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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We welcome to our public galleries today representatives from the St. Lawrence Town Council and the Canada Fluorspar Inc.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also welcome members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers: their board president Glenda Webber, Annette Johns and Lisa Crockwell.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Baie Verte – Green Bay, Stephenville – Port au Port, Terra Nova, Conception Bay South and Topsail – Paradise.

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in this hon. House today and recognize three individuals who live in the Central region.

March 5, 2017, was a stormy day in Grand Falls-Windsor. Snow was falling and the wind was strong. At around 12 p.m., Tyrone Lush, originally from Triton, and his wife Nicole Lush were driving on Lincoln Road when they spotted a woman lying in the snow.

Without hesitation, Mr. Lush jumped out of his vehicle and rushed to the woman's side. Finding the woman unresponsive and with no pulse, Tyrone started CPR while Nicole called for an ambulance. They were soon joined by another passerby, Mike Perry, who also offered to help. For approximately seven minutes they took turns administering CPR until the paramedics arrived and were able to take over.

These three individuals were the right people, in the right place, at the right time, and with the right training.

So I ask all hon. Members of this House to please join me in thanking Tyrone Lush, Nicole Lush and Mike Perry, for stepping up, when needed, and saving a life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, March 8, marked International Women's Day and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport announced their list of Canada's Most Influential Women for 2016. Kippens native and Paralympic gold medalist Katarina Roxon was named to this prestigious list, alongside some of Canada's top female athletes.

The organization's list highlights the leadership and inspiration that women bring to sport and physical activity in Canada. Katarina first made waves on a local level at the Regional Aquatic Centre in Stephenville and has since gone on to make national, provincial and international headlines through her achievements.

Though her fame has continued to grow here at home and across Canada, Katarina has never lost sight of her roots. Demonstrating her commitment to her community, she continues to train in her hometown and also acts as the assistant coach of the local Aqua Aces Swim Club, inspiring a new generation of swimmers.

Promoting healthy living and the importance of sport to both youth and adults, Katarina has been invited to speak at various engagements across the country. She is a true role model and inspiration to us all.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Katarina for this well-deserved honour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Royal Canadian Legion has a long history in this province, being here since 1926. That is why I have great pleasure rising in this hon. House today to pay tribute to the members and volunteers of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 48.

For more than 55 years, the members and volunteers of Branch 48 have dedicated their time, energy and talents to promote the interests and benefits of veterans and their families, the community and those who have served this province and country with pride and dignity.

On January 28, 2017, I had the pleasure of attending the first ever Honour and Awards Recognition Ceremony held in my home community of Port Blandford. During the event, Legionnaires honoured the contributions of 26 of its founding fathers and 47 individual members receiving service pins, medals and awards.

Special recognition went to Mr. Sidney Matthews and Mrs. Monnie Hann, as each received their Lifetime Achievement Award and 55-year service pin.

Congratulations to Legion President Bramwell Churchill and committee members Phoebe White, Lynette Pardy and Anne Harris.

As a long-standing volunteer organization, I wish to commend Branch 48 for its leadership and support of veterans and the community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, recently I had the pleasure of attending the Salvation Army Conception Bay South Corps Volunteer Appreciation Night. The event featured an evening of song, prayer and good food in thanking the volunteers who helped throughout the year.

The third Annual Riley Mercer Memorial Toy Drive was held in December at the Long Pond Citadel. This year's toy drive surpassed all expectations and was a complete success.

Today the CBS Corps is led by Majors Lorne and Barbara Pritchett who has been with the CBS Corps since July 1, 2011, and who play an active role in our community. The congregation remains vibrant throughout the town helping families and individuals in need.

They are involved and contribute to the CBS/Paradise food bank, school lunch program within CBS schools, and have a thrift store at the Villa Nova Plaza in CBS.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give a special thank you to the Salvation Army Corps in Long Pond for their continued support in our community, their Christmas spirit, strong faith and hard work throughout the year to help so many unfortunate people, and I want to commend them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to acknowledge Mrs. Helen Hood, who is celebrating her birthday today. Mrs. Hood was born to Alfred and Lillian Worrall, attended Prince of Wales College in St. John's and worked in the family grocery store; their business was on New Gower Street in St. John's. She married Daniel Hood in 1940 and, together, they had three children.

Mrs. Hood was born with a hearing impairment. She took elocution lessons for her speech and was a stickler for proper English grammar. She had learned several poems which she was well known to be able to recite for entertainment around the city, and I've enjoyed listening to her poems myself.

Being very active, Mrs. Hood drove until she reached the age of 90 years old. She enjoyed a very serious game of bridge until she was 96 years old, when her sight began to fail her.

Mrs. Hood currently resides at Glenbrook Lodge where she enjoys the company and the care that she receives. Celebrating her birthday today are her son, daughter, four grandsons and four great-granddaughters.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in wishing Mrs. Helen Hood a very happy 102nd birthday.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge the anniversary of one of the most tragic days in the history of our province. On March 12, 2009, Cougar Helicopter Flight 491 fell into the cold Atlantic Ocean as it was en route to the oil fields off our East Coast. Of the two crew and 16 passengers on board, just one person survived.

An anniversary such as this reminds us of the risk that men and women face as they work offshore in a variety of industries in Newfoundland and Labrador. But it also serves as a reminder that while we have come a long way in mitigating those risks, we must also and always be vigilant and seek opportunities to improve safety.

The anniversary of the crash of Cougar Flight 491 also allows us to reflect on the tremendous and unselfish work that our first responders do when they come to the aid of those in desperate need in one of the most difficult and harshest and more unpredictable environments on earth. That courage was on display again earlier this week as members of the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Coast Guard were dispatched to rescue five men who had to abandon a fishing vessel that was disabled in 10-metre waves.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a memorial service for those who passed away as a result of the

crash of Cougar Flight 491 on Sunday at 7 p.m. at Corpus Christi Church on Waterford Bridge Road here in St. John's. I encourage all residents to attend in remembrance of those who perished and to offer condolences to the families and friends that must deal with their loss every day.

In closing, I ask all my hon. colleagues to join me in a moment of silence as we reflect on those that lost their lives eight years ago.

Thank you.

(Moment of silence.)

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

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

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement today. The 12th of March will always be remembered as a tragic day in our province's history, when Cougar Flight 491 went down offshore from our province. The helicopter was travelling to an offshore platform where so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians continue to travel on a daily basis.

Sunday's anniversary is a sombre reminder that with all the benefits which come from our sea, so come risk, tragedy and loss associated with working in the offshore.

Mr. Speaker, we need to be always diligent of our safety in our offshore environment. Although we have come a long way in mitigating risks, the cold Atlantic is a very dangerous work environment. All the men and women who risk their safety to work offshore deserve our deepest respect.

My colleagues on this side of the House wish to join the government in remembering all those who were involved March 12, 2009, including those who lost their lives. And we, as well, send along our deepest, heartfelt condolences to the families of those who were tragically lost on that day.

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. Because of this disaster that occurred eight years ago, it's important that we recognize it and encourage people to attend the service. I notice the Premier mentioned safety in the offshore; because of the seriousness of this event, it is important to note, Premier, that two recommendations of the Wells inquiry have not been implemented; a permanent ban on night flights and the creation of a safety and environment agency separate from the C-NLOPB. I ask you to look into those recommendations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to announce a \$17 million dollar repayable loan to Canada Fluorspar Inc. Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: This funding will assist with the reactivation of the St. Lawrence fluorspar mine, which is an exciting venture that will benefit the community, the region and the province.

This financial support will help diversify our economy and strengthen rural development on the Burin Peninsula and the province as a whole. It will create upwards of 1,000 person years of employment in the construction phase. In addition, approximately 3,000 person years of employment in mining and milling is anticipated through the first 12 operating years.

Later today, I will be tabling documentation to transfer the funding from the Contingency Reserve to the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation. While construction has been ongoing at the site, this funding will assist the company in advancing the project.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Canada Fluorspar, the Town of St. Lawrence and all involved in this significant milestone that will help strengthen and diversify our provincial economy.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement. We join with government in congratulating all involved in this very worthwhile project. It's one that will benefit the region and the province, as the minister said. The project has been in the works for some time, with cash for a \$17 million dollar government loan to assist development set aside back in 2011.

I'm pleased to see the corporate partners and investors are finally ready to proceed. It's been a long process, and I'm glad to see it moving forward. We were committed to this, and happy to see the current government following through with the plan. With the potential for 300 to 400 construction jobs in the beginning, going to 200 full-time once up and running, this will have a huge impact for people in the area. And hopefully locals will indeed be hired for this project, as reports in the media recently state otherwise, as concerns are raised by residents in the area.

We wish the company and local residents all the best, and by working together we can ensure a successful and profitable project.

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.

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This mine is good news for the region and I'm sure the people will appreciate the addition of several hundred jobs over the next 12 years; however, given the negative imagine of fluorspar mining in the province, it would have been helpful to have an update on what health and safety measures are in place for the new mine to prevent the occupational diseases of the past. I'm sure there are, but it would be good to know what they are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, March is National Social Work Month, and I rise today in this hon. House to pay tribute to our province's social workers.

The theme of this year's National Social Work Month is Social Work: Rooted in Diversity – Cultivating Change and the focus is on celebrating the diversity of the social work profession and the valuable contributions social workers make in enhancing the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities in our society.

Mr. Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are more than 1,500 registered social workers who are committed to improving the health, safety and social well-being of residents through direct service delivery, health promotion and providing social programs.

Throughout the month, social workers are engaged in many professional development networking events in all regions of the province to promote and celebrate their profession. This provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of social work in governments, organizations and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing social workers throughout our

province, the rest of Canada and indeed the world for their ongoing dedication and support in the delivery of professional social work services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On behalf of my colleagues here in the Official Opposition, I thank the over 1,500 registered social workers in this province. I also wish to encourage all those who are in Memorial's Faculty of Social Work as they prepare to embark on a sometimes challenging but very rewarding career.

Social workers help us in all sorts of ways. They provide members of society with direct supports, they help us with our personal challenges and health promotion and they also organize programs and services. Having witnessed first-hand the work they do, I can attest they are truly special people.

Social workers support all ages, all genders, all families and all members of society. For their dedication and commitment, we thank them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fifteen hundred registered social workers: a love army of brilliant problem solvers, change makers, lifesavers, working with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Often, as front-line workers, they have to work with policies that are weakened because of poor budget decisions, but they continue to work in spite of that, helping people to navigate often complex systems, advocating for change, empowering

and strengthening people, helping them live fully.

Thank you social workers of Newfoundland and Labrador. Bravo! Keep pushing us in this House to do the right thing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

According to Statistics Canada, unemployment levels since the Liberals have come into office are the highest they've been in years.

I ask the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation: What specific actions have you taken to help boost business confidence?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just earlier in the House of Assembly I announced that government has issued a repayable loan to Canada Fluorspar that's going to create –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – 3,000 person years of employment. As well, we have a very competitive small business tax rate in Newfoundland and Labrador at 3 per cent. If we look at our tourism sector, there are 18,000 jobs for over 2,000 businesses here in the economy. We have in *The Way Forward* document, our vision for the province, strategic ways to grow and look at accelerated companies.

We're actually looking at specific companies and finding ways to scale them up because there are companies here who are invested, where they can adapt technology and productivity analysis to create more jobs, create inward investment and look at export as well.

So there's a tremendous amount happening of which we're taking action, working with my colleagues in Natural Resources and Fisheries and Land Resources and other departments so that we're creating jobs here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, non-resident investment is slated to decrease by 57 per cent this year and will continue to decrease until 2020-2021. I appreciate the minister's little history lesson, but what is your government doing new or differently to attract new investment from outside our province?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very happy to answer that question. It was just a few weeks ago that the Premier and the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources announced thousands and thousands of acres where we're going to unlock Crown land for agricultural use, for new economic development

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – that was not achieved or done by the government previously. We've also announced initiatives that are going to create construction jobs here in this province, such as the long-term care facility in Corner Brook, the Western Memorial hospital.

In last year's budget, there was a significant announcement of infrastructure. When you talk

to the Minister of Transportation and Works by getting tendering contracts out earlier, it's creating more work. We've had more roadwork done, better value, it's good for the economy.

We're good financial managers, we understand that there are financial strains and challenges, and we're making best use of the financial resources that we have to create jobs and get best value. We're good financial managers.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada recently reported that Newfoundland and Labrador is headed into a recession – the only province in the entire country. We know from the minister's unusual Twitter feed that he believes a long line at a coffee shop indicates a strong economy, but the Conference Board disagrees.

Minister, what actions are you taking to help take Newfoundland and Labrador out of recession?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know the track record of the previous administration when they had \$25 billion of oil royalties and the Atlantic Accord, and the direction they set this province by their overspending and their poor fiscal management, their inability to be courageous and make change legislatively.

We've seen where the Minister of Municipal Affairs when he was responsible for government procurement, brought in a new procurement act; when, in the former administration, their hallmark piece of legislation, Bill 1, was their procurement thing that they let die on the Order Paper.

We changed the procurement act to unlock opportunities, unlock for local value, look at the social value as well. There's so much good that can come from our procurement legislation that's going to create jobs and opportunities for local companies. And we're not going to stop there, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: While recession-battered Saskatchewan and Alberta is on the upswing, Newfoundland and Labrador continues on a download spiral.

We know that the Premier's promise of a stronger tomorrow was misleading. So far, the government has only increased taxes, begun mass layoffs, crippled business confidence, driven off investment and taken away hope.

Why is this government content in simply managing decline?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we've been working with boards of trade, chambers of commerce. We've been seeing companies in the tech sector that are scaling up, that are actually growing in the economy right now. I don't know where the Member opposite's been in the last few weeks, but you see IOC and where they're going and the investment, the 79 construction jobs that's going to be created. There's tremendous positivity.

The Minister of Natural Resources has been talking to a number of mining companies. There is lots of optimism in mining. As I mentioned earlier, Rambler and Anaconda on the Baie Verte Peninsula – the only gold mine east – Wabush and what's happening, the potential; there's a lot of interest in our economy. There was hundreds of millions of dollars last year in the budget for infrastructure that's creating a significant amount of jobs. We've invested in rural Newfoundland and Labrador in the last year. Through our Regional Development Fund,

we've put \$9 million into the economy and levered \$35 million additional in spending.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind all hon. Members the volume of the Legislature is getting a little louder than I would like to hear. The only individual I wish to hear from is the individual recognized to speak.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Not one of the items mentioned by the minister is a result of anything new or different that the Liberal administration has done since coming into office.

The Conference Board of Canada blames the incoming recession in Newfoundland and Labrador on lack of jobs, increased taxes and a significant drop in investment. Obviously, the Liberal layoffs, tax increases and lack of support for local business have done little to help.

Can the Minister of Industry give us details on his government's plan to actually deal with these upcoming challenges?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the Member opposite is getting his information because he's been putting a lot of things out there and he's not had the opportunity to look at government's vision and the 50 initiatives in *The Way Forward* document.

Some of the things that I'm responsible for as Minister of Innovation as well, we're resetting the innovation agenda here in the province; we're looking at social enterprise. We're looking at all ways of which we can unlock capital, different ways of financing, looking at ways to make sure that there's inward investment and I think we're doing an excellent job in terms of looking at the opportunities that present us. We're taking advantage of those, Mr. Speaker.

We have competitive tax rates in Newfoundland and Labrador. We also have the smallest business tax rate. We've seen investment in the aquaculture industry, in Northern Harvest. We've seen a lot of good things happen. Whereas the Member opposite, he needs to look at his own track record where he's talked about a bloated government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the size of the public service grew far more under Liberal administrations previously than it did under the Progressive Conservative administrations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: If the minister wonders where I'm getting my information, I'm referring to reports from the Conference Board of Canada. And he may think he's doing an excellent job, but the people of the province would argue otherwise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: The Conference Board of Canada isn't the only group warning of hard times. BuildForce Canada has indicated that the decline in the province's construction activity will cost 21 per cent of workers to leave the construction industry over the next 10 years. That's 5,000 less jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask the minister: What is this government doing to help people in Newfoundland and Labrador get back to work?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we've outlined a number of plans in our *The Way Forward* document that provide certainty and consistency, unlike the previous administration. When you look at the Minister of Transportation and Works with his five-year road plan, when we talk about the infrastructure and the predictability that's happening, unlike

previously when the Auditor General went looking for their infrastructure plan – couldn't find it, couldn't prepare it, go to the Department of Finance and go find the cheques or whatnot and make up something about it, right?

What we're doing is we're providing predictability; we're being very consistent on that. When you look at their legacy and why the Conference Board of Canada may be putting forward things, is the amount of debt that they're causing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take by a bloated project of the biggest make-work project, the Muskrat Falls Project, which will double electricity rates here in the province. That's the PC legacy. That's his legacy as the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that today there are 4,500 people working at Muskrat Falls. In addition to that we've seen tremendous growth, as the minister points out, in tourism, mining, tech sector, aquaculture. These are all as a result of initiatives and leadership provided by the previous administration – nothing new, nothing innovative from the crowd opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Insolvency trustees are saying that bankruptcies are growing in alarming numbers in Newfoundland and Labrador. People simply cannot afford these high taxes, especially when they are concerned for their job security.

I ask the minister: Where is the jobs plan that you promised? Can we actually see it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we're very cognizant of the impacts in the economy. We've done things in our budget to support low-income families and seniors through our Newfoundland and Labrador Income

Supplement, which is paid out quarterly, as well as the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit, which helps support a significant amount of people in the economy through \$75 million.

As well, we're very focused on growth sectors and finding ways, working with the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, unlocking our post-secondary institutions like the College of the North Atlantic, creating incubators and accelerators and opportunities which are tapping into the greatest potential of these well-educated Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and other students, and looking at immigration, looking at ways in which we're really unlocking the talent pool and creating opportunities.

We're not stopping, Mr. Speaker. We're willing to look at any economic opportunity that's out there for Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Premier specifically stated in the Minister of Fisheries mandate letter that he expects the minister and the federal government to finalize an agreement on the Fisheries Investment Fund.

I ask the minister: What actions have you taken to finalize this agreement?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. It is indeed a good question because the reality is we are facing some challenges in the fishery that are unprecedented, and I think probably – and the hon. Member would agree – back to 1992.

I can assure the hon. Member that I speak regularly with my federal counterpart, and I can assure you that transition in the fishery and

innovation in the fishery is the number one priority for this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I remind the minister, the CETA agreement is signed.

The minister knows there's a drastic decline in the shrimp and snow crab stocks and we need this fund now for what's happening in our fishery today.

Is the minister going to ensure that Prime Minister Trudeau lives up to his pre-election promise and honours his commitment on the \$400 million fishery fund?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the hon. Member for the question. Yes, Mr. Speaker, as a province, we're going to make sure that our counterparts in Ottawa and the conversations we have with our colleagues in Ottawa are open conversations to ensure that we are able to ensure that we transition our fishery as we go forward.

The Member is right, we are faced with a circumstance in the fishery and that is quite unfortunate. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the hon. Member, I share his concerns. I talked to fish harvesters just last weekend when I was in my district and we talked about some of the reductions that are happening this year in shrimp and, unfortunately, in crab as well.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. Member, we'll make sure that we're there for the transition for the fishermen in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Given the recent comments by the federal Minister of Fisheries: Can the minister confirm that Newfoundland and Labrador's \$400 million Fisheries Investment Fund is dead in the water, the money is going to go to Atlantic Provinces and Quebec instead?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure of the article, actually. I did see the article that the Member is referring to, but all I can tell the hon. Member opposite is as a government we are extremely concerned for the harvesters and processors and the people involved in the processing industry in this province. We're going to continue to advocate for our harvesters and our processors when it comes to our federal counterparts. I can assure him that's something we're going to doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, this is a desperate time in our fishery in this province.

I'm asking you: Have you done anything with the investments in the \$400 million fund that was promised by Prime Minister Trudeau? Have you done anything?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think I said in my first response to the hon. Member opposite, we are working with our federal government and with the federal minister. I speak with the federal minister on a weekly basis.

I can assure the hon. Member – I come from a district in this province that's heavily reliant on

harvesting and processing. I can assure that hon. Member that we will stand up for the fish harvesters and processors in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: So, obviously, there's no progress on that.

Minister, we know that employment in the fishing industry will be hit hard this year. With no action from this government and still no advisory council in place, the strategic action plan for the cod revitalization is nowhere to be seen and it seems now that the investment in the Fisheries Investment Fund is gone elsewhere.

You're in the office now 15 months, what have you done?

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

MR. CROCKER: What have we done, Mr. Speaker? Well, that's pretty good of a government that was in power for 12 years and grew the fishery, practically, nothing, Mr. Speaker, 900 million, one billion, 900 million, one billion. Mr. Speaker, that was the legacy that we found when we came into the Department of Fisheries.

Mr. Speaker, you look at aquaculture; look at how we've advanced aquaculture in this province. Look at how we've advanced aquaculture in just the year that we've been here in this province. Aquaculture this year, Mr. Speaker, will reach an all-time high level.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Our wild fishery will have the greatest contribution to its GDP ever this year.

Mr. Speaker, we respect the fisher people of this province, harvesters and processing jobs, and we'll be there for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, last week the minister stated that it's too early to do anything. I tell the minister it's too late. It's going to be too late in a couple months when you don't do anything. The fishery is ready to start in a lot of parts in this province and people are wondering where they're going to get work in the plants and everywhere else.

I'm asking the question: What have you done to help our fishery? Our shrimp fishery is in decline, our crab fishery is in decline, and our harvesters are wondering what the stocks are going to be like and where they are going to be able to catch fish to. What have you done?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate that question, Mr. Speaker, because about a week ago the crab science came out, and the hon. Member and I have had this conversation with regard to how this process actually works.

So last week, Mr. Speaker, the science came out. This week DFO is travelling this province to consult our harvesters. He wants us to make decisions before our harvesters have had an opportunity to be consulted? I understand that's how they operate. I understand that point, Mr. Speaker, but we're letting the harvesters of this province in meetings that are happening all around this province this week have their say in what the science is, what the final numbers are going to be.

It's important that we listen to science, but it's even equally important we listen to the harvesters of the province. Mr. Speaker, when we came in to government a year ago, 15 months ago, we still had a LIFO policy and we did work with an all-party committee, but –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in recent restructuring the Liberal government announced that it would be moving the Crown Lands Branch to Corner Brook.

Will the minister confirm for us which building will house the Crown Lands Branch in Corner Brook?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For those watching at home and never saw what happened – a water incident.

Mr. Speaker, where Crown Lands will be actually, physically located in Corner Brook will be in the agriculture and Lands Branch of government. The geographic physical location, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that we are looking at as government is how we lease space and where we lease space. But Crown Lands will now be a part of the agriculture and lands division of government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess there's a lot of planning when they haven't figured out where it's going and they're going to move them.

Crown Lands is currently located in a government-owned building in St. John's. We understand that in order to move the Crown Lands Branch to Corner Brook government will now have to lease space out there. Can the minister confirm this?

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, my colleague in the Department of Transportation and Works has undertaken a review of leased space in our footprint in this province. At this point in time – it's going to be in Corner Brook. That's the simple answer to that, Mr. Speaker. The reality is July 1 is when this part of the department will move, and I can assure the hon. Member that we'll have affordable space for this division.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I pointed out in my first question that it was going to Corner Brook, so I guess I tipped him off.

Minister, if you own a property, why would you leave it and go lease one?

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

MR. CROCKER: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, if I over simplified it for the Member but sometimes you have to be very simple with the Members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, there is lots of government space in Corner Brook. Until the move happens, we'll decide which best fits the footprint of the new Crown Lands Division in the agriculture and lands division of this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's already a regional lands office in Corner Brook in another separate building. Actually, I might add, I think it's a government-owned building.

Will the two Crown Lands offices in Corner Brook be merged?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The current office in Corner Brook is already in a government building, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that's important to point out here when we talk about how Crown Lands is being restructured, Mr. Speaker, Crown Lands will still retain its regional offices. So there will still be Crown Lands offices around the province to supply the regional office service.

As for the Crown Lands Division, because of the importance this government sees in agriculture, Crown Lands will now become a part of the agriculture and lands division of government. So we're putting our priorities where we need growth in this province.

One of the things we've identified in *The Way Forward*, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to grow our agriculture business in this province and that's one of the reasons why the Crown Lands Division is moving in with the agricultural lands division.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I tipped him again, but I guess I'll provide some good information here today and I'll get a better answer the next time around.

In the same announcement, government said 30 positions in Crown Lands would be moved to Corner Brook. We understand that government will have to pay all travel and moving expenses for employees who will now have to move.

Can the minister tell us the financial implications of moving these 30 positions? How much will this move cost?

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

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

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, these are, like he stated, positions, and until people have made their decisions – decisions that we will respect because these decisions are decisions that obviously impact people. So we're going to give the people an opportunity to decide if they want to move to Corner Brook and then we will be able to give a figure of what the actual cost is; but remember, these are positions, so we're not sure what people will decide, if they want to make this move or not. So we won't have that number until we have the number of people who decide to make the move.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: What have you budgeted for this move? Obviously, you planned the move so you have to have money budgeted. What is in your budget for this move?

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

MR. CROCKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member would know that this move will offer savings for government.

Just some simple examples, Mr. Speaker, currently, the department that I'm involved in today has four mapping divisions. So by relocating the Crown Lands Division of the 30 positions to Corner Brook, we're going to be able to consolidate four mapping divisions into one.

When you look at GIS, for example, it's a service that many, many departments of government use. So these are reductions of parts of the department that we're going to be able to break down some silos, Mr. Speaker, and

become more consistent in our delivery. So, Mr. Speaker, the savings achieved there will certainly offset any cost of the relocation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have a very short question. The minister just said there will be savings.

Can you tell us, what will the savings be?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member poses a good question, but I would have to suggest for him that we're in a budgetary process as we speak, and the savings will be seen in Budget 2017-2018.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to go back to that point. A Minister of the Crown stands up in this House and tells the province there will be savings, when asked what the savings are he can't answer the question. I think it's incumbent, if you come out and say there are savings, tell us, tell everyone here what will the savings be. Tell the people that are getting shifted to Corner Brook that want to stay in St. John's. Tell us what the savings are? Mr. Speaker, a simple question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question, but I think we quite clearly said last week when we released our Flatter and Leaner document that these savings will be \$25 million across government.

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.

It took our questioning this House to extract from the Premier an acknowledgement that Emera's equity share in Muskrat Falls transmission had increased from 29 to 59 per cent.

I ask the Premier: When did he first know this, why didn't he promptly notify the people of this province, and what has he still not told us?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, when you look at the Muskrat Falls Project, this project, of course, is always evolving as price changes and prices within the Maritime Link in this particular case, as that all changes it can mean that the various equity positions in the Labrador to Island Link could actually change.

Mr. Speaker, what we know with the pace it's on, the most troubling thing that I find is that this will lead to doubling of electricity rates in this province. This is a serious situation. We need to look for mitigating initiatives that we will need to put in place. We know that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, our communities, our recreation centres, our churches, Mr. Speaker, they cannot afford doubling of electricity rates in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We all know that; yet, he still doesn't give a really full explanation of what's going on and why he doesn't keep the people informed about what's going on in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the terms of the disastrous Muskrat Falls deal require ratepayers to foot the bill for a guaranteed 8.8 per cent annual return on equity in the project.

I ask the Premier: With the doubling of Emera's equity share, how much money annually will go out of the pockets of ratepayers in this province and into the pockets of the private Nova Scotia company Emera?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I made it quite clear a few days ago that this was not my idea, and I will say that again. This was not my idea. This was not the idea of anyone on this particular side of the House, Mr. Speaker. While the Members of the Official Opposition, the PC Party continue to support this initiative, there were a number of opportunities.

The best thing that could have been done is not to be in the situation that we're into today. It's the increasing costs, the construction at the Muskrat Falls Project that is leading to the doubling of electricity rates, Mr. Speaker. We've made it publicly known now for quite some time that we are exploring all the options that we have available to us to put in mitigating initiatives to keep energy costs down in this province. Seniors can't afford it, middle-income families can't afford it, Mr. Speaker, residents of this province cannot afford a doubling of electricity rates.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Did government or Nalcor, or both, ask Emera to provide additional equity?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, government certainly did not. As you know, the way this project is structured, the three transmission lines – there is an arrangement of what the cost-share of that arrangement would be. As we see escalating costs and price in one particular piece of the transmission, Mr. Speaker, it allows for what happens in this particular case Emera, as the partner that was determined by the PC Party – it was the PC Party that signed the partnership agreement with Emera.

This is not Emera's fault, Mr. Speaker. Let me be very clear, this is not Emera's fault. Emera is doing what someone gave them the opportunity to do. So it's an equity position right now.

The Member opposite is right, 8.8 per cent rate of return, Mr. Speaker. We all know that based on the contracts that are put in place by the PC Party, that it's the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador that will burden that cost and see the doubling of electricity rates.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not campaign on the slogan Muskrat Falls is not my fault. He campaigned on a platform of offering our people better management and real openness and transparency, and we have seen little of either to date.

I ask the Premier: Whether it's Ed Martin's severance or the latest revelations of Emera, why do straightforward facts have to be dragged out of him in Question Period?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, in all due respect to the Member opposite, this is a contract that had been put in place by the previous administration.

If she is suggesting right now, Mr. Speaker, that contracts will be going out and just ripped to pieces without consequence, Mr. Speaker –

AN HON. MEMBER: She doesn't understand.

PREMIER BALL: Yeah, you would have to understand the terms of the contract that was put in place, and before anyone on this side of the House just goes and rips up contracts, even the ones we may not particularly like, Mr. Speaker, there is a cost to do that.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we did offer better management and we are providing better management.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to section 5(2)(b) of the Supply Act, 2016, I am tabling one Order in Council relating to usage of the Contingency Reserve for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. ROGERS: 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 removed the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

WHEREAS an increase in tax on books will reduce book sales to the detriment of local bookstores, publishers and authors, and the amount collected by government must be weighed against the loss of economic activity caused by higher book prices; and

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

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

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

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, again, what we are seeing here is that the people who get the worst deal regarding books are our own people. We actually have to pay more to read the books of our own authors than the people in the rest of Canada. This is a recurring theme that this government isn't looking out for the needs and the rights of the people of the province. Everybody else is getting a much better deal than the people of the province are.

When we look at Muskrat Falls, when we look at what's happening at Emera, when we look at a number of issues that the people of the province are getting hit again and again and again. Their pockets are getting picked. That's what's happening, Mr. Speaker. Those people with the least deep pockets are the ones whose pockets are getting picked again and again and again. We haven't seen the end of it. Goodness knows what we're going to see in this upcoming budget, but there's not much left in the pockets of a lot of the people here in our province.

Again, I raised in the House yesterday, or the day before yesterday, how many people are applying for bankruptcy protection; 158 per cent increase over last year. Mr. Speaker, this kind of action flies in the face of anything that is reasonable, flies in the face of anything that is just, flies in the face of anything that strengthens our people, that makes our people able to weather this storm.

We know the best solution to poverty and economic downturn is education, strengthening our people through education. Our students in university are paying hundreds of dollars in extra taxes on their school books.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the worst taxes imposed on the people of the province.

Thank you.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to echo the comments of my hon. colleague from St. John's Centre; great job.

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

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* implemented a regressive tax on books in this province; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province in the country to have such a tax; and

WHEREAS a tax will undoubtedly affect literacy rates in this province as well as negatively impact local authors and publishers;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately cancel this ill-conceived book tax.

As my colleague just stated; the Liberal solution to the challenges which face us as a province and which have faced the globe is tax, tax, tax. And what has the result been? The worst time our economy has ever been in the history of the province. The highest record number of bankruptcies; students who struggle to get to university as it is, particularly those from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, now having to pay hundreds of dollars extra per semester just because of a book tax, Mr. Speaker.

And this government likes to call itself innovative. Well, get innovative; introduce something like a junk food tax. Take the tax off the books; education is very important to our children. Our children deserve better, the Liberals promised better, and we want to see in Budget 2017 the reversal of this ill-conceived tax.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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 Newfoundland and Labrador has the greatest percentage of the workforce earning the provincial minimum wage in Canada, with women, youth and those from rural areas making up a disproportionate number of these workers; and

WHEREAS in 2012 the minimum wage review committee recommended an increase in the

minimum wage in 2013 to reflect the loss of purchasing power since 2010 and an annual adjustment beginning in 2014 to reflect the Consumer Price Index;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate an immediate increase in the minimum wage to restore the loss of purchasing power since 2010 and an annual adjustment to the minimum wage beginning in 2016 to reflect the Consumer Price Index.

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

I'm pleased, once again, Mr. Speaker, to stand with this petition in my hand. I haven't any more come recently, and I'm glad to have this one, especially the day after International Women's Day, because women are so badly affected by the low minimum wage, which keeps people living in poverty.

The information or the word that sometimes you hear from people is that increasing minimum wage is going to be bad for the economy. In actual fact, studies by many economists and by researchers show that this isn't the case.

It's interesting; I have read – and actually have here in my hand – a study that's been done by a capitalist, by somebody who's involved in creating business in Seattle, specializing in early-stage start-ups: Nick Hanauer. He says that people who say a higher minimum wage will hurt the economy are wrong. As a business person, as a person who makes his money through businesses, he says they are wrong.

The study that he has done shows that raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would inject about \$450 billion more into the economy – now that's the economy of the United States – each year. But the basic principle that the economy gets strengthened by a minimum wage that gives people a living wage where people are more independent and, as consumers, have more money to spend, helps the economy. Having workers who are better off, having workers who are well, who have better working conditions, are going to be good for the economy.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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 an extension was announced to the Robert E. Howlett Highway on March 25, 2014; and

WHEREAS the environmental assessment, design and engineering of this project was under way; and

WHEREAS continued residential and commercial growth has increased traffic on the Southern Avalon;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to continue with the extension to the Robert E. Howlett Highway to enhance and improve traffic to the Southern Avalon.

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

Mr. Speaker, in regard to route 10, going south to the Southern Shore from St. John's –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A number of years ago the Robert E. Howlett was built, basically from Bay Bulls-Big Pond, extending to Ruby Line and then to various accesses into the City of St. John's and to Mount Pearl. Since that time, obviously it's been heavily used, and since that time we've seen tremendous growth and development in parts of

the Southern Shore, certainly in regard to Bauline to Bay Bulls region.

Just recently, Statistics Canada looked at that and recognized that growth in some of the largest growing communities in the region. From a residential point of view, it's very important; but as well, from a commercial point of view, in terms of fabrication facilities. In Cape Broyle, Bay Bulls, we have the offshore base. Pennecon base in Bay Bulls just recently, you've heard media clips of the highway being closed in regard to moving enormous pieces of equipment to Muskrat Falls.

As well, we've got three processing facilities related to the fishing industry, related to the crab industry; we've got professionals that move back and forth into the urban centre of St. John's. You're 40 minutes and, in some respects, you're just outside of the City of St. John's.

We're seeing a lot of growth, a lot of subdivisions and a new school that was cancelled last year in the budget. These are initiatives that drive economic growth. If this government is serious about economic growth, you need to acknowledge where that growth is to, and that there are opportunities for expansion and you support that on a long-term basis that allow the region to grow.

So again, this is a significant piece of infrastructure; I certainly call on government and the Minister of Transportation and Works to review this, work with the parties concerned, let's get this highway extension started, continue to grow the Southern Avalon, the economy, and for the benefit of all those that live in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 71, Interim Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 71, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2018 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Before we go ahead, I just wanted to render the decision on the point of order yesterday with respect to the point raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition respecting a comment by the Member for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I have reviewed the *Hansard*, and there's no point of order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Resolution

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2018, the sum of \$2,703,698,200."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure for me today to rise in this hon. House to speak to Interim Supply. Of course, we were all here yesterday morning in the debate and we all heard about the doom and gloom of this province and how we were going down the tubes, and we heard it again today from the Member for Mount Pearl North in his questions to the minister.

But, Mr. Chair, I can assure you that nobody – nobody – has felt the downturn in the economy worse than the people of Labrador West. We have suffered greatly since 2014 – and by the way, 2014 was the year – February, actually – that we saw the closure of Wabush Mines. That wasn't under our watch – that wasn't under our watch. What we've done since then is work with industry to try to mitigate the impact it has had on the residents and try to find a way forward.

But before I get into Wabush – I know I only got 10 minutes, and I'll try to get through this as quickly as possible. We've seen in the past year some rebound in the iron ore industry. As you know, Labrador West is totally, totally at the mercy of the iron ore industry and the prices of iron ore and the world markets.

So we heard just last week, of course, from IOC that they were going to move in and expand Wabush 3. Now, I'm going to give a little bit of history – and I guess no disrespect to anybody, but when they hear Wabush 3, they automatically assume that's Wabush Mines.

Well, I'm going to use an analogy to try to explain to the people opposite and to the people who are not familiar with the region; I'm going to use the analogy of Mount Pearl and Southlands. Southlands is right next to Mount Pearl, but Southlands is not a part of Mount Pearl; it's a part of St. John's. Wabush 3 is much the same. It's probably next to the Wabush Iron Ore – it is not as close as it is to IOC, but it's the same thing. It's not part of Wabush; it's a part of IOC.

They're moving ahead with this development because they see this as the way forward for the company; it's the future of the company. It's the shining star in the future because it is a great deposit of iron ore, and they're going to move forward with the development that will provide 70 jobs in the development stage and will give the mine 12, 15 years of extra life.

It shows that people like the Rio Tintos of the world, which own IOC, have confidence in the iron ore industry and they have confidence in Labrador West. Labrador West, Mr. Chair, is rebounding and will be a great contributor as it has been since 1960 to the economy of this province, because we have given our fair share. We have been a great contributor to this province and we continue to be, and we will in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Now, Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, Wabush Mines closed in February 2014. It was a great blow to the region and the region has suffered tremendously, especially the workers and pensioners of Wabush Mines.

I guess my first job as an MHA, along with the minister – he was Service NL at the time, now the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment. We had to go to Wabush – the same week as we were sworn in actually – to speak to the Wabush pensioners and inform them to save the integrity of the pension plan, the pension plan that Cliffs failed to contribute to, it had to be terminated.

As a result of that termination, Mr. Chair, there are people who've lost 25 per cent of their pension, 21 per cent of their pension. I have a gentleman sitting in the gallery today who's one of those 25 per centers. Just imagine how devastating it is to lose a quarter of your pension that you worked for 30, 35, 40 years, that you feel that you're entitled to and all of a sudden it's gone.

Mr. Chair, the last couple of years have certainly taken its toll on the residents and the workers of Wabush. As you know, there was a court case in Montreal on December 20 that we supported to have the case moved to St. John's as opposed to Montreal, and we never got a favourable ruling.

AN HON. MEMBER: There was a private Member's motion.

MR. LETTO: And we did do a private Member's motion on that, yes.

In his ruling Judge Hamilton did say, and did leave the door open for us, as a government, because he said we do have the opportunity to refer our deemed trust clause in our *Pension Benefits Act* to the Newfoundland Court of Appeal for an interpretation.

Mr. Chair, because we wanted, and we should, and we needed to do something to support the pensioners of Wabush, I am very, very pleased today to announce and to report that we, as a government, will be referring to the Newfoundland Court of Appeal the deemed trust clause, which is clause 32 of the *Pension Benefits Act*, for an interpretation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Do you know what? These decisions don't come easy because there are a lot of implications. And I want to thank the Cabinet Members and I want to thank everybody that's been involved in this. I've been working on this for so long. I'm glad to have the support of my Cabinet, my caucus today, to move this forward.

There are a couple of people I want to single out: to the Minister of Justice because when you are referring to court matters, it does fall under the Minister of Justice. I want to thank the Premier who stood with me on this. I want to thank the Minister of Service NL who is responsible for the *Pension Benefits Act*. I'd be remiss if I certainly didn't thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment who was such a big part of this, and just got moved from the Department of Service NL.

So there's a lot of work to be put into this. And I want to thank as well the pensioners of Wabush. There's one person I want to single out because she's been relentless, and rightly so, because she's a pensioner as well that's losing a quarter of her pension. I want to single out Rita Pynn who has done so much work on this file on behalf of the pensioners, both the unionized and the non-unionized pension because there are two

pension funds. But I want to thank her because she's been relentless and I know the work and the amount of time that she's put into this. She's been a constant supporter of this and relentless.

So I want to say to her: Rita, thank you. It's because of your continued efforts, along with your supporters and your pensioners, that we are doing this today.

We are doing this because it's the right thing to do, Mr. Chair. It's the right thing to do. It's something that we need to take to the nth degree. We need to take this as far as we possibly can. We don't know what the outcome is going to be, but certainly we have decided today that this is something we want to do and we're going to do. How long a time it takes, I'm not sure.

Mr. Chair, I just want to say that Labrador West, and in particular Wabush, have experienced – I guess you could say three years now because it's March 2017, so it's three years since the closure of Wabush Mines, and since the 1960s we've seen the ups and downs. We've seen the booms and bust, and 1982 is the one that comes to mind when we lost 700 people; 700 people in layoffs. Some of them never, ever returned to their jobs. But today, for instance, Mr. Chair, in IOC we're at the highest employment we've ever been, and the future looks bright.

I can also say that we haven't given up on Wabush Mines, and the minister is right here in front of me. The Monitor issued a report last week, the Monitor who is in charge of CCAA, giving anybody who's interested in the purchase of Wabush Mines, until March 27, to have their proposal in to him with a \$750,000 deposit if they're interested in purchasing Wabush Mines. So we haven't given up. We're working with those people. We know we have interested people out there that are interested in starting up this operation. So I say to the people of Wabush, I say to the employees of Wabush Mines and the pensioners: We are with you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: We are with you. It's taken longer than I wanted and taken longer than everybody wanted and I'm sure the impatience is there, but, Mr. Chair, we are with them and

we will do whatever we can to make this successful.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise on Bill 71, Interim Supply. As most out there would know, or probably understand, this is related to the operations of the province and meeting the financial commitments of the province until March 31 of a particular year before the actual budget for the Legislature is brought through for Estimates and is approved by the House for the next fiscal year. So this allows that to take place.

The government of the day, as we did in our administration, would put forward particular departments and the dollars that are required for those departments to get us through to March 31. That's why it's called Interim Supply for the budget process. Within the scope of that there's the ability to speak to a whole array of issues, and as Members have when they've gotten up and spoken here today.

I do want to mention the hon. Member who was just up and spoke about Wabush Mines and the issue with pensioners. I know from my perspective too, we've brought it up in the House, we've asked questions about it. I do have pensioners in my district, as well as many of us do I'd say in the 40 districts, who at some point were employed with the mines. Oftentimes that was a place of employment, and may have retired back to other parts of the province after that time but still obviously avail of that pension.

Some of the changes that happened with Cliffs when that had occurred, as the Member had mentioned, I think maybe a lot of pensioners had gotten a reduction of anywhere from 25 to 30 per cent. Now, you can imagine, Mr. Chair, what that means in regard to someone on a fixed income that's retired, they're settled down and

all of a sudden you've got 25 to 30 per cent of that reduced and what that means to those individuals.

On top of that, some of these individuals also lost their health care plan in terms of insurance. So you can imagine putting that on top of that, you lose 25 to 30 per cent of your pension. As you get older, obviously, you need that health care plan. If you do lose it and try to enrol in a new one in the private sector, you can imagine what the premiums will be for that. It's enormous in regard to the results and effects and the worry that it has on these pensioners. As well, in terms of life insurance for those that are often left behind, there were also changes to that and that was eliminated as well. So it has been huge.

I was certainly pleased today to hear from the Member, because back some time ago in this House there was a private Member's motion, on May 11 I think it was that he had brought it forward, and that dealt with the – certainly, this government and the seven Liberal MPs in Ottawa working to have the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, I think it's referred to, have that amended because that would be required to try and go back and have some redress in some of the issues that the pensioners were actually having.

When the motion was brought forward it didn't recognize that it needed to be retroactive. So we're happy to put a motion forward, an amendment that was adopted that allowed to go back and look at the retroactivity of the legislation. We haven't heard on that to date, but that would allow some redress for those pensioners that we're talking about here today.

Nevertheless, we're certainly pleased, and I acknowledge government and their officials in regard to moving forward based on what's happened in Quebec court in hearing this issue, and related to the deemed trust clause and how the Quebec court had indicated that it was necessary. They wouldn't rule on it, my understanding, but it was necessary to get an opinion from the courts, from the Appeal Court in Newfoundland and Labrador in regard to that deemed trust clause.

It was important to get it done quickly because the court in Quebec could move and rule further on it, but if we were to intervene, if the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador was to intervene with the appeal court here, obviously, my understanding is the Quebec court wouldn't move forward until the appeal was heard here on the deemed trust clause. Then based on what that determined, I assume the Quebec court would take that into consideration as they move forward and deeming – and moving forward and making the decision.

So we are pleased that the Member announced today that the government is going to move forward and pursue that in the Court of Appeal here in Newfoundland. It's been some time. Obviously, it's not definitive in terms of what the outcome would be but it's certainly positive that it's being pursued on behalf of those pensioners in the province, as I said, who are scattered all over Newfoundland and Labrador and who have concerns in regard to the reduction that they've seen in their income.

I know speaking of some of those, on top of that, what we saw last year in the budget in 2016 in regard to things like a levy, in regard to increases in taxes and fees, personal income tax, all of that as well comes out of those fixed incomes for those individuals. Which was a double whammy, if you will, in terms of what they are facing and the struggles they are having in terms of net dollars and what's available to them. All of that compounded, no doubt, for pensioners to make it a very difficult year. I acknowledge the work of the government to move forward now and to seek this ruling from the Court of Appeal here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have a few minutes left. I wanted to speak to, Mr. Chair, an issue that came up in the House last week, about my colleague, and he asked about a project that's very important to my region in the Southern Avalon, is in July of 2016 the UNESCO designation of Mistaken Point as a World Heritage Site. Over 600 million-year-old fossils; it's something that's been worked on, developed, certainly I'd say for decades. Certainly over the past 10 years in regard to the community, the region, local volunteers that have really put their heart and soul into this to develop this asset that we have.

I know internationally from an academic point of view, from a university study point of view, it's been world-renowned. A lot of Ph.D. students come to Mistaken Point, where that is their discipline to study, and that's been going on for a number of years.

I think just over the past number of years we've recognized, through the efforts of the region and the people that are involved, how important it is and what the opportunity is. It's twofold. It's about the preservation of the site but, second, it's about the economic opportunity that it holds.

Like many regions of the province, the southern Avalon was hit hard with the downturn in the ground fishery and what that meant to the region. You look at somewhere like Trepassey, the plant that was there, the trawlers that were there, the amount that were employed there, the community and the region, and just all along that area of the southern Avalon has been hit very hard.

So this is something that was key in regard to being able to bring opportunity to the region, very important, a lot of work done, a lot of investment in our prior administration in terms of human resources, but as well financial resources to get – they call it – the dossier ready, which is the document submit to UNESCO to get reviewed and whether you get that status as a world heritage site.

Now, this is the first one – there are others, obviously, that we know are UNESCO in Newfoundland and Labrador and they're operated by the federal government and Parks Canada. This is the first one that's operated by the provincial government. It's so important that the provincial government recognize the obligations, the responsibilities and what is required because within that dossier that was presented to – I believe it was in France – UNESCO, within that is a management plan for five years, I believe it is. It was outlined – it's all the responsibilities and requirements that UNESCO requires to be followed from the date of inscription, which was in July.

So that's why we were very concerned when, over the past year, we've been seeing that there are issues in regard to staffing, there are issues in regard to infrastructure, and there are many

questions in regard to operations. Are we ready to meet the world that's basically coming?

Last year in July, we got the designation and my understanding is about 700 people had called or come and wanted to get the tour – because it's a guided tour, because it's into a reserve – and they couldn't make it. We recognize there are growing pains and there are things we have to do, but we certainly need the commitment from the current government, from the ministers, that this is a priority.

I said it's not only about the preservation, but it's about the economic opportunity for the region and what that brings. That management plan is very clear on what's needed to be done and the commitment that needs to be made. So if you're looking for economic development, if you're looking for strategic development on a regional basis, this is the one. As I said, the world is coming and we need to be prepared and make sure that experience, from all over the world people who come – because many people in the world, they seek out UNESCO sites of the world and they visit so many every year. So there's time in terms of people organizing that, planning vacations to come. All of that is a complete package that we, and the current government, need to acknowledge. And certainly based on to date, I don't think, has done what needed to be done, and that's why our concerns were brought here.

So we look forward to the new minister adopting what's needed to be adopted and moving this forward for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a great opportunity to stand here today and speak. Mr. Chair, we are approaching the end of a fiscal year. It has been a difficult year in this province; however, each and every one of us here on this side of the House of Assembly are

dedicated to the responsible spending to the public purse and to help deliver the necessary services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Chair, the District of Placentia – St. Mary's has a land mass of 3,805 kilometres, with homes and cabins on almost every kilometre. The population is approximately 13,500. With the boundaries being just an hour outside the capital, you would think that we had the same services as urban St. John's, but that is not the case. We are a rural area with our challenges but also our benefits.

The bad news is that the investment in road infrastructure by the PC government, when the provincial government had access to the financial resources, was not sufficient in the district. Even though there are at least 120 or more kilometres of paved road that needs work and needed work in 2014, the PCs invested in two gravel roads. The tender included upgrading of more than 20 kilometres of Route 91 to Southeast, Placentia and a section of Markland Road; however, they never did the worst part of the Markland gravel road, Mr. Chair. Even though the province was thriving under the revenues from the offshore oil, the PC government failed at successfully managing the increased revenue and ended up causing an unstable, economic environment.

As stated by Premier Ball, the declining price of oil did not cause the current economic situation. It revealed the truth. The good news is that now we have a Five-Year Provincial Roads Plan that clearly outlines roadwork for the province and for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's.

For this year, 2017, the following projects have been outlined for the District of Placentia – St. Mary's: Route 90, pulverize and repave with rock cap from St. Joseph's to Riverhead; Route 91, replace Rocky Island Pond Bridge; Route 100, rehabilitate the Southeast River Bridge; Route 100, pulverize and repave Ferndale Road, and upgrade storm sewer system; Route 100, rehabilitate Veterans Way, which is the back beach in Placentia; Route 102, pulverize and repave Ship Harbour, from Ship Harbour towards Fox Harbour.

Mr. Chair, we have some projects that are being carried out from last year also. We have finishing the work on the South Dildo Bridge, Route 80; pulverizing and paving between Branch and St. Bride's, Route 100; Point Lance Road – Mr. Chair, Point Lance Road is a prime example of the policy of taking the politics out of pavement.

The community of Point Lance was historically Tory, and I received nine votes from the residents of Point Lance. I can almost name those nine votes; however, the road to the community was the absolute worst road in the District of Placentia – St. Mary's. Voting PC certainly didn't help these residents, but this government did. We recognized the safety hazard, we recognized the danger to the children travelling over this winding, potholed-riddled, narrow road in a school bus and the Department of Transportation and Works issued a tender for paving in 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: The first layer of pavement was put down this past fall and this road will be completed this spring. Taking the politics out of pavement is a responsible way to govern.

Mr. Chair, there are a number of projects outlined for 2018-19 season also. For the benefits of those listening from home, I'm delighted to tell you that Route 91, Old Placentia Highway, from St. Catharine's to North Harbour Road, also known as the nine-mile road, will be pulverized and repaved. I can assure you that this will make a significant difference to the large volume of residents who travel that from the Cape Shore to Salmonier Line each and every day.

Mr. Chair, the process of taking the politics out of pavement for the safety and security of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador is the right thing to do, and it is precisely what this government is doing.

A fact to remember is that in 2008-2009 the province would see a surplus of \$2.4 billion under the PC administration and the net debt

would be \$7.9 billion; but, in 2010-2011, instead of reining in spending to assure that the financial future of the province would be accounted for, the Williams's government ran a deficit of \$194 million, with the overall debt climbing back to \$9.2 billion.

The District of Placentia – St. Mary's boasts many positive attributes from the scenic Cape St. Mary's to Argentia, which is one of the fastest growing industry areas in Newfoundland and Labrador. It is, however, the fishery that has been and remains one of the solid, consistent sources of income for the residents from all three bays that make up the district: St. Mary's Bay, Placentia Bay and Trinity Bay.

In 1951, factory fishing began with the new super trawlers and the cod catch peaked in 1968 at 810,000 tons. Approximately three times more than the maximum yearly catch achieved before the super trawlers. Approximately 8 million tons of cod were caught between 1647 and 1750, Mr. Chair, a period encompassing 25 to 45 generations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: The factory trawlers took the same amount in 15 years.

Mr. Chair, all of us in the House of Assembly know the industry collapsed entirely in the early 1990s, owing to the overfishing and, debatably, lack of foresight and poor local administration. By 1993, six cod populations had collapsed, forcing a belated moratorium on fishing. Spawning biomass had decreased by at least 75 per cent in all stocks and by 90 per cent in three of the six stocks, and by 99 per cent in the case of the Northern cod, precisely the largest cod fishery in the world. The waters appeared to be dominated by crab and shrimp, rather than fish. Some 20 years later, by 2011 it became apparent that the cod fishery was returning slowly but surely.

Mr. Chair, the fishery had been and remains a solid source of income for my family. Of all the difficulties there are in the occupation of fishing for a living, I believe one of the biggest frustrations for a fisherperson is having little say

in how the resource they make their livelihood from is managed.

Declining crab and shrimp stocks are evident, and while the news of growth in cod is good news, the ground fishery is obviously not going to have the same value as the shellfish has had.

A fishing enterprise today is a business, Mr. Chair, a business with a million dollar price tag for many owners and operators. Support for our fishermen and our fisherwomen are needed, and solutions are needed sooner; however, fishing has been our livelihood for over 100 years. It is our bread and our butter. It is our culture. The fishery is a very important industry in the District of Placentia – St. Mary's, and very important for this government today.

As I go through my second year as a politician, I often reflect back on why I chose to run for the Liberal Party, why I wanted to become a politician. I never had any difficulty securing a job, and I knew this lifestyle was going to be very different than what I was used to. I knew I was going to have to give up a lot of things I enjoyed but I also knew my years of experience advocating for my son, who is an individual with a disability, and my vast volunteer experience empowered me with the skills I needed.

I often reflect back on my days as a MUN Liberal, and how I went out to work in the social development sector and why it took me down that path. Prior to running for this political party, I met with the now-Premier; I knew I had to believe in the person I was standing behind, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I left that meeting with absolutely no doubt that our present Premier was the right person to lead us out of the disaster that the PC government had placed us in. The provincial government must be redesigned to address our economic, social and fiscal challenges. We know we must position our province as a competitive place to live, work, do business and raise a family. We must think and act in a way that is long term and across government. We can no longer afford to operate this province as the previous administration was operating it.

The people of this province can be reassured, Mr. Chair, that reactionary thinking is a thing of

the past. With that said, Mr. Chair, I shall take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Oh, we got their attention. They're all listening now.

Mr. Chair, it gives me great pleasure to stand up in the House this afternoon to speak to Interim Supply. For those at home, for argument's sake, this is really a money bill. I'd like to take a few minutes, Mr. Chair, to talk about some of the great things that are happening in my District of Terra Nova, and certainly since I was elected as the MHA for the district.

Mr. Chair, education is an issue that is certainly dear to my heart. Prior to being elected in 2015, I had a long career in the provincial public service. I got to say, for more than half of those 26 years in the public service, I had worked as a child management specialist. In that role, I'd visit countless homes and work with families, teaching them and advising them about early childhood education, early childhood development, and its principles and techniques, to improve the social, physical, emotional and cognitive development of their children.

Late in the '90s, with the prevalence of autism and pervasive development disorders – certainly they were on the rise in this province – I moved into a regional senior therapist position. Mr. Chair, I was one of the very first people to be trained in applied behavioural analysis. I mention these things today because there is some significance about what is happening in our education system in this province today.

In the great District of Terra Nova, Mr. Chair, we have eight schools. We have Glovertown Academy, it's a fantastic school. I've been there many times. I was there in the last couple of weeks and actually had a good conversation with

the principal, Ms. Cheryl Gordon. Actually, I shared some time as well in the last two weeks with Ms. Gordon and one of her students who received a high school award for heritage at Government House, Nicole Chaulk. I was very pleased to be a part of that ceremony and to be there with her. It's just a testament of the kind of great things that are happening in the schools in my district.

Holy Cross School in Eastport; I had the pleasure in the last, I guess about three weeks ago, to be joined by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development as we launched Education Week. We were at that school in my district and it was a great opportunity to showcase the talent of the young students that are there and the teachers and the great things those teachers are doing.

Charlottetown Primary, of course, is a K to three school. Riverside Elementary; and I want to talk a little bit about Riverside Elementary in my time here this afternoon. It's a K to six school. We have Clarendville Middle School and Clarendville High School; Random Island Academy. I was actually at their high school graduation last year and that was a great event. I had the opportunity to present some awards to some of the students that were graduating from that school.

Southwest Arm Academy; I tend to spend a fair amount of time at Southwest Arm Academy. It's a K to 12 school as well, Mr. Chair. During Remembrance Day we were there and unveiled some great story panels of those who had served in the First World War. That was a great project that was brought forward by the historical society down there.

Mr. Chair, I just want to talk a little bit about Riverside Elementary. As I said, it's a K to six school with approximately 730 students. The school was constructed in 1985 but it's had some expansions because of continuing growth that's happening in Clarendville and the greater Clarendville area. It's had some expansions in 1989, 1991 and again just a few years ago in 2011.

Late in October of 2015, mere days before the election was called in this province, a contract was approved by the previous administration. It

was awarded to SNC-Lavalin to develop an extension to the school. The design work, Mr. Chair, was to include a new gymnasium and additional class spaces.

Now, the contract at the time was to a value of \$644,500. Everybody knows that we've had some significant challenges since we took over government. The previous administration estimated that there was going to be a deficit of \$1.1 billion. We know from the audited statements of March 31, 2016 that it was actually \$2.2 billion – significantly higher – which forced us as a government to make some significant decisions, some hard decisions.

One of those decisions, Mr. Chair, was that in April 2016, with only 1.6 per cent of that design work being completed, there was a decision that we had to defer that project. Now, I can tell you that everyone agrees that this school continues to have an overcapacity issue, especially in its common areas, its shared spaces.

But I can also tell you that I am an MHA who solves problems. I'm an MHA who seeks to find a solution, despite the fiscal challenges that we've been facing. So in May of last year, I, along with the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, met with concerned parents from the community, school administrators and the English School Board to discuss the overcapacity issues.

I also lobbied, and we were successful in having two modular classrooms installed onto the school last summer. That was in addition to the three modular classrooms that had been installed previously.

Mr. Chair, in last year's budget we allocated \$1.6 million to school infrastructure, including the completion of ongoing school construction projects, school extensions, and repairs and maintenance, like the addition of modular classrooms, to Riverside Elementary. The discussion continues where we've had joint council meetings with the English School Board.

I got to tell you, Mr. Chair, one of the things that happened I think was solely uncalled for. On October 14, parents decided to keep over 500 children out of that school on a Friday morning, and staffers from the Members opposite, in their

party, in their office, decided to send some of their people out to encourage the kids to stay out of school. Even the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands came along and also encouraged the children to stay out of school.

Now, I think that's absolutely shameful, Mr. Chair, to be doing that when they created such a fiscal mess for us in this province. We had to make some pretty tough decisions and then to go out and encourage demonstrations and keep children away from learning, in a learning environment – how low can it get?

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that myself and the Member for Bonavista, we've worked together. We've engaged the parents. We've tabled a report to the English School Board with a number of recommendations. Parents were concerned because of the overcapacity that there were air quality issues. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, that air quality study was done and found that there was no significant harm to the students attending the school.

We encouraged the English School Board – I'm looking at my time; I wish I had 30 minutes today, Mr. Chair, because there is so much I wanted to cover. One of the recommendations in the discussion and the report that the MHA for Bonavista and I tabled with the English School Board was that we would look at a reconfiguration of the school system, so, in January, we worked with the English School Board and they did go out and survey parents.

I can tell you, Mr. Chair, from the results, 64 per cent of the parents said that they would prefer to see a review of the school system in the Clarenville area. So that not only includes Riverside Elementary but it also includes the middle school and a high school.

Mr. Chair, I know my time is definitely winding down. It goes short when you're on your feet. I'd like the opportunity, at some point, to get up and continue to have this discussion about the great things that are going on in my district and the things that this side of the government are doing to address the mess that we were left when we took over government in November 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Exploits.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to first just make some pointers on some of the background stats and stuff on Bill 71, the Interim Supply bill, and then I'll close with some personal commentary.

In the report completed by the Auditor General on audit of financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2016, it shows a deficit for the year of \$2.2 billion – the largest in the province's history. Net debt at March 31, 2016 amounted to \$12.7 billion – also the largest level in the history of the province.

Despite this, former Premier Davis stated numerous times in 2015 that the deficit would be no more than \$1.1 billion. The 2015-16 Public Accounts show the continuation of a trend of significantly lower revenue, mostly the result of lower oil royalties due to the declines in oil production and pricing.

In 2011-2012, oil royalties accounted for almost 34 per cent of the provincial revenue. In 2015-16, this has fallen to less than 9 per cent, proving the instability of volatile commodities. The expected deficit for 2016-17 is now forecasted to be approximately \$1.5 billion – about \$700 million lower than the previous year.

Tax measures announced in *Budget 2016* have provided a significant boost to revenues. While this is an improvement from the original forecast contained in *Budget 2016*, it still remains a significant deficit. Relative to other provinces, the expected deficit in Newfoundland and Labrador is forecasted to be 10 times greater than the average of all other provinces.

Deficit management under the PC government: The unsustainable deficit that the province faces is due to reckless spending by the PC government since Danny Williams took office in 2003. Though the province was thriving under the revenue from offshore oil, the PC government failed at successfully managing the

increased revenue and ended up causing an unstable economic environment for us all. As stated by Premier Ball, the declining price of oil did not cause the current economic situation; it just revealed the truth.

Government spending under the Williams's administration skyrocketing and the reduction in income taxes meant that less money was coming into the province and more was being spent. In 2007 the following reductions occurred: tax on the first income tax bracket will be reduced from 10.57 per cent to 8.7 per cent; tax on the second bracket will be reduced from 16.16 per cent to 13.8 per cent; and tax on the third bracket will be reduced from 18.02 per cent to 16.5 per cent.

The 9 per cent surtax – essentially is a tax on tax – imposed upon middle- and high-income earners will be eliminated. Ultimately, the PC government focus is tax reductions on the higher classes rather than using the surplus to aid our struggling people. In 2008-2009, Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest income taxes in Atlantic Canada, despite running a deficit for that year.

Our government, Mr. Chair, delivered 64 pieces of legislation in 2016 compared with a PC average of 35 in the previous five years. Inaction on issues that matter to our people was a theme of the previous administration. We, on the other hand, were left with no other recourse but to implement difficult and unwanted measures to keep our ship from running aground that our colleagues opposite were happy to defer. Left with little or no leeway, compliments of the former government, we passed an ambitious legislative agenda that pursues for reasons of need to correct the litany of oversights and inactions by the former PC administration.

Muskrat Falls. Muskrat Falls. Yes, my colleague and our colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, only a brief few days ago commented that it was –

AN HON. MEMBER: That he was hoodwinked.

MR. DEAN: Yes, that he was hoodwinked. On a more serious note, it wasn't our colleague across the way that was hoodwinked, or any of

us. The worst of it all is that the people of the province were hoodwinked.

Anyway, the issue continues to come to the floor of the House, as well as through the news media, and at social events and church gatherings, and wherever you will find the people of the province, in an effort to find ways and means of mitigating the forecasted power rate increases soon to be brought to bear on the backs of the people of our province. Ultimately, the costing associated with this bottomless pit sees its proposed fix still having to be drawn down from the people's Treasury. Such projects should within a short term have the ability and expectations of enhancing the public Treasury, not positioning us for long-term drainage of the same people's Treasury.

This government and future governments have been positioned by the former government to have to continue to make hard choices on a go-forward basis in an effort to sustain programs and services that we need, never mind what we would like or what we would want. The fallout of finding ways and means to mitigate were resolved in a reduction of something else in the system, that's a given. From the feedback I've seen, and we've all seen, it's becoming more and more difficult for any of us on either side of the House, regardless of party stripes, to argue that reality. Again, thanks to the former administration.

The emergency service reduction at the Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood, the fiscal restraints we were handed despite our demographic reality showing long-term care needs at both the Grand Falls-Windsor and Botwood hospitals, reveal our limited fiscal ability to address these legitimate needs. Again, thanks to the former administration.

Our people don't deserve and do not deserve to see the doubling of hydro bills. They need roads that are fit to drive on. They need good, quality health care and other numerous services that regardless of where you sit, thanks to the previous government, will become harder to achieve for our people.

Yesterday being International Women's Day, Mr. Chair, I'd like to echo the sentiments from a well-known Newfoundland song in that A

Mother's Love is a Blessing but I can tell you and everybody else in this House that also there's a blessing when it comes to our wives, in particular my wife. She probably deserves a Member's statement after tolerating and being abused over the past several months through no fault of hers.

As I said in last spring's budget talks, and I'll stand by it again, that each and every one of us have to take some of the responsibility of where we find ourselves today. With that being said, when a wife sees her husband telling the truth and she's got to tolerate abuse then I'd like to take my hat off today to my wife.

Thank you and I'll have more to say down the road, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's indeed a privilege to get up here a second time now on Interim Supply. The former Member for Exploits was just up that time, we all have families and we all do a job in here, and I really – if his wife did take any abuse from some of the constituents or something like that, I think that's so unfair. I'm sure everybody in this House doesn't need family members to be attacked or anything else. When we do, we know we're in here trying our best, sometimes decisions that are made by government do have a large effect on people, but I hope people outside really realize that we're here trying to do our best for people and I'd never condone anybody doing anything like that.

I'm only going to speak for a few minutes today, and it's just one topic. It's a topic I spoke a little bit on in Question Period today. I want to talk a little bit about the fishery. I know the Minister of Fisheries today was up on some questions and stuff like that. Actually, I speak to the Minister of Fisheries on a regular basis. The fishery is a part of Newfoundland and Labrador, and it's a part of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that's gone back for centuries. It's the backbone of our whole society, as far as I'm

concerned. It's what brought people to Newfoundland and Labrador and it's what I hope, someday, will keep people here.

It's so important that we take it and understand that the fishery means a lot to a lot of people. I know in my district, and in my family, the fishery plays a huge role. I go back to the days of my first job. I'll always tell about it, going along in a fish truck and weighing fish. My father was a fisherman, and I hauled many a cod trap myself and went out and jigged lots of fish myself also.

So I understand, and I think that as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the fishery brings a special part to us, just to be able to go out and catch a cod, or just to be getting involved in the fishery. We understand what it does to rural Newfoundland and Labrador. I can't even say really rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Like I said, if you look in St. John's now and the amount of crab that's landed over in the basin across the way, because most of the harvesters in the area land their fish there.

The fishery is in a real crisis these days. It's really in decline. I know last year in the crab – the year before, they saw some declines in some areas. I'm not going to name the area but the area, they call it, is going to the southward down our way. The quota last year was like 9,000 pounds.

What they normally do, it's one trip. So you go out with the boat, you throw your pots out, you wait 20 hours, haul the pots back and usually you get your 9,000 pounds of crab. So you make one trip because of the cost. It's huge cost to go and fuel your boat the second time to have to make a trip. But they always could do it in one trip. Last year, that 9,000 pounds was down to 1,500. I know crews that didn't even go because it wasn't worth their while.

We have to be careful on how we manage stocks. Now, there are all kinds of reasons for the decline in crab. A lot of people that I know – science will say that it's the warming of water. I believe it's a lot to do with the revitalization of the cod fishery. I know myself last year catching cod, we were down in my yard and we were gutting one cod and there were eight baby crabs in that cod. That tells me that as the cod comes

back, obviously, there's going to be a huge decline in the crab.

It's a scary situation because the crab fishery – people will understand who are involved in the crab fishery – really did come around the right time. I guess that's the way it works. As the cod declined, the crab obviously grew. And now as the cod are coming back, it's working the other way. It's important that we have management in place to be able to adjust to this.

This year when the science came out again, DFO came out and they talked about a decline in the biomass of 80 per cent, and that's since 2013. The minister was right today in one part that he said about how we have to listen to the harvesters because what happened last year with the decline, the decline was more in the 200-mile area that they saw the biggest decline in crab in 3L.

In that area alone, there are six different sections in 3L that are fished. They're called inshore and midshore and offshore. The offshore is used with the bigger vessels. Actually those bigger vessels have a huge investment because most of them have tanks inside that keep the crab alive because they're gone for so many days at a time.

The midshore is usually another bigger boat that has, say, something over 42 feet. They just go for a full day but can be gone for a couple of days. The inshore crab, which is probably from 12 miles – and, in actual fact, if you go down off where I'm from, Flatrock, we can see a lot of the boys out catching crab. That's the inshore.

Now, last year the inshore crab fishery was really good. The catches, talking to harvesters, were as good as they were any other year. Actually, in some cases, they'll tell you they were really good. The midshore, they saw a bit of decline. But the offshore they saw a real huge decline in what was caught off there. A lot of trips were going out there, coming back with boats used to catching 30,000 or 40,000, only caught 3,000 or 4,000. So it's important that the management of these areas be done properly. Again, it's important that we talk to the harvesters and understand where they're coming from.

My whole thing with the crab fishery – and like I said, I have family members involved in the fishery so I understand a little bit about it. This year they're telling me that the price of crab is going to be up. It goes like this, it goes up – and it depends on the markets in the US and Japan. And if Japan's inventory runs down, apparently the price really goes up high. For harvesters, this year, if there is a cut – which is not a good thing, because I mean you're going to be cutting for a few years – at least the price will be up high.

But my concern is – and I think it should be government's major concern and not wait too late to do anything – is about our plant workers. If you do a reduction in crab and you reduce it 40 per cent or 30 per cent overall – now in different areas it may have a reduction of 10 per cent, others areas may have 20, but the overall reduction. If you do that – and we've got, I believe, I could be corrected, but I think there's almost 24 processing plants that really handle crab in this province, a lot of plants – if you take 40 per cent or 50 per cent of the crab away from the processing, I mean our communities are really going to hurt. There's going to be a time that government's going to have to step in and they've done it in the past, in the cod moratorium. We saw what happened in '92 when the cod moratorium came in and the effect that it had on communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

And the same effect will happen on rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Most of the plants are definitely in rural Newfoundland. Now, a lot of it's landed in St. John's and big areas like that, in Port de Grave and areas like that, in Harbour Grace, but the plants are all over the province. They are all over the Island. If you look down the Southern Shore, there are probably three or four plants down the Southern Shore. There are three plants in the Southern Shore that handles crab.

All I ask the minister today is we've got to get together, I don't care how we do it, as a government and you've really got understand that these cuts are coming. It's going to be too late down the road when we don't look it and see what we can do for people. Because I tell you, talking to harvesters, talking to plant workers, they're really concerned. And the effect that the crab industry would have on our

economy is unbelievable. It's millions and hundreds of millions of dollars that it brings in to Newfoundland and Labrador – hundreds of millions of dollars that it brings in to communities all over this province from one end to the other end.

It is really time we have a process in place. I saw today the Advisory Council, the chair was done today, but we need someone – the big part of the Advisory Council that government had on their Advisory Council was the strategic plan on the revitalization of cod. We know that we need the cod to come back because of the declines that are going to happen in crab.

We really have to understand the markets that are available. One time when I was involved in the fishery everything was done with a cod block that was sold to New England and the Boston market, that area, the States, everything was just cod block, cod block, but apparently that market is not there anymore. So it's important that we work with industry to make sure we understand what markets are available.

People are telling me that the new market in the States right now is the head on and the gut out; it's the whole cod that they want. Even the fishermen, this year, that were catching their cod, they sold a lot of cod with the head on and gut out and it had to stay at a certain temperature in order for the market. Because if they grade it – once it got to the fish plant if you wanted to get 75 cents a pound for it, it had to be grade one. But if it lost a grade on it and it went to a grade b, it would go down to about 40 cents a pound.

We have to develop these markets and we have to work with industry and now is the time to do it. It's not to wait and see what's going to happen down the road, let's see what the cuts are going to be. There are markets that need to be developed. There's a lot of work that needs to be done in our fishery. It's so important to people in Newfoundland and Labrador. We should be doing it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to start off by thanking my friend for Mount Pearl North for the kind comments he gave to me in response to the Ministerial Statement on the Tim Hortons Brier yesterday. It was kind of surprising, but it's amazing what two individuals can come to an agreement with over a Black Horse.

With that said, Mr. Chair, I do take exception to some of the words that his colleagues made yesterday directed towards Members of this side of the House. Comments, I would say, of a sleeveen nature, comments that are directed here and misleading the general public that we, Members on this side, were – this is not directed toward the Member for Mount Pearl North –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KING: This is directed towards certain Members of that caucus who said that we ran away after the budget last year, afraid to go to our districts. Mr. Chair, that person must have been mistaken with their budget from 2013 where you couldn't find a soul in their districts.

That being said, I for one went to a firemen's ball in Musgravetown the Saturday night after the budget. We've had Members go to all their events that following weekend, and for them to say we were hiding away, Mr. Chair, that's disingenuous. The same Members also said that we don't have a plan for anything.

Well, Mr. Chair, I'm going to talk about a plan. I know it's been touched on a number of times the last couple of days, but I want to talk about the five-year roads plan that was brought forward by the Minister of Transportation and Works earlier this year. This has been a long time coming and it puts some stability in road paving here, and road construction and maintenance here in Newfoundland and Labrador. This five-year innovative plan is going to invest \$77.2 million in road infrastructure this year in 2017-18.

As the Minister of Transportation and Works stated yesterday, tenders are already out for some jobs. We have some right now that are being looked at, at the moment, and most will be out by the end of March. This gets away from the pork-barrel politics of the previous government where you'd have a tender roll out in September to pave a hundred metres of road. In some cases putting new pavement over good payments because they saw paving as a legitimate means to say your MHA is doing something.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I understand it's Thursday, but I just want to ask for a sense of respect here in the House. I mean everybody will get an opportunity to speak. Again, I just ask for respect for the Member who's been given the opportunity to speak here today.

MR. KING: Thank you for the protection, Mr. Chair, I must have hit a nerve.

So getting back to the pork-barrel pavement, we decided as a government with our five-year plan that we were going to take the politics out of paving. What a long-term plan does, Mr. Chair, is it gives you more value for money.

I look at the projects that are going to be done in the District of Bonavista – the beautiful and historic District of Bonavista, I would say – and you're looking at major projects. It's not just the 100 or 200 metres that you'd normally see done, we're looking at four, five, six kilometres straight going through. You look over the carry-over work that's going to be done between Route 230A, which is between Georges Brook and the airstrip on the Bonavista highway, that was due to be done last year. The project in Terra Nova took a little longer than expected. So we're going to see that done immediately this spring.

What you're also going to see done in the District of Bonavista this year, Mr. Chair, where 100 per cent of funding has been announced – and I'll get to that in a little bit – you're going to see a stretch of pavement completed from Father Morris Pond, which is just outside of Melrose in

the district up to Port Union, one of the last stretches along Route 230 that desperately needed to be done. So we're going to see that done.

What you're also going to see done this year, Mr. Chair, is a stretch between World Pond Road in Port Rexton up to Champney's Arm turnoff, and that's a pretty rough road as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Elliston? I'll get to Elliston in a second.

How the funding is actually structured over the next few years – like I said, it's structured for early tendering so we actually get shovels in the ground, paving machines rolling. You get people employed earlier so you get a full construction season done.

This year, 2017-18, we have 100 per cent of our announcements made right now. So people who go online, onto the TW website, they're going to see our plan. The road announcements that are actually done are in place, but over the next few years you're going to see ability for other projects to come up. So people in my district who say, what about our road? I can say, well, it's a living document where next year 75 per cent of the funding has been announced. So you have 25 per cent that's going to come in there, and it's going to be done on the same scoring matrix that we currently have.

In 2019-2020, you have 50 per cent of our roads allotted for, and 2020 to 2022 you've got 25. So there's lots of space for other roads to get in there, and I'll certainly be lobbying – although there are no politics involved, us as MHAs are out and about in our districts, we know the condition of the roads, know the economic benefits that certain roads provide in our districts. I'll be talking with the minister, our regional director, just highlighting the concerns that are brought to me on a daily basis about the roads in the District of Bonavista.

We talked about what's going to be done this year. Next year, Mr. Chair, we're going to have the road to Elliston done. If any of you are familiar with Elliston, it has become quite the tourist attraction. It's a road six kilometres long

that you can't drive over. You can, but your car doesn't come out very good afterwards. That's one of the biggest complaints we get from visitors as they leave the area, no one told us about the road to Elliston. So next year that road is going to be done and it's long overdue. That's going to bring some more tourism into the area, more money into the District of Bonavista.

Also, next year you're going to see the road between Musgravetown and Bunyan's Cove resurfaced, and that's long overdue, Mr. Chair.

Also, what's going to be done in 2018-2019 is the resurfacing of a stretch of road between Route 233, which is the turnoff in Lethbridge going towards Musgravetown and up to Route 234, which is going out towards Winter Brook. So that's a lot of work that's being done over the next two years, and I would say it's well overdue.

The early tenders, like I said, are saving you money in the long run because you have the equipment in. You're not bringing equipment from one part of the district to another just so that you can say our paving machine is in the area, you get 100 metres done. This is significant work, Mr. Chair.

What's some other good things within Transportation and Works that's been done over the past year? What you've seen by Transportation and Works over the past year is something that people from Musgravetown, Bloomfield, Canning's Cove, Bunyan's Cove have been asking for is get the brush cut along Route 233 to Port Blandford.

It's an honour to have a colleague, such as the Member for Terra Nova, where we can share our resources and share our effort to get stuff done. We saw this past fall the brush cutting from Port Blandford down to Musgravetown, something that was long overdue, something that people in those areas were crying out for.

This past summer we saw two moose vehicle accidents on that stretch of highway, Mr. Chair. I was certainly glad when the brush cutting was approved for that area, and my constituents in that area were quite happy with the Minister of Transportation and Works.

With that said, Mr. Chair, I talked about the five-year roads plan, how it benefits the District of Bonavista. My time is getting short right now, so I thank you for the opportunity to speak on Interim Supply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Bragg): The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. Welcome.

I wrote some notes here. In actual fact, I started writing them yesterday. I must have been fairly fired up because I was in the alliterative mode of my colleague. Pork-barrel pavement is a really good one. I hadn't quite come up with that. The best I'd come up with was a diatribe of disinformation and the duo of doom from the Third Party. I was obviously fired up about something.

It was really around the hyperbole of the week, the last couple of Questions Periods leading up to yesterday, where quite frankly there was a lot of emotion and people were getting agitated about words, which I would have thought were perfectly normal discourse. The facts of the case are, there's a narrative being crafted from the opposite side of the House, which has very little basis in fact. It has been crafted with a particular world view, with a particular desire to create an atmosphere of agitation, an atmosphere of fear, and set the ground for their political point scoring up to and after the budget.

So I mean, really, how do you deal with that? You deal with that by not letting it pass unchallenged, I think. That's the first thing. I think essentially the fundamental problem with the PC Party is this total disconnect between their current comments and the current state of the economy in which we find ourselves. Somehow, this current state is totally devoid and totally separate from anything that went before December of 2015.

Somehow they have no role in that at all. So I think one of the roles that we have, when we have an opportunity like this, to stand up, is to start to correct some of that misinformation and disinformation that is being done in a particular

self-serving fashion. Essentially, I think we still have to go back to the fundamental message that we inherited a deficit of unparalleled proportions either in this province at any stage in its history, whatever the shade of government or style of government, or across this country, regardless of where you come from.

We have various comments that others have done it better, or others are managing their similar problems somehow better. But they all start from different positions. I know the orange wave in Alberta will appeal to a certain segment, and the facts of the case are, they started with an extremely good credit rating, money in the bank and resiliency from an economic perspective that we haven't had after 12 years of Tory misrule. Saskatchewan is going to have to grasp some hard nettles, as is Manitoba, but they also start from positions with different levels of strength.

The facts of the case are we have the highest per capita revenue of any province in this country. It is not a revenue issue. We have a spending problem. The previous PC administration set the tone for spending like drunken sailors on Water Street on a Saturday night. They have hacked their way –

AN HON. MEMBER: George Street.

MR. HAGGIE: Well, you never know. They end up rolling down the hill. They're on Harbour View Drive and heading for the bubble.

The facts of the case are \$25 billion out the door in a very short period of time.

AN HON. MEMBER: I take exception to the drunken sailors (inaudible).

MR. HAGGIE: I apologize to any of my ex-naval colleagues.

What we have is a situation of financial hemorrhage. The first rule of hemorrhage is you stick your finger in the hole and stop it from getting any worse. That's what we started to do with the budget last year. We now have a hold on all the revenue levers that we could. We have to start to address the other problem, which is we have a core public sector, public service, or have had, that is way larger than any other

jurisdiction in Canada. You cannot blame it solely on geography.

The big criticism they level on the other side which is one, I think, represents some kind of thought impediment or a refusal to accept what is out there, is that there is no plan. That is blatantly misleading the general public. *The Way Forward* came out in November. It is crystal clear, 25 fairly succinct pages, a balanced scorecard approach with short-, medium- and long-term objectives and time lines whereby we will be judged against those criteria that we set out as yardsticks. It's there, it's in business, and it is working. It isn't a strategy.

The previous government were masters of strategy that was never implemented and if I have heard once today or yesterday or the day before about all the things they were going to have done but never quite got around to in 12 years, it is like a broken record. It's a broken record. It really is.

It must be an embarrassment to them quite frankly because the numbers of things that have cropped up lately that have been delivered by this side of the House where they have said well, we thought of that or we started that, but they never finished it. They never got anywhere except shuffling paper, all the while \$25 billion goes out the window.

So we actually have a plan, we're implementing it, and you've seen some of the concrete things: the Canada Fluorspar announcement today; the announcements from within my own department about various health initiatives that have been on the books for ages, never moved, never moved until government changed.

We have a plan, it's cohesive, it's internally consistent, and it's a balanced scorecard. We've got government goals and underneath those, there are departmental goals and for our ABCs like our regional health authorities, they've got deliverables they're expected to live up to. They will be judged on that performance and, quite frankly, if you don't perform, there will have to be serious consequences.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. HAGGIE: We cannot go on hemorrhaging money at the rate we are at the moment. From my own department, from my own sphere of health, I'll give you a number. This is a number that's actually verified independently and not one that's just sucked out of the ether to stir up the media: \$7,132 is what this province spends every year for every man, woman and child on health care.

I'll give you another number: \$5,998; that is the average for the rest of Canada. For those of you who are clever or have your phones, you can work out the difference, but it's north of \$1,100 per person, per year. We don't get that value. Our outcomes are not \$1,100 a head any better. So you have two opportunities there: You can find out where the waste is and trim the expense and you can get better value for the dollars that you actually put in.

There is no excuse other than bad management – which we have inherited, which we are fixing. There is no excuse for that gap, absolutely none. To stand here and say it's all your fault, you haven't done anything when, for 12 years, they've sat on their bums and twiddled their thumbs and spent \$25 billion, really and honestly is the height of disinformation.

And if I call it deception and you want to chastise me over it, so be it. The facts of the case are you cannot give out incorrect information and not expect people to call you out on it. Because every time from now on that crowd over there, as my colleague down there says, that crowd over there do it, I'm going to call them out on it. It's wrong and they're not going to get away with it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Before I recognize the next speaker, I would ask people to keep the noise level down in this building this afternoon. I realize we got another hour, hour and a half to go.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you for the protection, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, it's always a pleasure to rise and talk about the great District of Torngat Mountains. Torngat Mountains refers to a range of mountains that is approximately 400 miles north of Nain, and the correct name is actually Torngait Mountains, which refers to legends of giants that lived in the mountains. These days, it gets somewhat tangled up with the Torngat Mountains National Park.

Anyway, the district itself, you can take the whole Island of Newfoundland and fit it in my district. I do have the smallest population, but I do have the biggest geographical size district. Sometimes it's challenging. For example, the past weekend, I actually got as far as Goose Bay and couldn't make it to my district because of weather. So weather plays a big factor in my district, but I'd like to talk about some of the things that happen in my district or are happening, Mr. Chair.

Some of them are from initiatives that were announced by the former administration – and I do give them credit for that – and the projects were seen through to completion in the last four years, and a lot of it in the last year. We've got new fire halls in communities now, where we didn't have fire halls or we just had rough shacks. We've got multi-purpose centres in many communities, where communities can access a facility to do recreational programs and staging.

This Saturday coming, I'm actually going to my home community and there's a grand opening of a brand new arena. It's well under way. This brings three arenas in my district. Yesterday, the community of Nain hosted the all-star legends for a hockey game, and it was a well-received event.

The arena in Makkovik, Mr. Chair, the announcement was made by the former minister of Municipal Affairs on the PC side, Kevin O'Brien. When he finished making the announcement, I went to him and I told him, Mr. O'Brien we only have one arena in my community; we do not have five. He gave me some advice and said you have to make an announcement five times. Anyway, I just want

to invite all my colleagues to Makkovik Saturday and join me in opening the arena there.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the comments from the other side in respect to Interim Supply. I'd especially like to mention the Member for Mount Pearl North in the media recently acknowledged that some of the damage that was done, he accepts. The size of the civil service 49,000 – everyone agrees that this is unsustainable, and the Member for Mount Pearl North actually admits to that. So it is good to see that they're slowly starting to take some responsibility for their action, or I should say their inaction.

The plan, we always talk about a plan and the crowd on the other side says there is no plan, but time and time again I've heard my colleagues on this side stand up and talk about a way forward, talk about a plan to address some of the challenges that we have. I should say challenges that we've inherited, Mr. Chair.

The amount for Interim Supply is consistent with the last five years, even with the huge challenges and financial restraints that we have. Mr. Chair, I'd like to talk about the last 12 years prior to 2015. I heard my colleague for Gander talk about it and as a matter of fact I heard many of my colleagues talk about it because it is a reality. In 12 years from 2003 to 2015, oil revenue was at its greatest. We had some \$25 billion in revenue, \$29 billion total over that 12 years, and what it should have done is it should have put this province well into the surplus situation and we wouldn't have to be dealing with the mess we have now.

I heard the Member for Cape St. Francis talking earlier and I'd just like to go back to *Hansard* just a few short years ago and quote some of this comments. I can read it and this is accessible in *Hansard* – I quote: I just look at what happened when we came here, when our government came here in 2003. I don't blame anybody. Times were different. They did not have the money we have today. I just take responsibly for what we are doing and what we've done since 2003 in making smart investments.

Now, Mr. Chair, this comment was after 10 years of Progressive Conservative governance; 10 years with \$29 billion of revenue and, as

many of my colleagues stated and I will state it again, we have a \$2.2 billion deficit. Now, it took 12 years for this to happen. We can't fix this mistake in one year, but we've made a difference.

I'd like to state some more information that Members opposite pointed out just a few short years ago. The Member for Mount Pearl North in 2012 said: Prosperity is about fiscal responsibility. Once again, we are delivering a budget that is all about fiscal responsibility. In 2015, the PCs said that we're projecting a \$1.1 billion deficit. That alone is a total contradiction of the Member for Mount Pearl North to talk about fiscal responsibility. That is a monumental deficit.

Now, Mr. Chair, we assume that through the politics and protection of priorities that this number would be significantly different, but what we were not ready for was the fact the deficit was actually double of what the progressive government said in 2015: \$2.2 billion.

I don't care what anyone says, when you project a \$1.1 billion deficit and the deficit is actually \$2.2 billion, it is a game changer. Mr. Chair, it's not easy to go forward after inheriting such a financial mess and what the people of this province are in for.

It's good to hear the Member for Mount Pearl North come out and take some responsibility at least for it. They had multiple opportunities, Mr. Chair, to come forward and billions of dollars of resources to address the issue.

In 2015, we don't have \$25 billion but we do have \$2.2 billion deficit. Now the way forward for us, Mr. Chair, is to address this debt whichever way we can to go forward with it. It is not an easy task. Government Members on that side in 2012-2013 actually said that it's a hard job, and this is 10 years after being in government. They said this in 2012 referring to 2003. Mr. Chair, we have a monumental task, we will go forward with it.

With that, Mr. Chair, I will take my place. It's been a pleasure to speak to Interim Supply.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm very pleased to stand and speak to the business of supply. The House consumed with the business of supply, I'd like to offer respective of the Liberal government here on this side, we seem to be successfully supplying this House with some good, strong debates and information about where our government is going, what our priorities are, our strategies are to be able to advance the economy and the social well-being of Newfoundland and Labrador. What our party is doing is we are supplying a strong foundation, a strong fiscal foundation, a strong social foundation and a foundation for hope.

We are supplying what this province needs at this juncture in our province's history. There is absolutely no doubt about it, when we came to government we faced dire circumstances. In fact, it was circumstances that were a long time building, a long time coming.

What the Opposition, however, Mr. Chair, have been supplying this House through the course of this debate is somewhat of a revisionist history, because they are trying to suggest through their revisionist history that they supplied good fiscal management. How can anyone stand after having spent \$25 billion –

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. BYRNE: Twenty-five b-b-b-billion dollars in oil revenues basically leaving the province at the end of their term with a massive, massive structural and cash deficit. That is what the PC Party, or the former PC government supplied.

So in this, the debate about supply, let me speak a little bit about what our government is supplying to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and, in particular, in the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. I'd like to talk a little bit more, as well, about what the Liberal government is supplying to the people on the West Coast and to my own consistency of Corner Brook, but allow me first to address the matters within my own ministerial portfolio.

We decided, as a government, that immigration – to be able to stem some of the challenges with our demographics, to be able to stem some of the challenges with growing our population, given our demographics and given the circumstances we are in, we recognize that immigration can play one of a number of different roles and parts to grow our population. Immigration was a very, very important component.

What we supply to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is we supplied a refreshed and we invigorated a modern-day look at our Immigration Action Plan. We supplied a view that recognizes we needed to work with the federal government, we needed to work with stakeholders in Newfoundland and Labrador – for example, like our ethnic communities, like those who provide post-secondary education, like our university where a number of current and future new Canadians come from and are attracted to our province.

We also reflected on the fact that we needed to work with those who provide resettlement services. So what was the strategy that we supplied? We worked with the federal government to sign the first-ever Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Immigration Agreement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Now, why is that important? Well, that's an agreement that was just over 10 years in the making – 10 years. It was first proposed back in 2007 but absolutely no action taken whatsoever.

Now other provinces, of course, have established their own respective agreements on immigration but our province decided not to. Well, we were the last ones coming in but we're going to do a great job working with our federal partners. Most importantly, our stakeholders are those that are really advocating for increased capacity and growth in our immigration numbers. Those stakeholders include our employers because that's what our immigration strategy is really focusing on, is being able to supply skills and talents, much needed workforce skill sets where they are needed. We're going to put Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians to work first and foremost, but in those skill sets that are still left unfulfilled, that's where our immigration strategy plays the biggest role.

So what did the Opposition, the former PCs supply? Nothing, there was no strategy. There was no action plan. In fact, there was an agreement waiting to be happened, not only through the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Immigration Agreement but we were the last jurisdiction in Canada to sign a Foreign Credentials Recognition agreement, Mr. Chair, the last jurisdiction in Canada. We took in over – this government took in, partnering with the federal government for \$800,000 that was on the table for the last number of years and not drawn down upon by the former government. That's what they supplied.

So let's move on now to workforce development. What our government is doing in supplying the province with a stronger and more capable workforce – well, I'll tell you what the former PC administration supplied. We have a central agreement called the Canada-Newfoundland Labour Market Development Agreement, Mr. Chair. It's a very, very important piece of business. It was signed some time ago, but here's what they supplied.

That agreement is valued at approximately \$126 million per year to be able to provide assistance, financial assistance to apprentices, to those going to school trying to advance their own educations and their own careers. It provides funding for community organizations to unions, to anyone who's very active in developing our workforce and our skills and trades in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what that money is available for.

What did the PC administration do? Well, that took that \$126 million and sometimes they didn't even spend it. At times, \$13 million per year were sent back to Ottawa unspent. That's what the PCs supplied this province during their time when they administered our province.

So we look at other things. We look at our post-secondary education facilities themselves. We are supplying a renewed, reinvigorated positioning for our post-secondary institutions.

Just today, I was listening to the CBC, for example, where the university came forward and said they are looking at their tenders now for their core science facility. What is that? It's, of course, a facility to be able to house their engineering and science faculties, their labs, their educational infrastructure there; \$325 million financed largely through the provincial government, largely through the Building Canada Fund and through White Paper funding. That's what this government, even despite hard times, economic times but hard financial times we are prioritizing post-secondary education as a key economic driver and a key skills driver.

I look at what we're doing with the College of the North Atlantic. When I first became the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, one of the very first things I looked at was CNA, our public college system. I've always been a huge, huge supporter and fan of our public college system. It has a network of 17 campuses located throughout the entire province in strategic regional hubs. It provides not only access to post-secondary education, but, as I remembered it from years ago, it used to be a key community driver. It provided key community services not only on social and educational developments, but on economic developments.

I think it would be fair, it would be reasonable, and it would be truthful to argue that the College of the North Atlantic has fallen on hard times in the last number of years. We are supplying a renewed, reinvigorated positioning for the College of the North Atlantic. We are supplying a new, fresh vision.

And while the PC government formally supplied at 25 per cent, nearly \$25 million cut to the College of the North Atlantic, we are rebuilding that institution, not in its former face, not in the vision that the former PC government had, but in a brand new vision which includes not only excellence in post-secondary education, in trades, in academics, but also in community engagement in entrepreneurship, in workforce development.

Just recently, I was privileged to stand with the Premier and announce a new concept, a new think tank called the Workforce Innovation Centre which will serve all the Province of

Newfoundland and Labrador. That think tank will work with stakeholders whether it labour groups, whether it academic groups, whether it be industry groups, municipal governments, it does not matter. As long as someone comes to the table with new, fresh ideas on how to grow our workforce, that's what this think tank will do.

So, Mr. Chair, I see I could on for another seven or eight hours on this because there's so much to talk about. However, I will conclude by simply saying this: We are supplying vision. We are supplying a new approach to fiscal discipline but fiscal responsibility and fiscal growth. We are supplying hope. What has supplied by the Opposition during the course of this debate on the business of Interim Supply is revisionist history and nothing but a dark, dismal picture.

And I will now conclude.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

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

I'm pleased to stand here today to discuss Bill 71. I'd have to agree with the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. He made some comments yesterday about the nervousness that some of the staff are facing within the civil service. I would have to tend to agree with that, but one of the things that we disagree on is the reason why they are feeling that nervousness and feel that angst that goes along with this: The mismanagement of the previous administration and the fiscal reality that we face that they have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Because at the end of the day, they shouldn't have to feel that way, and the blame should lie directly at the feet of where it should sit, which is at the PC Party and the former administration. So I do agree with them on the first hand, that they do feel that, but I disagree on the reasons why.

I was also shocked, and a bit dismayed that the Member for – I'm going to stick with my good friend the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. I was shocked and amazed that he brought up – he even had the gall and audacity to bring up the fact of the relationship that we

share with our federal counterparts as Liberal Party. It's shocking because knowing his colleagues and the relationship they had with the former administration in Ottawa, and the fact that they spent many a time out waiting with the doors locked and rain coming down on them just to get a meeting, just to have a discussion with the prime minister of the country.

That doesn't exist on this side of the House, and hasn't existed since the first part of November – or sorry, the last part of October with the election of Justin Trudeau as our prime minister. And on November 30, with our ministers and our Premier, they don't have to wait outside in the rain. At least they get inside the door, maybe get a cup of hot coffee while they're waiting to meet the prime minister and to discuss the important business of governing in our province.

It's disappointing that he would bring that up and even highlight the fact. We're after bringing to the table millions and millions and millions of new dollars to this province that had been left behind by the previous administration's lack of relationship with, one would think, their cousin, Prime Minister Harper at the time. So it's a little disingenuous that he would bring that up, considering how positive the relationship has been on this side.

I also was a little bit amazed and my colleague behind me for Bonavista – what a Member, by the way – brought up a concern that was expressed by somebody that I was very surprised that would bring up such a thing, the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. I was very surprised because he knows better. I never ran away from anybody, and I don't run away from any one of my constituents. Regardless of how bad the situation may be for them, I'm willing to talk to them, meet with them on any given day. He knows that. I'm sure he knows that and he should, anyway, because I know how good a constituency person he is.

So I'm very disappointed that he would bring that up because there are many of us on this side of the House that never ran away from the tough decisions we had to make. I would argue that the people that were running away from the tough decisions are the people that sit on the opposite side of the House now, who decided to run away from making the tough decisions when they

should have been making them when oil was at its peak, when they had the opportunity to try to govern this province in the right fiscal way, and that's where the problem lay, and that's where I think there's a big issue with what he had to say.

Anyone who knows me, knows that I'm a positive person, so I don't want to dwell on the past, on what the hon. Members were speaking about there. I want talk about the fact that we've taken responsibility for the situation we've been given. However tough it may be, we have decided as a group, as a caucus, as a Cabinet, and from leadership from our Premier, that we're willing to make those tough decisions. Which is difficult, there's no doubt.

My colleague for Exploits mentioned it earlier, how sometimes our families are taken to task on some of the decisions we've had to make on this side, which is disheartening, and that's not something they signed up for. From my perspective I'm a little surprised that they would have to face that, but I also understand that people are very upset at the situation we've been dealt.

I think people now are starting to realize where it was misplaced anger before at us – some of the decisions we've made, yes, have we made mistakes, undoubtedly, but that's how it happens. We're going to learn from those mistakes, we're going to make those changes that need to be, when we need to fix the course of the ship when it's a little off, the lack of changes that the PC government, the previous administration, didn't make. That's where we run into problems on the difference on this side.

I do want to take the opportunity now to talk about my district – the beautiful, historic district – maybe not so beautiful as Cape St. Francis, as my colleague would say, but it is a beautiful district, historic Virginia Waters – Pleasantville. It's a beautiful district to represent, it's very diverse, and I'm very happy to be speaking right after the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour here today because my district is probably the most economically diverse, arguably, and also socially and culturally diverse.

We have great disparaging amounts of economic indicators there from both sides. We have some

people that are struggling to make it, and we have some people that are doing very, very well – like many districts, but one of the things I pride myself on in my district is the ability to get around and meet many different community groups that are there.

One of the things that we do have in our district is a very good cultural hub in my district, bordered right around many different nationalities, many different cultures that come out and form a beautiful melting pot for activities in the district to attend. So I'm very lucky to have that.

I would be remiss if I didn't bring up in the discussion of diversity the beautiful event that happened at the mosque on Logy Bay Road in my district: the human shield.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: I was very surprised and happy to see such a great turnout. I shouldn't say surprised. It warmed the heart, overwhelmed by the outcry of support that we received to come to that part of my district. I know that the individuals that practise their faith in that mosque were very touched and warmed by what they seen as well.

Anytime we have the ability to stand up and send a clear message against Islamophobia and hate, we should do that every day of the week, on every corner, in every hour. So I'd just like to thank my colleagues who did come out and some of the colleagues of the House who were there as well. I was very happy to see them and I know that it warmed the people in MANAL very much so to have them there.

I'd also like to take the opportunity as my colleague for Terra Nova, who mentioned the schools in my district. I have three schools in my district and one sort of school that's just outside my district but represents a lot of people in my district.

We have Vanier and Virginia Park Elementary and St. Paul's Junior High and then I always sort of take ownership of Mary Queen of Peace as well because many of the students that attend Mary Queen of Peace are from my district. So I just wanted to highlight some of the great work

that those institutions are doing and the excellent work that the educators do to support and uplift the children that live in my district. I just want to say a big thank you to them.

In particular, I'd like to also bring up one of the big investments that our government has made in my district. Sometimes when you change a government – we're only in the second year of our mandate now – some things are going to start from the previous administration. I would like to give them credit for starting the school in my district, Virginia Park Elementary, but I will like to give credit to the current Minister of Transportation and Works who's delivering on it and it's ahead of schedule, we think, which is great. I know he hates to have me say it's a head of schedule, but it's doing very well, progressing very nicely.

The students are very excited to be hopefully moving in there early next year – or, sorry, early in the school year of 2017. So I'd be remiss if I didn't say a big thank you to the Transportation and Works Department and under his capable leadership to get this done and make sure that we've done our due diligence to ensure the property is completely safe for those children. It's going to be a beautiful school for them to grow up and be a hub of activity for my district and the students in my district for many, many years to come. I would be remiss if I didn't say that.

There are many other districts that I'd like to talk about now. I know my time is getting short, unfortunately. I may get a chance to get up again later on today to discuss some of the many charity organizations that do some great work in my district, that our government has been able to help through different grant programs. Without that support from the government and from Children, Seniors and Social Development, many of these organizations wouldn't be able to do the great work that they do in our community. Thank you to the minister for her great work on that file and helping to ensure that those children and seniors that participate in activities are given that perfect opportunity to do those –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. B. DAVIS: – activities in a cost-effective manner.

CHAIR: I remind the speaker his time for speaking has expired.

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always an honour and privilege to stand in our places here in the House of Assembly to represent our great districts. Of course I represent the historic, strong District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. To start off today and what I'll be speaking about, I'm going to be promoting the Kraft Hockeyville event. As we know, I've mentioned it here in our Legislature now several times, that Bay Roberts has made the top 10 for the Kraft Hockeyville 2017.

So, guys, I'm calling on each and every one of you in here, and of course Newfoundlanders home and abroad, to tune in and vote online on Sunday and Monday – so that's March 12 and 13; the details are available on the Kraft website. I know the Member for Mount Pearl North is a very big supporter of athletics in his district, so I'm calling on him and all of our hon. colleagues to do the same. So again, guys, that's on Sunday and Monday, March 12 and 13 for Kraft Hockeyville for Bay Roberts.

I want to send out a big shout-out to the town residents, of course, and residents in the surrounding communities, as well as the town staff and the team at Powell's Supermarket in Bay Roberts. Powell's Supermarket is a big contributor to the economy in Conception Bay North, but they certainly came together – all hands came together and made sure that Bay Roberts landed in the top 10. And that's an accomplishment in itself, of course, to make the top 10 of other communities across our country. So again, guys, on Sunday now, March 12 and March 13.

I'll talk about the Bay Arena as well – the Bay Arena would significantly benefit, should we

become Kraft Hockeyville. The building is over 30 years old itself, but it's quite the centrepiece in Bay Roberts and in the area there in Conception Bay North. Residents from many different communities such as Brigus, Conception Harbour, Colliers, Upper Island Cove, Spaniard's Bay, Tilton, Shearstown, Butlerville, we all utilize the Bay Arena. I have two great arenas in my district: the new Harbour Grace Danny Cleary centre that was just opened, and the Bay Arena. So lots of wonderful things happening and, as I mentioned, it is a centrepiece throughout our community.

I also want to talk about an event that's happening in May; it's an annual event. It's called the Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival. It's become an annual festival. It's renowned province wide, and we even have visitors from other provinces to come and take in this event. It happens in Bay Roberts each year.

The Bay Arena is also utilized for the large barbeque celebration. I know the Member for Cape St. Francis was out one time a couple of years ago and he had a great time. Also, the minister was out last year and we took in the small plate's event. And I'm proud to say that the minister's department and this government contributed \$15,000 to that festival just last year, and I'm confident we're going to be a big supporter, of course, in the future, in years to come in this. Because it's festivals like this, it's the community initiatives, from the volunteers, the many volunteers – we have an abundance of volunteers in Bay Roberts and throughout the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. P. PARSONS: Absolutely, and it really contributes to the tourism.

I'd like to say again, and reiterate that we've had a record high for tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador this past year. Despite the fiscally challenging times, it was certainly a record high. It's these festivals like the Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival all around our province that contribute to that and they bring people because, as we know, people love to visit Newfoundland and Labrador.

Right now, we have a major event happening. It's the first time we're hosting the Brier here in our capital city. We're very proud, of course, of Team Gushue and all the teams. If you listen to the local media ever since the Brier kicked off, and just prior to the launching of the Brier, if there's one thing that's common that we hear is that people are enjoying the hospitality and the pleasantness of the people here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

And no matter where you go, you always hear people talk about how friendly and welcoming Newfoundlanders are and certainly that rings through. I'm very excited to take in my first game tomorrow at the Brier tomorrow morning, so I'm certainly looking forward to this.

Also, there are many topics now facing our province and that will be the case for many, many days to come, but the fishery – as a few Members mentioned – is facing now a challenging time. We went through this back in '92 with the cod moratorium and now we're seeing that happen to the snow crab.

I have a lot of great, strong harvesters in my district, both players in the inshore and the offshore in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave and they certainly will be affected by this. But, as their Member, as their MHA for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave district, and as a Member of the All-Party Committee for the fisheries, I will certainly do everything I can to stand with our fish harvesters, and to do everything that we can, whether that to be to lobby our federal counterparts or to work with them, that certainly is a huge dedication and a very big deal in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

And it's time now; the cod is coming back. As we know, it is in the mandate of our Fisheries Minister to re-establish a commercial cod fishery. So it's great to see that, but this is certainly nature at play. We've seen the depletion of the cod stocks – they're coming back – and now the depletion of the crab, and I guess that will be the circle of life, but it is time of course now to get that up and going. Like I say, I'm fully committed to that as well. It's the backbone of our province.

The fishery will always be a mainstay and it's the backbone of Newfoundland and Labrador for plant workers, the inshore and the offshore industry and our coastal communities. When the fishery does well, everybody does well here in this province. So it is a natural renewable resource, unlike oil. So it's something we can never neglect.

I will reflect upon the times when we were rich. As Brian Peckford, our former premier's book says, "Some day the sun will shine and have not will be no more." Unfortunately, that's not really true. We saw the sun shining. We felt that sun on our skin when we had \$25 billion in oil revenue that came to our province, and had the previous administration created a rainy day fund at the time, or in our province a rain, drizzle and fog fund, perhaps we wouldn't be in the situation – we would not be in the situation that we find ourselves in today had \$3 billion of that been saved.

Often when I speak with constituents, I compare this to, of course – picture yourself going to Vegas, having a great time in Vegas on vacation and you hit the jackpot in one of those slot machines, or you win big on poker or what the case, but you go and you take it all and you throw it all back into a slot machine again in the same night. That's what I can compare it to, that's how I use to break it down and to compare it to what the previous administration did when we had our big oil boom. We were rich. We were a have province. We technically still have the title of have province but we're certainly not feeling the effects of a have province and it's unfortunate.

I know that this government is determined and is committed to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to do the right thing. That's listening, that's engaging our people. I know I am certainly committed to that as the MHA for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I can't get up here and talk about the money the province saw go right out the door and not talk about Coley's Point Primary School.

My colleague from Virginia Waters just mentioned this district is getting ready to celebrate doors opening to a brand new, educational facility for their young people. I applaud that, and thank god for projects like

that, but again, I have to ask about Coley's Point Primary School. Again, this building is over 60 years old. There are children in that school, young students, Mr. Chair, who are attending this school now whose great-grandparents were educated in the very same building. That's probably a Guinness Book of World Records accomplishment right there.

I have to ask, where was the support for Coley's Point Primary? At the time there was money announced several times. We even had the former Member for the then District of Port de Grave who was here when the money was here. It was written, it was on paper. It was there, but nothing materialized for Coley's Point Primary.

As their MHA for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, I will not – I will stand by the people of my district. I will stand by those young people and do everything I can to lobby and to advocate until we turn the sod on Coley's Point Primary School and I will do that. I look forward to the day that we can cut the ribbon. We'll be celebrating when there will be a new Coley's Point Primary School, because the children and the young people, the staff, are certainly deserving of this.

We live in an area where we have an expanding population in Conception Bay North and Bay Roberts. The school services children in Bay Roberts, Coley's Point, Shearstown, Butlerville, Country Road, Port de Grave, Bareneed, some from Clarke's Beach and even North River. So it's no-brainer. We live in an expanding area. Currently students there are utilizing closet space, I'm told. There is no cafeteria. So again, I always ask about Coley's Point Primary, but it's something I'm certainly committed to.

Also, to end on a lighter note at the end of this week; again, I just want to remind people at home, and of course my colleagues here in this hon. House, let's support Bay Roberts for Kraft Hockeyville. Again, the voting is Sunday and Monday March 12 and 13. The details are available online on the Kraft website. So let's come together, let's make this happen. There will be two finalists selected after Monday. This is what this voting is for, for the Sunday and Monday, to select an east and a west finalist. We are the only community in Newfoundland and Labrador to make this top 10; that's an

accomplishment in itself, but let's make it happen. Again, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians home and abroad, let's do it. Bay Roberts for Kraft Hockeyville 2017.

That is my time, Mr. Chair, and thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure for me to speak on this bill for the second time. For all those people that are at home and anxiously listening to all the debate that's happening here, it's a bill that we're putting through to give us supply so that we can actually run the operations of the government as we prepare for the budget for next year.

Mr. Chair, from where I'm sitting as the Minister of Transportation and Works and having to be sworn in as minister last year in December, it was certainly somewhat of a shock to me when my first exposure to Cabinet and realized the significant fiscal situation the province was in. I may have mentioned before that I guess it was one of the few times in my life that I felt overwhelmed because of the challenge we would have to face.

Mr. Chair, when we look at being fiscally responsible, one of the things I guess we had to realize was that there are two revenues, two streams in a budget. There's a revenue stream, there's an expense. And if we look at what would be a normal practice in business, or efficiently running a business, you'd have your revenue stream that's on the top and you have an expense stream that's on the bottom.

Mr. Chair, when we started to look at the significant challenge we were facing, those two lines were total reversed. So we have an expense line and we have a revenue line that's on the bottom, and we know that that's not sustainable. We know that that's not possible, to continue to have that line the way it is.

I guess, Mr. Chair, the surprising part of that was, and we've mentioned it, some of my colleagues have mentioned it, that the PC government at the time had \$25 billion dollars in royalties over a 10-year period. If you look at, a lot of times when we do a budget or we look at accrual and looking at what will happen in future years, we do a forecasting. A lot of times when we do a forecasting we base it on graphs and chart.

Mr. Chair, if we were to look back over the last 10 years, just the last 10 years, and pull up those charts, it would be quite alarming. Because we realize that for the first time in our history, we had a period of time when actually the price of oil per barrel was over \$100. And, Mr. Chair, if you look at the two lines, the expense line and the revenue line, when all of this money was coming in, when the production was high, when the price of oil was high, you would have certainly expected for all of those 10 years to have revenue that would have surpassed your expense.

Shamefully, Mr. Chair, shamefully, if you look at those numbers – and it's very, very hard to believe – that in those 10 years they even ran deficits in five, if not six of those years. Imagine. Can you imagine? Running a deficit when you had money coming in the way in which it was coming in. It was really, totally irresponsible, totally shameful and really, Mr. Chair, what it has done, it has placed this province and the people in Newfoundland and Labrador in a very precarious situation, and a precarious situation that a lot of people have been upset. I have talked to many people. Mr. Chair, I have taken my responsibility and my fiduciary responsibility and my fiscal responsibility as minister, I have taken it very, very serious.

One of the tasks that I have and I'm trying to instill within my department is the fact that status quo is no longer acceptable. Many, many times when we get in situations when we're flush with money, when we really don't have to make serious decisions, we become very comfortable; we become very complacent. Status quo is fine because we don't have to make any tough decisions. We have the money that's coming in; we don't have to make these tough decisions.

Mr. Chair, that is not the reality of today. The reality of today has been caused by the way in which the PC government decided to manage the last number of years they were in office. I feel that there's a lot of complacency in there because I think a lot of departments, when we took over office, felt that the status quo was acceptable.

Well, my department and the staff in my department are all well aware that the status quo is no longer acceptable. We have to be innovative. We have to look at better ways. We have to be more efficient. We have to be more effective. We have to look at ways in which we can provide the services that we provide to – I would suspect every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, in some way, is impacted by the services that TW provides on a daily basis.

Mr. Chair, it's my challenge as a minister to be able to instill within my staff that desire, that drive, that we have to find better ways in which we can do and provide the services. That is a challenge. That's a challenge because of the fiscal responsibility we have and the fiscal environment that we're facing.

I wish I could say that things are rosy and things are bright when it comes to our fiscal situation. We're not there yet, Mr. Chair, but I'll tell you one thing this government, our government, we have made a commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we are going to be fiscally responsible and we are, someday soon, going to be in a surplus position again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: I know that today, looking at what we're facing and the challenges that we're facing, that seems to be a long ways off, but I can assure you that we are going to make the tough decisions. We are going to look for the efficiencies. We are also going to look for the inefficiencies that are in our system, and we have to correct those. We have a responsibility to correct those, and we are going to do that.

Mr. Chair, it's going to be a challenge for us to do that, but I have every confidence in my colleagues on this side of the House, I have every confidence in my Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, I have every

confidence that we are going to make the decisions that are going to be necessary for the future of our young children and for the future of our grandchildren in this province because we need a stronger tomorrow and we need a brighter tomorrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Chair, that is the only way that this province is going to survive. We are going to survive by partnership, by co-operation and by looking at ways in which we can do things differently. We cannot continually do the same things we did five years ago, today. It just cannot happen.

We don't have the resources to do it that way. We don't have the money to do it that way. So we have to make tough decisions; however, realizing those tough decisions, they have to be made realizing that we have to provide the same level of service to the people who are expecting it.

That, Mr. Chair, is a real challenge. That's a challenge that I'm up to as minister and that's a challenge that I think my ministers and my caucus, we have taken that responsibility seriously. We will continue to work hard for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador so that we do have a bright future for our young people because it's very important.

I have said before; four of my grandchildren, unfortunately, are not in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I do have two great young girls; I have one in first-year university now, the other in grade 10, from Gander that I have all the pride – I am so proud of my grandchildren and I respect them every day for what they do. I am not going to be making decisions that are going to be detrimental to my grandchildren, and that's why I'm standing firm on the decisions that we're making so that we do have, in fact, a better tomorrow for our grandchildren and they are not burdened by the continued debt that we have built up over the years.

We have to find ways to curb that. We have to find ways to mitigate that debt and we will need to do it and we will need the co-operation of the people of the province and we will need the co-

operation of all politicians on both sides of this House to make sure that that does not happen and we do have, in fact, a solid foundation and a solid financial foundation for this province.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure to stand again to speak to the Interim Supply bill. I echo the comments of my colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Works. I'm very optimistic about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador and all of the opportunities that we have, and what we have on the horizon.

It's very unfortunate that we're left in the fiscal situation based on the reckless overspending by the previous PC government of 12 years. That they've spent and spent and spent in a non-sustainable way, growing the footprint of government, the amount of office space that exists, that now the Minister of Transportation and Works is tasked with finding savings to shrink that footprint and the excessive costs that are in place.

There was an incredible amount of spending that took place by the previous PC administration – absolute reckless fiscal policies. When I got up the last time and I spoke, I talked about the vision that we have here on this side of the House, the financial management skills that we have, the team of people, the Premier who's leading the province, the Finance Minister, the team of ministers and our caucus colleagues, all of us as to how we're contributing our skills and our diversity to make sure that we have and we make very good and bold decisions for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to remind the people of the province that between 2007 and 2010, public spending increased 35 per cent, or by almost \$2 billion dollars. That's a significant increase in just a few short years by the previous administration. That

type of spending is really out of control. When you're looking at, in Newfoundland and Labrador as a government, there's only one taxpayer and that's the people of the province. And we've been generating the most revenue per capita for a number of years here in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair. We also spend the most per capita on our programs and services. And it's not necessarily leading to better outcomes.

So we need to find ways of which we have better outcomes and that's why the Premier has put forward a number of policies in place with the Minister of Health and Community Services, and to also look across all departments around health in all policies. To look at preventative care, and looking at primary health care, to have upfront savings. These are important things that need to be done, having these health care professionals in the community to tackle those initiatives.

In my very own department, I'm very excited to be looking at resetting the innovation agenda here in the province. We have a lot of high-tech companies that are employing a number of people here in the province and generating, adding \$1.6 billion to the economy, Mr. Chair. I've been visiting some of these companies that we've been supporting for productivity or competitive development and seeing what they're doing.

When we launched our innovation agenda, we were at Solace Power in Mount Pearl. This is a very exciting company that's growing. It's very dynamic. Seeing companies like radiant360 and what they're doing for the oil and gas companies across the province, and the major contracts they're securing. It's exciting when you go into a company and say, we're moving to another location because this location is too small. We're growing, we're scaling up.

When you go to Kraken Sonar that's going after billions of dollars in the ocean defence sector, Mr. Chair, it's really exciting that they're in a new location. They're growing out of their CBS facilities and finding that they're adding and adding more capacity. When you walk around and you talk to the employees, these are younger, highly skilled, highly educated professionals.

We have a great ecosystem here in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in the capital region when it comes to the tech sector. We have competitive companies that are really doing big things. We talk about GRI Simulations and what they're doing, and business they're doing in other countries.

We have companies that are doing business in Brazil, doing business in the Middle East, doing business all over. We do a significant amount of exporting in Newfoundland and Labrador. We do billions of dollars' worth of exporting to the United States of America. We are looking at all ways of which we can enhance and expand trade, not only in the US, in Europe, in Asia and elsewhere. There are a lot of opportunities that we have in our economy. I'm very optimistic.

Mr. Chair, I've been in your district. I've been in a number of other districts and seeing the opportunities that exist in the mining sector, in the service and supply as to what we can do from a department in terms of supplier development.

When we go to the Burin Peninsula, and we see in today's statement that was provided around what's happening in St. Lawrence. There's a lot more economic opportunity and potential. When in the Bonavista Peninsula and seeing that numerous new businesses are being added, small businesses, mainly around the cultural economy and the tourism economy. There's a real great cluster that's happening there.

When you're down in Placentia – St. Mary's area, you look at Argentia being a strategic port, an investment for shipping and major industrial facilities, and the employment activity that's taking place there. That's extremely positive when you see that so close to the capital region.

As well, in my own district, the Port of St. Anthony, an investment that was made to remove the harbour rock will allow for larger ships. It's the second-largest international, containerized port in the province doing business directly to Europe. So there is significant opportunity. It's supporting business in Southern Labrador, supporting business to the further south on the West Coast of the province and other areas. It is opportunities. This link already exists.

You talk about cruise; there are reports showing that we're going to double the number of cruise ship passengers this year. These things are exciting. It's exciting to see that we have another World UNESCO Heritage site in our province.

When we see the statistics around tourism and the growth and the optimism in the hospitality sector, these are all positive indicators. People are looking at scaling up their operations and their business. More communities than ever before are looking at –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – the types of services that need to be provided. As a government, we've laid out a vision as to how we add product development, how we're going to go out and do different marketing, how we're going to work with smaller communities around co-operative or social enterprise development. There are a significant amount of initiatives of what we're going to do. We've laid them out.

There are a lot of good plans that are already in place, like the Minister of Transportation and Works five-year road plan. It allows for people to put their energy and focus now on other initiatives, because it's clearly put out there. It allows the companies and the contractors to bid and then go after other business.

A new Procurement Act, there's a lot of great initiatives that are happening from this government in just over a year in office. A lot of great pieces of legislation have come forward, like the presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters, career and volunteer. These are all positive initiatives, Mr. Chair.

In my district we have certainly a huge geography, we have an aging population. That's been highlighted in the media previously, but you know what? We see a lot of resiliency in our communities as well. There are a lot of people that are looking at new initiatives, looking at ways of which we can provide affordability, the services that need to be provided.

I would say, Mr. Chair, my district is one that thinks regional more so than maybe any other

area of the province. If you look at NorPen and their regional waste services board, you have 60 communities under one waste management model. You also have fire services that serve 13 communities under the model.

There's ability to look at regional recreation, to look at ways of which we deliver services to incorporated municipalities and unincorporated municipalities in a very fair governance way. We've seen where communities have come together and created non-profit social enterprise in a seniors' home, which has 37 seniors living close to home. That's a social enterprise that has over 16 jobs in the community where I live. I'm very proud of these types of things, these solutions.

In Baie Verte, you see a lot of co-operatives. You see people finding local solutions and solving those problems. These are all things that we need to do. We need to talk about these types of initiatives and find very creative ways as we move forward to grow our economy and look at all of those opportunities that exist.

I think *The Way Forward* document clearly articulates 50-plus different initiatives that we're committed to doing. We're acting on it and we're getting results. Day over day, we're seeing things that couldn't be done by the previous administration, or wouldn't be done, or wouldn't be chosen to do. What they chose to do was spend, spend, spend. What we're doing is being responsible financial managers and we're going to grow the economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would move that Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Chair of the Committee of Supply has been directed to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

Sorry – when shall the Committee sit again?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: It's the end of the week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

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

I would move, seconded by the Member for Lab West, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.