. Mr. Speaker, the commitment we've been able to do in Budget 2016 won't go unnoticed.

Mr. Speaker, as a person from rural Newfoundland and Labrador and as a father –

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

**MR. CROCKER:** – I look at numbers; \$950 million this year in interest on our debt. Mr. Speaker, \$950 million in interest, that's before we do anything. In the same breath, that's \$100 million more than we're able to provide for education.

Where do we go? Do we continue to download this on the next generation? I'm not satisfied to do that, Mr. Speaker. I have no intention of taking my seat and pushing off debt into the future.

Mr. Speaker, it took us 66 years to get to a \$12 billion debt. It will take us 71 years, five more years, to get to a \$24 billion debt. With a \$24 billion debt, if left unchecked, this province will then spend \$2 billion a year on interest. Just imagine; that's more than twice of what we provide for education. That's not something I'm willing to be a part of, in no way shape or form to take an interest bill for \$2 billion a year. You know, \$29 billion with no rainy day fund – and I've heard Members opposite say our legacy fund is Muskrat Falls. I'll leave it at that.

To know where you're going, you've got to know where you've been. Just in 2015, the provincial government recognizes that a decline in oil prices has put a great strain on our revenue and we need to adjust our course to meet the realities ahead. This situation we find ourselves in is a temporary one – it was a temporary one. But our problems aren't temporary. Debt is not temporary.

The previous administration treated our finances as temporary. They stand up day after day and talk about what their five-year plan was, the five-year plan they put in place. The five-year plan they ran on, the Third Party ran on, the five-year plan that we ran on, because on September 28 we asked for an update on the finances of the province and we weren't given one. So we erred on caution.

It's interesting, the projections of the five-year plan. In 2016-2017, oil was projected to be \$71 a barrel; 2017-18, \$80 a barrel; 2018-19, \$84 a barrel; 2019-20, \$87 a barrel. That was the five-year plan. That was the plan, and a temporary one. It was treated as temporary; it was temporary. Well, temporary is not good enough.

We need a fiscal plan that's not based on temporary or a wish list that oil was going to trade this year at \$71 a barrel. We've accepted the reality of the world economy, Mr. Speaker, and we budgeted oil at \$40 a barrel this year. That's where we've budgeted it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's leadership.

**MR. CROCKER:** You're right, that is leadership.

Members opposite criticize us for the unfortunate closure of the Harbour Grace courthouse; \$29 billion in revenue, Mr. Speaker, and the Harbour Grace courthouse fell down. No investment in the Harbour Grace courthouse, no investment.

Members raise multigrading; well I can assure Members opposite that from rural Newfoundland and Labrador where I came from, our teachers have, in my memory, always dealt with multigrading. Then to question the ability of our educators to offer multigrade education, our educators, Mr. Speaker, are some of the best in the world I'd say.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** The best in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is getting short. The Member from St. John's Centre this afternoon, there are a couple of things I have to bring up. She compared us to Alberta. It's not a fair comparison. No debt load. We have a debt load, Alberta has a heritage fund.

She said the Alberta budget was different than ours. Yeah, it sure was. Our budget maintained our credit ratings. The Alberta budget got Alberta credit-rating downgrades. So that's where the Alberta budget brought us.

The Member opposite talked about a carbon tax, user pay. Well, the user is the same consumer that the Member was referring to all day in her remarks.

Mr. Speaker, my time is out for right now. I'm sure we have lots of budget bills coming up in the coming weeks and I'll have another opportunity. I would like to thank you for the opportunity this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Osborne):** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

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

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

Before I get to my part of the Budget Speech, I'd like to get a little bit of housekeeping out of the way. I know this weekend is Mother's Day so I'd like to wish my own mother, Linda King, a happy Mother's Day. Oh, and to the Minister of Fisheries and all the other mothers here in the province. A special Mother's Day wish to my Aunt Deanna Edwards and Aunt Nancy Edwards, who are a big part of my life.

Last week when I got up and spoke to the private Member's resolution, I forgot to mention something very good that's going on in the district on July 1. It kind of gets back to the budget a little bit. The New Curtain Theatre, run by Geoff Adams, is putting on a production this summer called a *Soldier's Heart*. That's out in George's Brook, Milton. I very much look forward to that production.

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

**MR. KING:** That's going to be around July 1. That goes along with the Trinity Pageant which my friend opposite mentioned earlier.

I got up here to speak, the last speaker before we adjourn for the weekend, because it's been bothering me all week. There have been attacks based on the town of Catalina – you're losing your library – directed towards me by the Member for Cape St. Francis and the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. They say you haven't done anything for the town of Catalina. Well, let me give you a history about the town of Catalina and the previous PC government.

I was talking to the deputy mayor of Trinity Bay North, which Trinity Bay North is composed of Little Catalina, Catalina, Port Union and Melrose. It amalgamated first in 2004, later picking up Little Catalina in 2010. We are a very strong community, a very proud community.

The Joseph Clouter Memorial Library, which was the first library outside the overpass, which was founded in 1937 – it was a big part of my life and still is a big part of my life. It's held in a municipal building so when they say it's going to close right away – foolishness.

I had a conversation with the Deputy Mayor of Trinity Bay North yesterday –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They are not listening.

**MR. KING:** No, they're not listening. They only talk when they want to talk, and listen when they want to listen.

I had a conversation with the Deputy Mayor of Trinity Bay North yesterday and we're going to work on a solution to keep that open. I'm all about listening.

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

**MR. KING:** It's a big part – it's a historical part of our community and a vital part of our community, so I'm committed to keeping that library open.

But the previous four years, the Town of Catalina in the municipality of Trinity Bay North was ignored by the previous Member and the previous government.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's shameful.

**MR. KING:** It is shameful.

In 2012, Catalina Elementary was on the chopping block. Now, that's a school that was opened in 1990, a modern school, a lot of money invested into it. In 2012, they were going to shut it down. Shut down, b'ys, let's move everyone to Bonavista, just shut it down.

The community fought for that school. Today's Minister of Education fought for that school, I fought for that school and I'll still fight every day for the people of my district.

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

**MR. KING:** But what did the previous government and the previous minister do? Work behind the scenes. I've got it on good authority that he worked the scenes, worked behind, talking to the school boards, saying close it down and move to Bonavista. Now, that's shameful. That's the type of commitment we got from the previous government in the Municipality of Trinity Bay North – shocking.

Let me tell you about the OCI plant in Port Union, another part of Trinity Bay North. Igor ravaged that building in 2010.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We caused Igor?

**MR. KING:** You didn't cause Igor, but you didn't step up to the plate to help solve the problem, did you?

In 2012, took everything out of it. The previous government didn't stand up and fight for that plant. No. But you look at the Minister of Fisheries now, in his hometown, he's standing up and fighting for that. So the damage done to Trinity Bay North, not a thing, not a mention.

In Bay de Verde we got good support, so b'ys when they talk about Catalina, Port Union or Trinity Bay North, it is absolutely ridiculous that they would actually bring it up. They should be ashamed.

The Sir William Ford Coaker Foundation – talk about leveraging government money. They had an opportunity to leverage \$100,000 of federal funding. Now, that's last year. They couldn't get \$60,000 from the provincial government to leverage that funding so they got nothing at all. It's shameful.

Do you know what happened? Mr. Speaker, \$44,000 went to the trail association, yet two people campaigned against me.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Did they win?

**MR. KING:** No, they didn't. They weren't successful.

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

**MR. KING:** The former premier likes to talk down to people who don't agree with them, such as our young MHA which is disgraceful terminology. It's a shame. He wanted to lecture me on the Bonavista hospital, talking about X-rays being gone and laundry being gone. I've got a meeting with Minister Haggie the week after next, with key stakeholders. That's going to be the topic of discussion.

What the former premier won't talk about are the four doctors that left from January to March of last year that weren't replaced. The reason why they left is because they had their incentives taken from them in a rural area. They weren't replaced. Where was the big uproar

then? Where was the Bonavista hospital then? Where was it?

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

**MR. KING:** Yes, protecting their buddies. You know that savings was supposed to be a little shy of \$100,000. Do you know what it actually cost with locums, flying them in from Ontario and bringing them in from different parts of the province and putting them up in the nice hotel in Bonavista?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** How much?

**MR. KING:** Over \$500,000. So that's your Catalina library there plus many more.

Do you know what I did? Within a month of being sworn in, I met with Eastern Health to discuss the issue. That went silent on those people.

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

**MR. KING:** Talking about the Bonavista hospital again –

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

**MR. KING:** Well, yes.

Mr. Speaker, \$500,000 was budgeted for the Bonavista hospital for improvements in 2014. Guess what happened in 2015?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What happened?

**MR. KING:** It got cancelled.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Oh no.

**MR. KING:** Yes.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Who cancelled it?

**MR. KING:** In 2015, the previous government. Now, we can't go doing the blame game all the time, but I'm just presenting the facts as they lie.

They say good intentions are a pathway straight to you know where. I had good intentions when I went to the NAPE rally Monday past. I was invited by local NAPE leadership.

What came out of that was the friends of the NDP decided they were going to ambush me there. They put a camera in my face. When I talked about how good I am and how proactive I am working with the communities, they said the College of the North Atlantic is closing down, is it?

So they had a big rally planned for last Saturday – oh, save the CNA. Do you know what that rally turned into? Another budget protest, because the facts came out. Mr. Speaker, here's what happened and here's what I've been doing since I've been elected.

Between 2013 and 2015 enrolment went from 120 students down to 65 – 120 students, where it should be, down to 65. Do you know what left the campus? Office administration when the demand was still there. Adult Basic Education was privatized, taken out of the school and it's cost us more money ever since. That's more money for the Catalina library, isn't it?

They took out half a plumbing program. There were 12 students in Bonavista. They decided they were going to take the other half. No offence to the Minister of Transportation and Works, but they decided they were going to take half, put them in Grand Falls, spend \$400,000 on infrastructure that we already had, there was no wait-list, and move it out of their so we had 60.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** So where did the money go?

**MR. KING:** That's our libraries.

They got rid of the wildlife management program. Also, what happened, we lost the Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism, over \$10,000. Now the Bonavista Institute for Cultural Tourism was the centre of excellence for tourism in this province. The Harris Centre out of MUN loved it. It helped people during the shoulder seasons of the tourism industry, gave them the appropriate training, grew our economy. Because of \$10,000, which they couldn't get, they said all right, we're going to get rid of that.

We had some great meetings with the Bonavista Area Chamber of Commerce and the Minister of

Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development was out. I'm going to work with him and I'm going to work with the federal minister, Judy Foote, to try to get some money to get that institute up and running again.

So when the buddies of the NDP, NAPE, Jerry Earle and them, said: oh, the College of the North Atlantic's closing down. The College of the North Atlantic in Bonavista is closing down. Well, I said, no it's not, and here's what I've been doing.

When I got elected on November 30, I met with the new manager of the College of the North Atlantic immediately in December. We came up with a plan to grow the college. He's new to it and he wants to see it grow. I view that school as an economic driver for the District of Bonavista.

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

**MR. KING:** What I've done is I have put together an advisory council of key stakeholders in the district that will keep that college open. I have the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills' support to do that.

Who are these key stakeholders? Well, we have representatives from the Town of Bonavista; the Town of Trinity Bay North; a representative for Tourism Elliston and the Sealers Memorial; and the past manager of the College of the North Atlantic. I've got the chair and vice-chair of the local Chamber of Commerce, and I've got the current manager and myself. I think that's a pretty strong team to bring to the plate, right?

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

**MR. KING:** So that's called being proactive. The former Member wasn't even reactive.

My time is winding down here, but I'm going to talk to one more. We look at rural broadband Internet. In the District of Bonavista I've been getting emails since I've been elected about where's our rural Internet? I talked to the minister about it and he said do you know what? As an MHA you reach out to Bell, you call Mark Duggan at Bell and you set everything up. Why hasn't that been done over the previous few years?

I'm going to take advantage of the \$2 million we're putting in here, the \$500 million that's put in by the federal government, and leverage broadband Internet for our area. We need it. It's vital to the tourism industry. It's vital to people who want to utilize the Internet without taking up a data package, because it's right for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in the rural areas.

I've got another 20 minutes to speak, so I'm just going to wind it down here. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having that 20 minutes to talk. I am committed –

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** (Inaudible) all sides.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**MR. KING:** Thank you for the protection, Mr. Speaker.

I think I have might have gotten the lead role in the Trinity Pageant after this one. I'm just going to leave it at that.

I'm going to get another 20 minutes to speak. I'm going to talk about what's in the budget for the district, how the budget is going to positively affect the people in my district and what our plans are for long term. The next time I speak for 20 minutes it's going to be about the fishery as well because the fishery is vital to the people of the District of Bonavista.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time.

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

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

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

Prior to closing, I think on behalf of everybody in the House, and I'm sure we all say a happy Mother's Day to all the mothers out there.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I would move, seconded by the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It's been moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Against?

This House now 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.