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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.

I recognize in the public gallery today a former Member of the House of Assembly, Mr. George Murphy.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also, in the public gallery, we have representatives from Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador for the reading of a Ministerial Statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well, we have Mr. Glen Nolan, President, and Mr. Perry Feltham, Vice-President of the United Steelworkers Local 9316.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: In the Speaker's gallery today we have Mackenzie Dove and Charlie Byrne. MacKenzie is Miss Newfoundland and Labrador 2017. She is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: On behalf of all Members of the House of Assembly, we pass along condolences to the Opposition House Leader on the passing of his mother.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As well, in the Speaker's gallery, we have Mr. Kevin Collins and his wife Karen. Many of you know Kevin. He used to work in Broadcast and, for many years, sat up here overlooking all Members of the House of

Assembly. Kevin has retired after 37 years of the House of Assembly on January 31.

Thirty of those years that Kevin had, of his 37, were spent in the House of Assembly. He served under 11 Speakers, 10 premiers, and most Members of the House of Assembly will recognize Kevin for his work in the Legislative Library and Broadcast Services.

In earlier years, prior to our proceedings, as I said, Kevin sat up above and would be listening in – probably sat in more sessions of the House of Assembly than any Member here, including myself, and I've been here a long time. So Kevin has seen a lot and heard a lot, and while not participating – we welcome him to come and join us on the floor perhaps to participate; something to think about – he controlled the microphones for Members.

I know all Members join me in wishing Kevin a very happy retirement. I understand for the very first time on Saturday he's going to Florida. I don't know if that's a sign that he's no longer got the stress of working, or if he's got nothing else to do, but happy retirement, Kevin.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: By the way, I made an offer to Kevin earlier today; his old haunt, as I said, is just above us. I said if he ever comes back to visit us again, I'll allow him to put a chair up here and sit down and look upon the House as he always did.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the District of Lewisporte – Twillingate; Fogo Island – Cape Freels; Conception Bay East – Bell Island; Placentia West – Bellevue; Terra Nova; and Conception Bay South.

The hon. the Member for District of Lewisporte – Twillingate.

MR. D. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, on March 5 a crew of sealers from Summerford, New World Island, were forced to abandon their ship off the Northeast Coast of the Island amidst 60 knots of winds and eight-metre swells.

The crew of the *Northern Provider* includes Frank Brown, Junior Brown, Dion Rideout, Lorne Hawkins and the skipper is Brian Anstey. Brian, a veteran skipper, said he had never seen weather conditions as bad as the ones he faced that day. He compared it the movie *The Perfect Storm*.

As the weather conditions deteriorated to a life-threatening degree, Skipper Brian contacted the Canadian Coast Guard and arranged for a helicopter to come and rescue them. One by one they jumped into the icy waters to be carried to safety by the helicopter that hovered over them.

This was the first time that this particular Coast Guard crew had attempted helicopter rescue, and they succeeded in rescuing every member of the *Northern Provider*.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in thanking the Canadian Coast Guard for its training and its heroism and in celebrating the safe return of these sealers to their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to rise and inform every one of the good news stories from my historic district. The grade four and five students from Lumsden Academy are giving Mother Nature a helping hand.

The students have been involved in a unique project of installing bird nesting boxes on hydro poles. The students hope that Woodpeckers and other wood-boring birds will be enticed to use the nesting boxes rather than boring holes into the utility poles.

It was noticed that these birds have bored into numerous poles along a three-kilometre stretch from Deadman's Bay to Lumsden. It's no surprise these birds have taken up home in the utility poles; whereas the forest growth is limited and small in the area. Over 60 boxes will be installed over a two-year period.

These students are looking forward to their next project. They are currently involved with Ducks Unlimited and the Town of Lumsden. Their next plan to aid the local ducks by installing nesting boxes for waterfowl. This is an excellent example of giving nature a helping hand.

I ask all Members to join me in extending our gratitude.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize the passing of a man who provided a valued service in my district. I speak of master mariner the late Captain Walter Stratton who, for nearly 40 years, provided ferry service to the people of Bell Island.

Skipper Walt, as he was affectionately and respectfully referred to as, started his career aboard the MV *Mineko*, then the *Kipawo*, *John Guy*, *Catherine* and ultimately the workhorse of the service: the *Flanders*. He was a respected captain by his counterparts and by all who travelled the Tickle for his unwavering commitment to the travellers to ensure their safety to and from Bell Island.

Captain Walt had served in Korea during the Korean conflict and served as a mentor to many a young crew member. He instilled in his children and grandchildren values of commitment and dedication. Skipper Walt was also devoted to his wife Myra, their family, his country, his employer and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in passing our condolences to Myra and their family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, on February 11, I had the great pleasure of attending the 10th annual Cory Kenway classic basketball tournament, hosted at Christ the King School in Rushoon.

Each year, this basketball tournament is held in memory of Cory, who was killed in 2004 as a result of an alcohol-rated motor vehicle crash. Cory's untimely and senseless death, however, was not in vain, Mr. Speaker, as his parents, Randy and Julie, work tirelessly with MADD Burin Peninsula chapter as well as MADD Canada as partners to raise awareness for this very preventable cause of death.

To be in Rushoon that day with his family and friends to make this 10th anniversary was very inspirational, as the strength and love for Cory spilled into the gymnasium present in all players and organizers. Making the tournament even more special, Mr. Speaker, was that for the first time in the history of this Cory Kenway Classic, the host team, the Christ the King School Crusaders, came away as the tournament winners.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the participants and the organizers of the 2017, 10th annual Cory Kenway Classic and remind all people of Newfoundland and Labrador that driving while impaired is a serious action and a choice that impacts families forever.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise in this hon. House today and recognize the accomplishments of a young woman from my district. At the young age of 21 years, Mackenzie Dove, a resident of Clarenville, has had a very active and accomplished life.

Mackenzie has a very impressive resume. She is a second year pharmacy student at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Mackenzie has dedicated her time and talent to support many volunteer organizations and worthwhile causes including: the Clarenville area SPCA; Ronald McDonald House; Canadian Cancer Society; and, Suncor Energy Fluvarium.

Mackenzie is the co-chair of the St. John's Relay for Life and she was the President of Newfoundland and Labrador's Youth Parliament for 2016. This young lady has a long list of accomplishments, including being awarded Miss Achievement Newfoundland and Labrador in 2013-2014, and in 2016 the YMCA's Young Woman of Distinction.

On February 26, 2017, Mackenzie Dove was crowned Miss Newfoundland and Labrador

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HOLLOWAY: After receiving this honour, Mackenzie commented: To me, Miss Newfoundland and Labrador is a role model, inspiration and, above all, a representative for all the outstanding and strong women of our province.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Mackenzie Dove on her accomplishments, her leadership and her passion for helping others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Town of Conception Bay South is home to many of this province's finest athletes. On March 9, I had the pleasure of attending the 2016 Athlete/Coach of the Year and Sports Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony at the Manuels River Interpretation Centre.

During the evening, their achievements were emphasized along with the important role that sport has played in the development of youth and adults alike within our great town.

Mr. Speaker, all the nominees for the five award categories were honoured and the following individuals were the recipients of the 2016 awards: Coach of the Year, Mr. David Coates; Junior Male Athlete of the Year, Daniel Hogarth; Junior Female Athlete of the Year, Haley Dalton; Senior Male Athlete of the Year, Stephen Rideout; and Senior Female Athlete of the Year was Jessica Davis.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the Sports Hall of Fame inductees: Alice Gear, Andrea Lee-Coffin, Margaret Noftle, Paul Smith and Valerie Haines-Dalton who have all contributed tremendously to our sporting community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating all the recipients and nominees of the 2016 Conception Bay South Athletic Awards.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Friday, March 24, as Purple Day for epilepsy in Newfoundland and Labrador, a worldwide event that first started here in Atlantic Canada.

Cassidy Megan from Nova Scotia organized the first Purple Day at her elementary school after being diagnosed in 2008. Her goal was to get people talking about epilepsy and help those who experienced seizures feel less alone.

Although the House will not be in session on March 24, I call on my colleagues to observe Purple Day in their districts and wear purple, the internationally recognized colour for epilepsy.

In the week leading up to Purple Day, our government will Light it up Purple with

Confederation Building scheduled to be lit from March 19 to March 26.

Epilepsy affects over 10,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador and approximately 50 million people around the world.

Purple Day plays a big part in helping to further our understanding about epilepsy, reduce stigma and improve the quality of life for people living with epilepsy.

I invite this House and all residents of our province to participate in Purple Day and support those who live with epilepsy every day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We join with government in recognizing Purple Day for epilepsy as we have proudly done in the past and will continue to do in the future.

Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador was founded in 1983 and represents more than 10,000 women, men, children and their families who are living with epilepsy. So while we recognize Purple Day, let us also recognize those who support the epilepsy community in our province. Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador offers its members a wide range of programs and services. The association is funded by donations, 100 per cent of which remain in the province to help develop programs and services dedicated to the promotion of independence and the quality of life for all people with epilepsy and their families.

So please give generously towards their great work and please support Purple Day next Friday.

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. I'm delighted to stand today and wish congratulations to Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador for their work in dispelling the myths about epilepsy. Last year they asked grade four students to learn about epilepsy and contribute pictures to a calendar; they also have an ask the doctors program with regular sessions. Understanding is key; everyone should make the effort to learn more. Let's support the work of Epilepsy Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to announce that Budget 2017 will be delivered on Thursday, April 6.

Newfoundland and Labrador continues to face a very serious financial situation, and our government is focused on strong fiscal management. We have established financial targets and are committed to achieving them, as was recently evident in our fall fiscal and economic update, with a lower deficit projection for the current fiscal year than was projected in Budget 2016.

Over the past year, Mr. Speaker, our government has been working to lower spending, create a leaner and more efficient public service, and create a more modern and effective government. Budget 2017 will demonstrate our government's continued commitment to sound fiscal management in light of the difficult finances we face.

The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador sets ambitious long-term goals to improve our

province while facing our fiscal realities and provides tangible actions to achieve these goals. These goals include achieving deficit reduction targets, eliminating excess, and employing an overall approach that ensures all spending decisions are justified on a year-over-year basis.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen our Way Forward plan in action over the past few months through strategic announcements such as \$77.2 million for our five-year provincial roads plan; \$100 million for our three-year municipal infrastructure program, which includes \$70 million for multi-year capital works and \$30 million for municipal capital works. We've seen progress on the replacement of Western Memorial Regional Hospital, and the announcement of a long-term care home in Corner Brook.

I look forward to April 6 when our government will lay out Budget 2017 for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, which will outline our actions to date while maintaining our commitment to return to surplus in 2022-23.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. While the people of the province all wait for Budget 2017, they're still dealing with the impacts of *Budget 2016*. *Budget 2016* clearly demonstrated that the Liberal government has no plan and, in doing so, it drove many people in this province into unnecessary hardships.

The personal tax increases, the Liberal levy, corporate income tax increases, increases to fees, along with the cuts to services have driven our province into a recession this year – the only province in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we're not the only ones saying that. The Conference Board of Canada, in their provincial report, has pointed to the actions in *Budget 2016* as the primary reason why this province's economy will shrink this year.

As we wait for Budget 2017, I truly hope that the Liberal government will make more thoughtful decisions and avoid the lazy decisions which we saw in *Budget 2016*.

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 thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. It's good to get such a quick reply to my colleague's question yesterday, and good the people have a date and a chance to brace themselves for what promises to be another brutal budget.

In her statement, the minister mentions a few good things to come; I guess we will have to wait for April 6 for the bad news. In the meantime, I ask the minister: Does this announcement mean we have two more weeks debating Interim Supply?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, a 2016 Supreme Court of Canada decision, known as Jordan, set time limits for court cases to be concluded. So I ask the minister today: How many cases have been stayed or dismissed due to the Jordan case ruling so far?

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

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

I'm happy to stand here and speak to the Justice Department. The Jordan decision was a

significant one – one that the repercussions and impacts are being felt all over this country and certainly they're being felt here in Newfoundland and Labrador. As people may or may not know, it actually imposed hard-and-fast time limits on handling cases in the criminal system: 18 months in one court and 30 months in our Superior Court.

Right now, after meeting with our director of Public Prosecutions very recently, I believe the number that we have dealt with is in the range of 10 to 12, I understand.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

So I think what the minister said 10 to 12 cases have been dismissed as a result of Jordan.

MR. A. PARSONS: I didn't say dismissed; I said dealt with.

MR. P. DAVIS: Well, maybe the minister can clarify, Mr. Speaker. The question was: How many cases have been stayed or dismissed as a result of the Jordan court ruling?

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

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

I certainly didn't say that 10 were dismissed; I said we've actually had 10 to 12 altogether that we've dealt with. I think right now it's about – and I may be wrong here, but I'd be happy to report back to this House after meeting with the director of Public Prosecutions whose office is responsible for this. I think that we're batting about 50 per cent on these right now.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm not sure what that means. My question was how many cases have been stayed or dismissed and the minister hasn't provided that, or maybe if he can get it, he can provide it for us.

My understanding is there are approximately 14 homicide cases currently before the courts in Newfoundland and Labrador. The minister can correct that if he has a more accurate number. Also, we're hearing concerns that several of these have very tight deadlines.

I ask the minister: Are there any risks with these cases? Any risks that any of these cases may be thrown out or dismissed as a result of Jordan?

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

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

Right now, I believe we are handling in the range of 14 active murder files, which is certainly a very high number. A number of these were certainly in the system prior to the Jordan system. Many of them have been around for some time. After meeting with our director of Public Prosecutions, I haven't been advised that any are in jeopardy of coming under the Jordan application rule.

What I need to put out there to the people of this province, every province in this country is dealing with this. While we are dealing with about 10 cases, I believe in Quebec they're actually dealing with over 200 cases that are facing this Jordan scrutiny.

The fact is that most of these cases we are dealing with, these were in the system when I actually came in here. What we're doing, we can't deal with what was pre-Jordan. I can't come in and say what things should have been done. What we are doing as the Department of Justice is making sure that all files, since Jordan, are handled appropriately and with the Jordan application rule in mind.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We do appreciate the stress that's been put on the system as a result of Jordan – a system that has already been stressed; we're quite aware of that.

This week, more charges, high-level charges, cocaine trafficking, in fact, were dismissed in the courts here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I ask the minister: Other than the justice summit event that he's talked about publicly coming up, what actions have been taken by the minister to ensure that no other cases are dismissed or thrown out of the courts because of court delays according to Jordan's rules?

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

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

Certainly there was a case that was dealt with yesterday, one that I think stemmed from 2014, before I ever got in this position. We are taking a number of steps now in the Department of Justice. The first one is our director of Public Prosecutions has met with our police forces to talk about the need for a timely exposure of evidence, timely disclosure of evidence. What we're also dealing with is different policies and procedures when it comes to granting adjournments in matters. We're trying to get matters through the system.

What we're doing, something that actually hasn't been done in over a decade, is actually bring all the people in the justice system together, whether it's the judiciary, sheriffs, Crowns, Legal Aid, private bar, Justice Minister, federal counterparts. We're going to put everybody in a room and have a talk about the criminal justice system because it wasn't done prior to my getting in this position, but these are

things we're trying to do to ensure that we live within the Jordan timelines.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, at a time, as we said, when the entire justice system is under extreme pressure and while the minister is planning to bring all the stakeholders together, the Liberal government eliminated 22 positions in the Department of Justice before that event gathering has even taken place.

So I ask the minister: What impacts will these 22 eliminated positions have on our current, very stressed justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't that long ago that we stood in the House and the Member opposite was part of a government that went out and cut the justice system and then, two days later, flip-flopped on the decision because he hadn't bothered to talk to anybody – or actually, changed the name of the department and then two days later changed it back; flip-flopped on that because he hadn't asked anybody about that.

What I can tell you: no cuts to judges, no cuts to Legal Aid, no cuts to Crown prosecutors, no cuts to anything within the court system that's going to affect these cases. What we actually do on this side when we're in charge of the Justice Department is we actually talk to the people in the system to make sure that it runs as efficiently as possible, and certainly not without the challenges that the other side faced because they didn't have the time to talk to the people actually doing the work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I was wondering if that's what they did when they closed the courts in the province and reversed those decisions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, Jordan came along in 2016 and, since that time, they've also made further cuts. So they can talk about the previous administration, which they like to do, but they made cuts after Jordan.

So I ask the minister: In light of the ruling and the fact that the province's justice system is very stressed and strained at this point in time; will you commit to ensure that the justice system has all the resources needed to function appropriately?

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

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

There have always been pressures within the Justice Department. In fact, I read the minutes of the Law Society from their 1893 meeting this morning where they talked about the pressures they faced because they had a courthouse that wasn't up to snuff. Certainly that's a pressure we felt. I know the previous administration announced a courthouse and then forgot to actually put any money into that.

Again, we talk about the courthouse out in Harbour Grace that actually was left to rot – left to rot – and nothing happening. Again, that's something else we had to come in and deal with. But thankfully, we had the Jordan decision come in and it helped us make those decisions there.

The fact is we've added extra resources to deal with the pressures that come from the Jordan decision – one that's affecting every jurisdiction across this country. But what I'll continue to do, something that wasn't done previously under the revolving door of Justice ministers that they had, was I'll continue to talk to the people that do the

work and make sure that their thoughts and views are heard.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, today in media reports we're learning that the future of the Bull Arm fabrication site is unknown.

I ask the minister: Have you had any discussions with Nalcor officials regarding the future of this site?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pardon my voice; I have a bit of a cold today.

I'd be happy to advise the House that yes, I've had multiple discussions with Nalcor on the Bull Arm site. As the people of the province know, we're coming to the conclusion of the Hebron, wonderful Hebron Project.

The Bull Arm site is under lease until March of 2018. We wanted to get out there early to make sure we talk to as many people as possible, get an expression of interest, to see what interest there is to use the Bull Arm site for further work, and that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We've allocated time and we've allocated resources to searching worldwide to bring more work to the Bull Arm.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I have some Fisherman's Friends I'll share with you, if it helps. I feel your pain today.

I have to ask the minister: Are there conditions under which she would support selling the site?

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

MS. COADY: And thank you to the hon. Member for the offer, I may take him up on that.

We're going global to ask what – to ask the global community under an expression of interest, what they would like to use the site for, how we can lease that site. If someone comes forward with an opportunity to buy that site, we'll certainly consider it. It is an expression of interest, Mr. Speaker, so we are considering all the different avenues.

We are searching globally. We want to make sure that whatever we do is in the best interest of the province, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to monitor and review these expressions of interest before we go to a request for proposals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: So the minister has just confirmed that the Bull Arm Fabrication site is indeed on the market.

I ask the minister: Is this the start of a fire sale, a sell-off of Nalcor assets?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nothing of the sort. Mr. Speaker, I don't know what was in the plans for the former administration. Perhaps they had none, which they often did not have any plan to do anything with the assets of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we are being very responsible. We're going out a year before the lease is up with the Hebron Project, to go out and search globally to get expressions of interest of what could be done with the Bull Arm site. There are

multitudes of opportunities out there. We're going to do what's in the best interest of the province. It's an expression of interest to see how we can continue to work with the Bull Arm site.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, if the asset is indeed sold, that will limit the potential for future economic development activities.

So to avoid selling the asset: Will the minister put conditions on any future oil developments that the fabrication of rigs and equipment must be done in this province?

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

MS. COADY: The number one goal of this government, Mr. Speaker, the number one goal of this government is to keep and continue to employ the people of this province through great private sector, great opportunities in the economy.

As the Member opposite knows, we have benefits agreements with oil and gas companies. We have been very fortunate this year in attracting seven new entrants – seven, Mr. Speaker, new entrants in exploration offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. We're going to continue to work very diligently, very smartly to ensure that this is the best place in the world for offshore oil and gas development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the seven entrants came as a result of the seismic work conducted by the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: We've been recently made aware of cuts to the provincial drug program, seriously impacting some cancer patients in this province.

Can the minister confirm that some cancer patients are being denied coverage of Neupogen?

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

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

Thank you for the question. The issue of chemotherapy drug treatment for cancer in palliative, end-of-life patients is a very emotional issue. It's fraught with clinical and ethical issues.

What I can say unequivocally is that any clinician who feels a patient, who needs Neupogen, can apply and the patient will get it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, that response is problematic. While I thank the minister for the answer, I can't accept it.

Can the minister confirm that there were changes made to the criteria for special authorization for Neupogen in December? As a result, many people who would have been covered before December will now not be covered?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The first part of that statement is correct, the second is not.

The correction to the guidelines for the drug, line it up with Atlantic drug review and refer to patients receiving chemotherapy for curative intent.

Again, for the House, any clinician who feels their patient would benefit from Neupogen can apply and will get it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, if that were true, why are we hearing of cases where patients over the last couple of months have been denied?

Neupogen is considered a vital medication by cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy. It can extend life and, just as important, provide them with a better quality of life during treatment.

How can the minister justify denying people this comfort and dignity?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, for clarity, for the third time, any clinician who feels their patient would benefit from Neupogen can apply through special authorization, a process the minister opposite put in place or his predecessor, it's not changed. The criteria that have changed are around curative intent only. It's available if a clinician needs it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, if what the minister is saying was true, why would the criteria for special authorization have changed in December? The side effect Neupogen treats is a decrease in neutrophils, white blood cells responsible for immunity. Without the drug, immunity can drop to where the patient can easily contract a dangerous infection and chemo treatments are missed.

Minister, patients need this drug. Now, as a result of changes that did get made in December, less people are going to get this drug. Can you please fix that?

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

MR. HAGGIE: For clarity, Mr. Speaker, any clinician who feels their patient, palliative

chemotherapy, requires Neupogen and will benefit from it, they will get it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: There it is, Mr. Speaker, who will benefit from it. The changes to special authorization criteria have been made because a determination has been made about which patients will benefit from this drug.

The spouse of an impacted patient said that government seems to be saying if you're going to die anyway, we're not going to waste our money on you.

How can the minister put less value on individuals considered terminal? This callous action is beyond disgusting, and I will call on government once again to reverse this terrible decision immediately.

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

MR. HAGGIE: I think there may have been a question in there, Mr. Speaker. But, quite frankly, I think the gentleman is making hay with a very unfortunate group of people and I would call him out on that.

The situation, quite simply, is that if a clinician feels a patient will benefit, they will get it. He's not surely suggesting that we should give drugs to anybody if they're not going to benefit from it, because that's the message I took from there and that is irresponsible, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: I'm not making hay, Mr. Speaker. I'm exposing a decision that the minister made that's affecting patients' lives and will result in less people getting the coverage they need.

Why won't you consider the evidence being presented by some of our province's oncologists? Why won't you consider the

evidence being presented by Janet Edmonds and others in our province with lived experience, who have been affected by the decision that was made in December on his watch?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAGGIE: This is precisely the group we've listened to: the oncologists. They recommended changing the criteria for curative intent only. Again, for clarity, any patient in palliative care who needs Neupogen in the opinion of their physician, and will benefit from it, will get it. I really can't make it any clearer than that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to patients who could benefit from this drug who will now be denied access as a result of the minister's decision. In fact, I spoke to a cancer survivor this morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Without this treatment, she would not have been able to spend quality time with her children and her immune system would be so low. This drug boosts your immune system and helps fight off infections and prepare you for your next round of treatment, even if you are terminal, Mr. Speaker.

Time is of the essence when you're a terminal cancer patient. Minister, you have the ability to make this right. I'll ask you one more time: Will you make this right and reverse the change that you made in December?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite really has failed to grasp a simple statement that it is a clinical decision. I am not prescribing anything for anybody and nor should he, neither of us have a licence. The decision as to who prescribes medication for patients and what medication they get is based on clinical advice. Medical, oncological best practice, not political haymaking in this House. It's down to the clinician, always was, will be and we have not changed that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government promised to make decisions based on evidence and take the politics out of decision making. Will the Premier show us the evidence beyond the decision to move Crown Lands to Corner Brook? What is the real reason?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Department of Fisheries and Land Resources will have the relocation of the Crown Lands office in Corner Brook and it was done with the intent that the agriculture Lands Branch is in Corner Brook. There are significant operations there. There are natural synergies – the announcement that was made recently about expanding agricultural land for economic development here in the province.

There are synergies and there are reasons why we would move the Crown Lands office to Corner Brook to be with the Lands Branch in that office, the headquarters in that building.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I guess based on that response, I'll ask this question: The government told the public Crown Lands were moving to Corner Brook to be near the majority of agriculture and forestry activity in the province. We have been told, however, that in recent years there were more agricultural applications on the Avalon than all other regions combined.

Can you confirm this?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries and Lands Resources Branch that would be in the Corner Brook office, where it is headquartered, is where the staff would be located, where they're making these decisions. But when it comes to the day-to-day service, the counter services, we would still have counter service in St. John's, in Clarenville, in Gander, in Grand Falls-Windsor, in Corner Brook and in Happy Valley-Goose Bay to provide the services for people that require them when it comes to the applications.

As part of the relocation process, there's going to be no impact on our Crown land records. This is about making better decisions. There's mapping; this is a way of bringing together the synergies that exist within the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources to make better use of government resources.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: What is the status of the schools in Coley's Point and Shoal Harbour?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In December 2015, following the swearing in of Cabinet, I became aware of a number of school capacity issues that had been failed to be addressed by the previous administration. We set about immediately trying to find timely, practical, cost-effective ways to deal with those issues. As Members would know, there are a number of capital projects that were placed on hold for last year's budget.

At present, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is reviewing the family of schools in the Clarenville area to look at solutions for Riverside Elementary, which has received additional modular classrooms to help with the over-capacity issue at that school that the previous administration had failed to deal with.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: So just to clarify, we had committed to it and had budgeted for particularly those two schools and a number of other schools, but that wasn't having a plan in place. But obviously, the minister's not ready –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: – to address overcrowding in those particular areas.

So, Mr. Speaker, educators, parents and students of Mobile, Witless Bay have been told that the government will not build a new facility for their children.

What was the Liberal's rationale behind making that decision?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, this previous administration, on the way out the door,

budgeted some one-quarter billion dollars' worth of new school constructions, extensions, et cetera, et cetera. It's the stuff of fairy tales that you hear in kindergarten classrooms because there was no truth to any of that. Nothing was done. They failed to address these capacity issues when they were in government.

When I became minister, one of the first schools I visited was St. Bernard's Elementary in Witless Bay. I immediately set upon trying to find a way – in a timely, practical and cost-effective measure – to deal with the overcrowding out there. Last year in the budget, we decided that an extension will be added to Mobile Central High. There's going to be nine additional classrooms there. Through a reconfiguration, the over-capacity issues will be dealt with.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: So I'm led to believe by the minister that the three-quarters of a billion dollars that this administration spent in building new schools, ensuring schools no longer had mould in their schools and that they had the proper facilities for proper education was a waste of money. Well, you know, I have to disagree with the minister here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: I also want to note, the minister should be aware that the Mobile school area is a growth area. If you check the latest census, it's a growth area. There's a need here for not just building a few classrooms on, but be preparing for the future.

So I ask the minister: A new school servicing Bay Bulls to Bauline East was part of the Eastern School District's recommended five-year plan; who made the call to cancel it – was it the board, or was it your department?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the fairy tale I was referring to is the quarter-billion dollars' worth of new school constructions, additions, extensions that never went ahead under their watch. They threw it in the last budget to try to make over-capacity issues look like they were being addressed, and they simply were not.

In last year's budget, we had \$105 million-or-so worth of capital projects for schools, to finish constructing schools that were underway, to try to find solutions to over-capacity issues, that that crowd did not address during their time in office.

Every year, the school districts provide proposals to the department, millions of dollars' worth, that the department adjudicates based on timely, practical and cost-effective solutions that we can put in place to address those issues. That's what we've done with the family of schools in the Witless Bay-Mobile area, and that's what we're doing with the others.

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

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

The recent announcement of more than 100 layoffs at the oil refinery in Come By Chance is a serious blow to the laid off workers, their families and the economy of the area.

I ask the Premier: Has he or any of his ministers met with North Atlantic Refining Limited in an attempt to stop the layoffs? If so, what was the outcome of these efforts?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a very difficult time for the workers of the North Atlantic refinery. We empathize with them in this time. We've been working, I know under the Department of AESL, to make sure that they have the supports they need.

Mr. Speaker, we have met on a number of occasions with the refinery to encourage them to continue their efforts in the province, to continue

to add to their employment levels and to continue to work here in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I point out to the minister that these workers are already qualified for the jobs that they're doing. They want jobs.

I ask the Premier: What is his plan to go to bat for these workers and the people in the communities hurt by these layoffs?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite is exactly right, these workers are very skilled and we are certainly supportive of the efforts they have made in building the refinery.

We are looking for additional work for everybody in this province and, in particular, for those who have those skills that are so needed. That's why we're doing things early with Bull Arm. That's why we're working very hard with the oil and gas industry, with the mining industry, to continue to develop work here in the province.

We're hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that this skilled workforce will have the opportunities that they need in this province in very short order.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, the remaining employees of the refinery and their union, the United Steelworkers, have serious concerns

about how these layoffs affect safety in the facility.

I ask the Minister of Service NL: Has there been a full safety inspection of the refinery since the layoffs took effect?

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

MR. TRIMPER: First of all, thank you very much for the question.

I would also say that, as with the Minister of Natural Resources, I recently also met with company officials. I also want to assure everyone in the House, as I did with the company of the day, that the North Atlantic Refining Limited is obligated under all legislation dealing with occupational health and safety. They need to comply with that on their operations.

Our staff continue to do regular inspections, and we will continue to do so, to make sure there's a safe environment at that refinery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Well, Mr. Speaker, if in fact that was done, what were the findings of the inspectors, and will the minister make that report public immediately?

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

MR. TRIMPER: I may need to report back, Mr. Speaker, because I'm not sure if such reports are available; but, as I said, my staff are regularly making those inspections. Any complaints or any sort of untoward activity and so on is investigated by our department.

I'll be able to report back to the House as to whether or not this can be released.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Service NL: Will he commit to sharing these reports on an overall safety inspection as a result of the layoffs, not just individual inspections and reports of concerns, but an overall safety inspection due to the layoffs?

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

MR. TRIMPER: What I will assure the Member opposite, Mr. Speaker, is that I will follow up with staff to confirm the inspections are still going on, on a regular basis. If there are untoward, if we're feeling there is pressure and the company is not fulfilling its obligations, I certainly will be investigating and I will report back to the House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will he make those reports available publicly, to the union and to the public, regardless of what is contained in them?

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

MR. TRIMPER: Again, I will confer with staff. But one thing I can assure the Member opposite and I can confirm with both union and with the operator, that we take health and safety very seriously. We're going to ensure that that legislation is followed. Our staff will continue to do their inspections, and if there are situations or complaints that we need to follow up on we will, and I will report back on what we can release.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We've got about 30 seconds left in Question Period, you'd better make it quick.

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

MS. ROGERS: Again, Mr. Speaker, will he publicly release the reports that are being asked for?

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

MR. TRIMPER: One thing I can assure everyone in this House is that this government will not tolerate our workers working in unsafe conditions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TRIMPER: So I will make sure that Service NL does their job, and if we need to report back I will. I will get back to the Member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to present a petition. To the hon. House of Assembly in 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 tax; and

WHEREAS the 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.

Mr. Speaker, as every single resident of Newfoundland and Labrador knows, 2016 has been one of the worst years we as a people have seen in over a decade, and in large measure it is because of the economic shrinkage that has been imposed on our province by the regressive measures of *Budget 2016*.

The book tax – they're all bad measures, and to see the Conference Board of Canada indicating we're the only province in the country going into recession because of the policy measures that were undertaken. Certainly, it's not the better tomorrow we were promised, and it's far worse than any of us could have ever imagined. We are targeting the people who least can afford it at all, Mr. Speaker. The ones who have the least amount of money in their pockets are being the ones who are asked to dig into their pockets and take out more.

When I hear university students who live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador who have to face the additional burden of accommodations and meals to try and get themselves an education, come home and say, this term I spent an extra \$700 on books. That's food they could have put in their mouths that would have enabled them to enjoy healthy living. We think it is totally unacceptable. It is hurting our students, it is hurting our authors, it is hurting our book industry. It's yet another of the many measures implemented by the Liberals that are putting this province backwards by 20 or 30 years.

We're going to reel from *Budget 2016* for a very long time, Mr. Speaker. We call upon government in Budget 2017 to start fixing some of these regressive measures and to immediately cancel the book tax.

Thank you so 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 many feel their problems and concerns are not being addressed in an appropriate and timely manner;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly call upon the House of Assembly, urging government to use all-party town hall events as an avenue whereby people can express their concerns to all parties.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ask to be heard.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to stand and raise these concerns that this petition expresses. This petition today is being signed by people from, it looks like, the Torbay area. All the signatures are coming from there.

What it's pointing to, Mr. Speaker, is a real dissatisfaction in the province by people, dissatisfaction because they do not feel that their voice is being heard by government. Obviously, the so-called consultations that government does are definitely not satisfying the people of the province and the people who are signing these petitions that are coming to me.

They also realize that our democratic process includes everybody who's been elected by the people to sit in this House and to be part of the discussions in this House relating to the legislation that government puts together, relating to policies that government is creating. They want everybody in the House to be involved in those discussions, which is an essential part of the democratic process. And involving people through all-party events, all-party events by standing committees would be a

way of giving people an opportunity freely to express what they have to say.

Many people in the province are really looking at the dearth of democracy in our province. I know that at the university some of the political scientists are certainly looking at it. One thing that's been said by Stephen Tomblin, for example, one of our political scientists, is "that the Executive Branch of government has a monopoly on how information is presented, and the voting public has lost faith in government's ability to bring people together by failing to provide a coherent understanding of what the problems are, and how they're going to be addressed."

Now, that's a pretty strong statement being made by one of our political scientists, but the voting people have lost faith. That's why we see sometimes when consultations are happening; we are not getting good turnouts. That happened, for example, when the Members' Compensation Review Committee held their process and held consultations. People want to express themselves, but they've given up hope.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS government recently cut vital funding to many of the province's youth organizations; and

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

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

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately reinstate funding to the province's youth organizations.

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

Mr. Speaker, we already know that a number of youth organizations in this province have taken a dramatic hit for the last year. Unfortunately, they only got notice seven months into that year where they had already allocated their budgets; they'd already spent money that they were anticipating would get. From their perspective and the perspective of a lot of people, including a lot of civilian servants that I had spoken to, this was core funding. It was part and parcel of continuous funding they had gotten, in some cases, for 37 years, but all of a sudden that was wiped out, or cut dramatically.

In those cases, what happened, organizations had to not only try to recover the money they've already spent and realign their budgets, but they also had to deal with a shortfall. Now we're into a second fiscal situation here. As part of that, they now have to budget again to make up the shortfall and the 60 per cent cut in a lot of cases. It's just not possible.

In some of these organizations, particularly the communities that they reside in, they are part and parcel of what they do, the core, of providing services. They're providing services at a tenth of the cost that it would cost government to do it. So from a business point of view, the benefit to government investing with these organizations or partnering with them is of very high benefit for the taxpayers because we're getting a ten-fold return on our investment, plus we're having people who are qualified to have a partnership developed between other entities of municipal and federal governments, with other private sector partners, to be able to provide those services.

From the economy of scale, as has already been noted from the economists and the reports that have been done, these organizations leverage anywhere from 4 per cent to 20 per cent return on their investment, so when we're giving them money not only are we asking them to provide a

valued service that they're capable of doing – not only capable, they're the professionals. They have the experience. They have, in a lot of cases, national and international organizations who feed into their training modes, new programs and services; how they best identify gaps in services to young people; and how they develop their partnerships and how they promote their programs.

So we already have an entity in play that we should be not only partnering with, but we should be actually investing more because if we invest in the frontend, we're going to save dramatically on the backend. But for some reason, the exercise was purely about cutting money without realizing the benefits here.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll have an opportunity to present this numerous times over the next few weeks and outline how this is a detriment to the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union presents new trade opportunities; and

WHEREAS the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has a historic trade relationship with the United Kingdom; and

WHEREAS the two regions may mutually benefit from trade opportunities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to develop an economic strategy that capitalizes on trade opportunities between the United Kingdom and Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

Mr. Speaker, in the past when I've raised this issue and presented similar petitions, I focused on some of the history of Brexit and the opportunities it presents for Newfoundland and Labrador, and why the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation should make a concerted effort to capitalize on that. Beyond just doing the normal day-to-day activities of the department, beyond just continuing the trade work in the department that's been going on for years. There's an incredible opportunity before us because of Brexit. We have a historic trade relationship with the United Kingdom.

I'd like to elaborate a little bit on why we should build on that because it's really about opportunity – opportunity to strengthen ties between the UK and Newfoundland and Labrador; opportunities to increase trade to support the province's economy; opportunities to create jobs so that hard-working families in Newfoundland and Labrador have the dignity of work. I believe that our province must seize that rare opportunity. Never again will the opportunity so plainly present itself to re-found and improve the trade between the UK and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Because a queue has already formed, from Australia to India, from Ghana to New Zealand, all searching to open the British economy, which is actually the fifth largest in the world, all seeking to open it to their products and services. We can't afford to be at the back of that line. Jobs depend on it, and I'm calling on government to act, as are the petitioners that I'm speaking on behalf of here today. I think it can be part of a wider plan to diversify the economy.

I know that folks in the United Kingdom will continue to buy our seafood and our oil and our iron, but there are other parts of life in Newfoundland and Labrador that could also be sold back in the UK. Right now, you can buy maple syrup from Quebec in the UK, but you can't buy Newfoundland and Labrador bakeapple jam. There are bars in London that sell some liquors that are produced in our Arctic, but you can't find Iceberg gin, made on the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are a lot of people from the UK who go to the mainland for vacations, but we could attract more of them to Newfoundland and Labrador when you consider our scenery, our culture and the warm welcome that's found here. So there's an opportunity here; great prosperity can lie ahead if we pursue it, but we need to make a concerted effort to do so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker I would call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 65.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 65, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 65 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 65)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 65 has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 65)

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

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

I call Order 4, third reading of Bill 69.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that Bill 69, An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 69 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act. (Bill 69)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 69 has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Health Professions Act," read a third time,

ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 69)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Harbour Main, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 66.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to debate Bill 66.

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, Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 66, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3." (Bill 66)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, I have a chance to support this, but I do have a couple of clarification questions here around multi-year funding and being able to do that.

Can the minister give some clarification of exactly what the criteria will be for multi-year

funding for a particular organization? What that criteria would be, how they fit that criteria and are there already ones existing? And, if so, based on what criteria and how would new ones meet that criteria?

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

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

As I said when we introduced Bill 66, this was really about enabling the *Financial Administration Act* to provide a mechanism which currently doesn't exist for our government's plan to have multi-year grants. The process is continuing to be worked on by officials, as well as items such as criteria for multi-year funding. So those things are to come.

What we're talking about in this particular piece of legislation is it singularly updates the *Financial Administration Act* to allow for multi-year funding. As we've discussed in the House during debate already, currently there is no provision inside the *Financial Administration Act* for monies to go to community organizations in any way in a multi-year scenario. So part of the process of implementing a multi-year grants program is to make sure that we have the legislative ability under the *Financial Administration Act* to do that.

So I appreciate the sincerity of the question from the Member opposite but we're certainly very early in the process, and I can't provide that information to him right now.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I appreciate the minister outlining that. She may be at the point right now where there are still some details haven't been worked out, but around the accountability issue, we've had those discussions here because while we all support a bit of longevity with organizations because of the benefits of being able to plan from staffing and training and leverage other types of money through partnerships, we do realize it's taxpayers' money and every organization that we deal with has to be accountable.

Have there been some discussions around the accountability process? Particularly when we get into second and third year, because maybe the mode of that organization or the priorities have changed somewhat, or they've leveraged much more money than they need from the government purse, for example, to look at maybe we're already duplicating funding because they've already leveraged from a private partner or a federal partner or a municipal partner as part of that.

So it's more about the accountability to ensure as we move – I can understand year one is probably the easiest year after the assessment process is done, but the accountability for year two and year three to ensure money is not being duplicated and it's being used for what it was funded for.

Thank you.

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

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

Certainly, from our perspective, and I'm sure Members opposite would share this, the accountability for taxpayers' money is something that we take very seriously. Equally so too, do we take seriously providing consistency in funding decisions to organizations so that they can make the operational decisions they need to make, particularly for programs that straddle multiple years.

From an accountability framework perspective, in the multi-year grants, those types of tools that will be used and assessments that will be used, will be defined in the regulations. But I can assure the House, and I think it would be no surprise, that some fundamental things like financial disclosure, providing transparency into the organization's financial performance on a regular and annual basis would provide confidence to government on a regular basis as to the destination and the expenses of the charity.

While, as we all know in this House, the majority of the – I said charity, I should say the not-for-profit sector more appropriately, Mr.

Chair. We recognize there are thousands and thousands and thousands of individuals that put a tremendous amount of due diligence into working in community and are part of volunteer boards that monitor the operations and the financial capacity and financial accountability of all of these front-line organizations.

We have seen, sadly, organizations that have, through sometimes no fault of their own, and sometimes through purposeful actions by others, that there is a need to address the accountability and that taxpayers' money hasn't been used for the purposes of which it was provided, which was to provide the services that the organization was asked to do.

Certainly, as part of the regulatory framework under multi-year grants, we can minimally expect to see financial reporting disclosed. And, in all likelihood, there will be other mechanisms that will be used to ensure that there is an accountability framework, particularly in the multi-year funding, Mr. Chair.

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

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

Just a quick question for the minister regarding when the act will come into force; I think the not-for-profit sector and groups that are depending on funding from government are quite delighted with this bill – we all know that. It has really given them a sense of hope and a sense of security in that they know that they're going to be able to do longer term planning because of it.

Because of that, I'm asking the minister: Is it her intention to have this act come into force as quickly as possible? Will it be done in conjunction with the budget, for example? How soon would she hope to have this in? Because I think this is really important to the community groups to know.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

I thank the Member opposite for her question. I would agree with her that I think we have many, many volunteers and front-line individuals who are working and doing yeoman's service in community that are looking forward to the consistency that, potentially, multi-year grants might provide their organizations.

As I mentioned earlier in the debate, we have a cross-departmental team right now. That team is made up of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, the Women's Policy Office, Executive Council, the Community Seniors and Social Development, Finance and the Office of the Comptroller General. We also are bringing in Education and Early Childhood Development and other departments on an as-needed basis. That cross-departmental team is continuing to establish the framework and then, fundamentally, the regulations and policies that will follow as part of multi-year grants. We have a lot of work to do there.

I would not want to lead those hard-working volunteers in the community astray. It's going to take us a period of time to get that work done. Our hope would be that we'd be able to make an announcement well in advance of next year's budget and do training with the organizations so they understand the new mechanism that they will have to use to apply for multi-year funding, and help them work through that process so that funding announcements made in next year's budget would be made under the umbrella of multi-year funding for those groups and organizations that would be able to receive their money in that way.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In the bill itself, or in discussion in terms of introducing the bill, I think there was reference made to community-based organizations in regard to many discussions about those for multi-year funding. In the bill itself, there's no reference to community-based organizations.

Could the minister give us some understanding of what the definition of that group would be?

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

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

The definition of community groups includes, for example, cultural groups. I know there were some questions in the House earlier as to whether or not cultural groups would be included. As a community organization, they would certainly have the ability to apply for multi-year funding, and that would be a cultural and heritage grants.

Also, economic grants can also be part of multi-year funding and can be included in the definition. As to exactly which portions of grants – if an organization is receiving operating grants, certainly those were the ones that we're focusing on for multi-year. Program grants are different, as Members of this House understand.

So those organizations that are receiving operating grants, our intention is to follow the definition that I just referred to in answering the Member's question.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are a number of volunteer administrative boards that are set up in the province to carry out various functions for providing services to the public; regional health authorities and entities like that that get large grants at any particular time in the budget process on an annual basis.

Would those be groups that would be considered for multi-year funding? I'm just trying to get an idea of how you differentiate volunteer groups and the role they play in society in our province and who would be included here and who would not be.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, the Member opposite certainly raises an interesting point. As I think this House may be aware, when you look at the Estimates books, there's over \$3

billion worth of funds that go out in the form of grants, as it's listed in the Estimates books. Certainly monies that go to regional health authorities are considered technically, by definition of the Estimates books, grants.

That's not what we're talking about here. What we are talking about is monies that are distributed through various government departments that go directly into community-based organizations. Those community-based organizations may be working in the area of social policy, or they may be working in the area of the economy. They also may be working in the areas, as was said earlier, of culture and heritage. Certainly, as the work unfolds over the next number of months, we can provide clarity to those organizations as to which organizations have the ability to participate in the multi-year funding program.

If the Members opposite have specific organizations that they would have questions about, we can certainly take those under advisement as part of the work that we'll be undertaking over the next number of months.

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

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

When the minister answered my last question – and I thank her for answering the last question, fairly clearly – she did make reference to hoping to have everything well in place by the next year's budget and I'm wondering if the minister is talking about 2017-18 budget or 2018-2019 budget?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

One of the things that has to happen as part of – just one example of what has to happen in order for government to be able to provide a multi-year grants process is we have to structurally change the kind of one-window approach. We would like to make it very simple for organizations to access information into

government, so there's technology work that has to be done. There's administrative work that has to be done. There is cross-departmental work that has to be done.

I would expect that our goal is to achieve all of that work and have the process identified so it's able to be communicated to organizations so that we can announce in Budget 2018-19 the results of the multi-year funding so that organizations will have clarity over the course of three years.

I think it was also, Mr. Chair, important for me to recognize that much like infrastructure spending, which has the ability to change on an annual basis, our intention with the community grants is to also provide opportunity on an annual basis for organizations who maybe weren't prepared in one year but are better prepared in a second year to apply for the multi-year grant privilege that we can help make that happen. We recognize that providing clarity in multiple years and, I guess, dependability on revenue allows organizations to focus on what they're doing, versus focusing on filling out grant applications.

So our plan is to hopefully have the organizations well trained and well prepared for the first wave, which we intend to have ready to execute and implement for next year's budget so we can make the first series of announcements, but that shouldn't limit organizations that may need some additional time to prepare for what has yet to be determined, the rules and regulations. Our objective is to make this as easy as possible for organizations so that they can keep their efforts focused on providing the services that are so critical to the people that they serve.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to clarify some information the minister gave a little earlier in the questions with regard to defining community-based organizations. I just wonder, I think her answer was that in order to qualify you'd be a non-profit group tied directly to a line department and the money would flow directly to you. So based on you being an applicant, that would make you eligible. But it wouldn't be a situation where

funds could be allocated to an intervening group that would then subsequently pass it on to another, as I indicated, with a regional health authority or something like that.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: I can't answer that question at this particular point. As the Member opposite would recognize, and I say this with gentle humour on a Thursday afternoon, the amount of locations across departments, agencies, boards and commissions that community grant money goes into our community is extensive. And we want to make sure that as we bring in a multi-year grants program, that we don't inadvertently create an unintended consequence that prevents a very critical organization that is providing front-line services from getting caught in a policy that hasn't caught up with the multiple places that money is distributed in the community.

So while it is our hope that everything would come from core government, the Member opposite would be aware that certainly regional health authorities do provide some community grants. For us, we want to make sure that as part of the work the cross-departmental team is doing, that we would capture those and certainly identify any and all places where community groups receive money and try to provide some clarity as to whether that money is going to be available through the multi-year grants process or if it will be available through a program grant, which is not the same as multi-year grants.

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

MS. PERRY: Will community youth networks now be able to avail of three-year funding?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, that particular community organization I believe is in the CSSD – the funding comes out of the CSSD. I don't have the information in front of me as to whether or not those organizations receive funding through other departments or through

regional health authorities. I don't have that information here today.

It is our intention that any organization that receives core funding right now will have the ability to participate in the multi-year grants program. While I can't speak specifically to that organization, I can provide that context to the Member opposite.

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Will this bill then apply to sports organizations, the health and wellness grants? I know you referred to those within health authorities, but those within the department. We were wondering if you could provide us with a list of which programs, or give us some specific programs that you're talking about here.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, I certainly have, as I said earlier, a tremendous amount of respect for the Members opposite, as I do for the Members on this side of the House, who are certainly eager to understand the substantial change in multi-year funding for community organizations, and I appreciate Members speaking positively to this.

I do want to remind Members opposite, and for the relevance of the bill, what we're talking about here is not the organizations that will apply, that will be impacted. What we are talking about is an adjustment to the *Financial Administration Act* that will provide the framework in the legislation for us to provide multi-year grants. Right now as it sits in our province, any government, our government, former governments, future governments, as the legislation sits right now would be limited and, quite frankly, would have no ability to provide multi-year grants.

What we're talking about as part of this particular legislation is to change the *Financial Administration Act* to provide the mechanism to allow that to happen. As I said earlier, I understand the enthusiasm and the zeal of which

the Members opposite would like to get specifics. I don't have the specifics for them this afternoon, Mr. Chair, but I certainly hope their representation and their eagerness to represent their constituents will not result in us not passing this bill because without the bill we will be unable to provide multi-year funding in any form to any organization.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Chair, certainly we're supportive of the bill, but in the spirit of openness and honesty we feel it would be the right thing to do for government to be straightforward and open with the people about the programs and services they're going to be covering.

So we're wondering if the Finance Minister can commit to bringing the draft regulations forward here to the House of Assembly before they are finalized, again, in the spirit of openness and honesty for the people of the province.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, the regulations that will be governing multi-year grants will, first and foremost, be communicated as part of our consultation work with community and getting their feedback on the work we're doing. The cross-departmental team that's in place now will be the ones that will be creating the rules around the multi-year grants that will apply strictly to operating grants.

I know Members in this House sometimes have difficulty understanding the difference between program money and core operating funding. Certainly, that's what our focus is, is on core operating money. We will provide full transparency to the people of the province on the process.

Mr. Chair, I would remind Members of this House that providing this type of transparency and also providing the ability for organizations to avail of multi-year funding is considerably more than the former administration did when –

my understanding is that ministers actually had the ability to determine who got community grants, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. PERRY: Today we're talking primarily about community organizations, but what's going to prevent Cabinet from changing the regulations in a year or two? Could Cabinet change the regulations to include business grants and tourism grants, and grants to health authorities?

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

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

I would remind the Member opposite that in an earlier question related to the definition of grants I provided that community-based grants can be defined as cultural organizations. They can also be defined as economic. They can also be defined as a community based. I think for the Member opposite, that answer should provide her some clarity. If we have organizations that are receiving core funding that may be cultural, for example, or heritage driven, we want to be able to provide that certainty in a multi-year situation.

I think for the Member opposite to get some sense of comfort, having a very transparent process that community is very aware of, I'm very confident the general public, as they always do, will hold not only government, but Members of this House of Assembly accountable for the processes and systems that government puts in place.

Thank you.

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

MS. PERRY: So to get some further clarity now for the organizations that are out there receiving funding on an annual basis, if a particular group gets rejection for funding in one year, does that mean that they will then not be able to receive funding for the three following

years, or will there be a block of funding set aside for applications each and every year?

So my question, to be clear, is: Will funding be awarded each year, or will all the funding be awarded for three years at a time?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Chair, I thank the Member opposite for her question. I think I referred earlier to the rolling infrastructure process. Those Members on this side of the House who participate in Treasury Board, and I would suggest Members on that side who may have had the opportunity and privilege to do so, may also understand that Treasury Board process allows for a rolling budget.

It is our intent, obviously, to make sure that community organizations who may want to avail of multi-year funding grant applications but, for some reason, are unsuccessful, that they are still eligible for applying for the core funding that they may have achieved. There may be a reason why an organization doesn't meet the criteria for multi-year funding.

If you have an organization that has, as I'm sure, sadly, Members in this House would have some appreciation for, when you have an organization which, for example, has questionable financial performance, has serious concerns about the organization delivering the services that it must provide, then in those situations it would be irresponsible of any government to provide funding in a multi-year environment.

But those organizations that, for whatever reason, may not meet the criteria in one year certainly will have the opportunity to reply in subsequent years. And we see this as a rolling discussion, rolling process, on an annual basis for those community organizations.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't have many comments to make on this legislation, but I did want to have an opportunity

in Committee to raise a couple of concerns. I'm, once again, asking for the minister's consideration as it relates to grants to youth organizations. The concept of multi-year funding is a really good one. So I applaud government for taking that step.

The challenge I have, however, is with cuts that have happened over the past year to grants to youth organizations. Now, several ministers and the Premier himself have stood and said well, those grants, it's not core funding. That's simply not accurate. The challenge we have is that for youth organizations that were getting funding year after year after year from the provincial government, to have that cut halfway through the fiscal year without warning has had a detrimental impact on some youth programs in our province.

So I've asked lots of questions and made lots of noise about that in the past; I won't prolong that point today, but I do want to highlight the impact it's had in real terms on some of those organizations in terms of dollars. What I'm asking for is simply government's consideration of including these organizations that have been impacted as it takes a different approach to multi-year funding. So if these organizations can benefit from the changes that are being made here, which will allow government to do multi-year funding, then I think the concerns can be addressed.

We may still argue about the funding amounts; we may still argue that organization X has been treated unfairly and isn't receiving enough funding or whatever the case may be, but it would give these organizations some ability to plan and to budget if they had some sense of what their funding is going to look like for multiple years.

An organization like Allied Youth has been funded for decades by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; in fact, at one point – the office may still be – their office was even in a government building with a government phone number. It was an organization that was very heavily supported by the provincial government.

Their funding for 2015-2016 and recent years prior to that was \$35,000. Not a lot of money.

But in 2016-2017 it's only \$23,000. When that's a significant chunk of your provincial operating budget that you depend on year over year over year, then it's effectively core funding and to have that cut partway through fiscal year has a detrimental impact. Boys and Girls Clubs across the province were cut. The Botwood Boys and Girls Club were cut from \$10,000, which it had been receiving for years and years, down to \$6500.

So we're not talking about a lot of money. So we're actually talking about a problem that is easily solved. The Boys and Girls Club received a provincial grant of over 50 grand and they've received it for years and years and years, and it's been cut in more than half. It's down to \$24,500 this year. The Boys and Girls Club of St. John's has for years and years and years received about \$72,000. It was cut down to \$34,000 this year; so cut by more than half.

That's resulted in programs being cancelled. That's resulted in reduced staffing at the St. John's Boys and Girls Club. The Boys and Girls Club of Wabana on Bell Island has had a similar experience; I don't know if I have the figure immediately available. They were receiving \$36,000 a year and it's been cut to \$17,000 a year.

I won't list them all – St. Anthony and area, it was cut from \$10,000 annually down to \$4,500. So Boys and Girls Clubs across the board were impacted, which is very unfortunate, and it happened part way through a fiscal year so there was no ability to plan. They'd love to have the assurance that, in future, it's going to be set for multiple years, whether it's three years or whatever the case may be at a time, that would allow them to plan. So if their funding is going to be cut and you know it's going to be cut, at least you can plan or if you know it's going to be stable for three years, you can plan accordingly.

I want to emphasize that these cuts did have real impact on these organizations. It's not simply a matter of my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island and others and myself making noise about it for the sake of doing so. We've worked directly with many of these organizations and we know how far these dollars get stretched and what impact they have on

young people who need services and need support.

Easter Seals was cut. There was a youth centre and an organization in Englee that was cut completely. The Girl Guides were cut. In addition to that, funding for Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Parliament was reduced; funding for their Radhoc Youth Leadership organization was reduced.

Our cadet programs in the province – the Navy League of Canada for instance, which is not heavily federally funded – in fact, I don't think they received any funding at all from the Department of National Defence. Air cadets, army cadets, sea cadets, they do receive some support, although they still rely on the province for some funding as well.

In the case of the Navy League, they receive virtually no federal support. A modest grant of \$5,000 a year for the provincial division of the Navy League of Canada went a long, long way to supporting their work, which is driven 100 per cent by volunteers. That grant to the Navy League of Canada, the Newfoundland and Labrador division, which they've received for years, was reduced to zero. Not just cut by 50 per cent like many others, or more than 50 per cent, it was reduced to zero.

Some people will say well, five grand, that's not a lot of money. No, it isn't, but when it's the bulk of your operating budget that you depend on year over year, it's a hell of a lot of money. So that's why it's necessary for us to make this point once again today.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award program, which has been heavily funded by the province for a long, long time, they've received an annual grant for quite some time of \$60,000 a year. Part way through the fiscal year, they find out their grant is cut to \$30,500.

So there are lots of project grants that also get funded that are one time. Some of them may apply again and receive a grant for multiple years but it's not consistent. All of the ones I've listed, for years, in some cases for decades, have received a similar amount of money from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I'm hoping in this budget that we now know will come on April 6, I'm hoping some consideration will be given to fixing that. Given the minor amount of money that I just outlined for those organizations that were receiving the grant year over year over year over year for the same amount, then that's core funding they depend on. So, treat it as such. Even if you can't restore all of it, restore some of it.

In relation specifically to the bill we're debating here today, enter into an agreement with them that says, okay, this is the new amount – hopefully larger than the reduced amount, but at the very least, here's what your funding is going to be for the next three years. That's as a result of this legislation we're debating here, easily done, and that's what should be done.

We're talking about an impact of not a lot of money, but an impact on thousands of young people. In some communities, particularly in the rural communities, the children and youth accessing the services of these organizations, it's the only game in town so to speak.

When you talk about cutting funding for a Boys and Girls Club in a rural community, it's a focal point for community activity for young people. It's a place where they regularly go after school and go in the evenings to participate in safe, fun activities that contributes to their development. It's a place where they get mentoring. It's a place where they get help with homework. It's a place where they participate in recreation programs that in many cases they might not otherwise be able to afford. So that's why it's important to make this point today.

I'm respectfully asking the minister to consider these organizations in making budget decisions this year. Look at restoring some of the funding that did get cut. The project grants are important, but I'm not as concerned about those. I'm concerned about the organizations that were receiving the same amount of money year over year over year over year, and in some cases, Mr. Chair, that was for decades.

Now, please, based on this legislation that we're bringing in here, which we will support, let's make it possible for these organizations to have some assurance of what their funding is going to look like for the short term, for the next few

years. It's a reasonable approach. I'm glad government is taking that approach, but let's address the issue that's affected dozens of youth organizations in this province.

This is an opportunity to easily make it right, and we will be the first to stand and support government if it chooses to take that step. So I think I've sufficiently made the point, Mr. Chair, I'll conclude my comments there.

Thank you for the opportunity.

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

MR. BRAZIL: No, I can sit and let the minister respond.

MS. C. BENNETT: (Inaudible) go ahead.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough.

Okay, I have a question around our conversation back and forth, and I was glad to see there will be criteria developed around the onus on accountability but also on the criteria of who meets that.

Can I suggest – and I go back just because of my 30 years as a civil servant and a lot of it around working with not for profits and youth organizations of engaging them. I know civil servants do a wonderful job in our province of addressing the needs and that, but it would make their job a little bit easier. It would be very relevant – particularly if you're going to do multi-year funding, you want to ensure the criteria meet the needs of those organizations and from our financial investments.

Could I suggest, and would the minister give any thought to this, of trying to engage parts of the sector. It doesn't have to be a big encompassing, costly exercise. It could be either through an online petition or an outline for people to propose what they feel. The organizations that are going to benefit from this, what the criteria should be because in some cases some of these organizations can do some self-policing to ensure the money is being spent properly and that it's better invested to ensure the programs that are the priorities are the ones we invest in.

So I'm throwing it out to the minister. Would she consider engaging her staff or staff from another department to see if there's a mechanism to ensure the sector out there, that you're going to be funding and who would no doubt be very appreciative of multi-year funding, could have input to design the criteria.

For two reasons; one, in my former life it shows when there's more engagement there, then there's less push back and less confusion by the entities that we're trying to support. The second would be, it would streamline exactly what we're going to put out as our policy from a government point of view when it comes to multi-year funding.

So I want to throw that out to see if the minister would be interested in engaging that and having some staff address that in some way, shape or form.

Thank you.

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

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

I'll take the opportunity to answer a couple of questions that two Members opposite asked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask all hon. Members if they could bring the volume of the conversation down, please.

Thank you.

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

Two questions at least that I want to address as part of this Committee debate. One was from the Member opposite who asked about whether there is an opportunity or a plan to engage community as part of the process of establishing what the criteria might be.

We have multiple departments that are participating in this activity. I would certainly expect, as the lead minister on this particular project, that those departments would reach out

to their stakeholder groups and ask for feedback and suggestions as part of the process we're undergoing. I think that certainly provides an opportunity for a community to be engaged in the discussion, and I would see that to be a normal practice to do.

With regard to the comments from the other Member opposite, with regard to the list of organizations, I too would recognize that every one of those organizations provides an opportunity for youth in our province to participate in things they may not have the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Chair, one of the things that was certainly evident to me as we went through this process with officials, it was clear that the former administration definitely was having internal angst over what was core funding and what was project funding. Certainly, they brought that discussion here to the House. They represented that as part of this debate, and I certainly appreciate that.

There are organizations, and the Member opposite indicated there were a number of organizations that received project funding regularly, unchecked. Those decisions I would have to defer to the people who were in the decision-making chairs at the time as to why those were made.

In our situation, what we're trying to do is to provide a more open and transparent process for community organizations so they can understand how the process will be made. That they will have certainty in multi-year funding for core funding, and obviously project and program funding is different from core funding and will continue to be so.

Mr. Chair, I would suggest to the Member opposite, any organization who will be provided an opportunity to participate in the multi-year grant application process could certainly do that, and we'll be sure to make sure that we do communicate through organizations like the Community Sector Council on the regulations and the tools that are available for those organizations to participate should they choose to.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was prepared to leave my comments where they were. On a positive note, to start with, I'm happy to hear the minister say that any organizations can have a conversation with government and take advantage of this new approach to multi-year funding. So that in itself is good news for the organizations we're talking about, but to suggest somehow that this is project funding is ridiculous. It's not true. It's an absolute statement that – it's absolutely false.

We're talking about organizations that have depended on this funding year over year over year. So if you fill out a form manually, yes, that's fine; that's part of government process and that's existed for decades and decades. Liberal governments, PC governments, that's the way it has been. The fact that we're moving to a model where you won't have to jump through that hoop of filling out the same form every year when you know – well, you used to know you'd get the same amount of money every year. Cleaning that up and entering into multi-year funding agreements makes good sense.

What doesn't make sense, though, is misleading the people of the province by suggesting that these organizations are somehow receiving project funding and not annual funding that's core to their operation. It's not fair, it's disingenuous and I'm going to call it out. It's not fair to those organizations. We've heard from them. They feel that they've been treated unfairly by this government. In some cases, they feel they've been bullied, which I would hope the minister would take seriously.

So to stand in this House and to suggest that this isn't core funding – we've had this debate in Question Period; we had it in Estimates. All I'm looking for is acknowledgement that these organizations will be treated fairly through this year's budget process, that they can avail of multi-year funding and that some of the funding that was cut halfway through a fiscal year – maybe for political reasons, I don't know – this funding was cut, it makes sense for this funding to be restored.

I can list the project funding. If the minister would like me to give the list of all the project funding, that's fine. You have groups that received one-time grants or might have received it for a couple of years or applied for funding for a particular reason; that's fine. But then you had other organizations, like the ones I listed, who received the same amount of money year over year over year and filled out the same application form.

I worked for a couple of charities professionally, years ago, and I filled out the form year after year after year. I knew, based on conversations with the staff in the youth services division, which has changed names multiple times, but based on the conversation with those officials, I knew that I could count on getting the same amount of money every year.

Now, it may have changed slightly some years because governments may have decided to increase funding or decrease funding slightly, but we've never seen a situation like this where an organization that's been receiving the same amount of money for, in some cases, decades, all of a sudden, after spending that money that they were counting on for six months, find out that their grant has been cut in half for that current year. By any standard, that's outrageous.

So I can't sit quietly and have a game being played and be told that oh no, this is project funding and somehow it was about how the previous administration managed it. Mr. Chair, funding for these organizations was stable during the previous administration. I recognize, like many of these organizations, that tough decisions have to be made. I think most of these organizations, given the provinces fiscal circumstances, would have been quite prepared to live with government saying at the beginning of the fiscal year you know what, we're going to have to reduce funding this year. So you can anticipate a 10 per cent reduction in your grant.

If you know that, if you have a little bit of notice, then you can plan for that and that, hopefully, with good planning, may not result in people losing their jobs or after-school programs being cancelled. But as a result of the attitude of this administration, that doesn't seem to matter. That doesn't seem to matter. To say oh well, it wasn't core funding; it's nonsense Mr. Chair.

It's absolute nonsense. I can't sit quietly and accept those statements being made repeatedly in this Legislature.

Organizations like the Army League of Canada in Newfoundland and Labrador, which had received several thousand dollars a year – every year – was reduced to zero. Allied Youth which has received \$35,000 for years – again, used to have a government phone number, had a government office, has been funded by the province since, I don't know, the 50s or 60s, they go back at least that far – was cut this year to \$23,000. Boys and Girls Clubs had their funding in many cases cut in half. I mentioned some of them already; being cut by over 50 per cent mid-year is problematic.

The Church Lads' Brigade has received funding for years, and had their grant reduced as well. I previously mentioned Easter Seals; the Gander Boys and Girls Club previously received \$15,500 a year – it was cut this year to \$8,000. The Girl Guides of Canada was cut from \$37,000 to \$25,000. The James Hornell Boys and Girls Club which was quick to defend government during the budget process – a staff member for the club, who probably regrets it now, was quick to come out in defence because he had been assured by his MHA that funding would not be cut and then finds out halfway through the fiscal year that the grant was cut from \$37,500 to \$25,500.

This is real, Mr. Chair. And the reason some of these groups are so upset is that they depend on the funding year over year over year. So we can talk about the semantics of application forms and internal government terminology; that's fine. But that's not the issue that I'm trying to solve. The issue that I'm trying to solve is about predictable, sustainable funding for non-profit organizations.

I actually believe that, through this legislation, that is the problem government is trying to solve. That is the issue that government is trying to address, and I applaud them for doing so. All I'm saying is that for a very small amount of money, for these organizations that have been missed, for these organizations that have been treated differently because of some arbitrary definition that's not even logical, let's just make it right for them. Let's give them a chance to

avail of multi-year funding. The minister says that will happen, so that's good news and I'm glad to see that happen.

But let's acknowledge the fact that these organizations have received the same amount of money from government. They fill out the same form every year and receive the same amount of money every year, and that's gone on for multiple years and, in some cases, for decades. I call that core funding. It's not used for a particular project. If you read their applications, it's not project-based; it's about sustaining their overall programs and services and it's been treated by these organizations and by government as being annual operating funding. I don't know how you can call that anything other than core funding.

So anyway, we've exhausted that debate. It's been going on since last April. But the problem still exists for these organizations who've reduced after-school programs and reduced staffing, in some cases.

A grant to Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Parliament being reduced from \$3,000 to \$2,000, while it's a significant percentage, maybe that won't have major operational impact. But when you cut half of the funding for the St. John's Boys and Girls Club, that has operational impact. That has real operational impact. It's not just the St. John's Boys and Girls Club, it's the Wabana Boys and Girls Club, it's the Gander Boys and Girls Club, it's the James Hornell Boys and Girls Club, it's the St. Anthony Boys and Girls Club, not to mention the YMCAs.

The YMCA of Exploit's Valley was cut from \$9,000 annually to \$4,000 this year. The YMCA of Western Newfoundland and Labrador was cut from \$13,500 to \$6,500. So this has real impact. I understand government has to make difficult choices but this is one that I think is easily fixed. This legislation makes it easier to fix by providing predictable, sustainable, multi-year funding to these organizations that were negatively impacted through *Budget 2016*.

If you get the grant every year and you fill out the same form every year and you get the same amount of money every year and it sustains your

operation, then I call that core funding, even if the minister doesn't want to admit it.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, I stand on a point of order, Mr. Chair, under section 49.

I didn't interrupt the Member opposite while he spoke but he did use the term during the debate, he said that the Member on this side was misleading the people of the province and misleading the public. That is clearly unparliamentary, and I would ask that he simply stand up, withdraw the comment and we'll continue on with the debate.

Thank you.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Speaking to the point of order; at numerous times in the last couple of weeks similar language has been used. I did not accuse a particular Member of misleading the House. That would indeed be unparliamentary, but the use of the term misleading, it's really about context and how it was used. I didn't use it in a way that hasn't been used regularly in this House in the last number of weeks. So, Mr. Chair, I can't withdraw that remark.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Certainly, we gave the Member opposite an opportunity to do so. Again, he can't use previous times that were not referenced. If the Member opposite took umbrage or issue with the use of a word at any point he has had every opportunity to stand in this House and point that out and have it put on the record, but he, nor any Member of his caucus, had taken the time to do so. So, clearly, they did not have an issue.

I'm pointing out right now, as we clearly know through O'Brien and Bosc, saying that a Member is misleading the House is

unparliamentary. I would stand and ask the Member to stand and withdraw the comment.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair of the Committee will take it under advisement and report back to the Committee.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's interesting to sit here and listen to this debate, especially as it comes from the Member for Mount Pearl North because he very well knows the distinction between core funding for community organizations and project funding. He's well aware of that.

It's sort of rich to hear him talk about funding being provided for political reasons when we know, and certainly be able to table information here in the House of Assembly to that effect, that when the Member for Mount Pearl North was deputy premier and had an opportunity to politically interfere in decisions around where monies for community-based organizations went, he did that very thing himself.

So it's really a case of the pot calling the kettle black because that's what he did. When he was in there he did two things that I – we can provide lots of information, factually-based information to this effect, that the one thing the Member for Mount Pearl North did when he was deputy premier is he steered funding to community-based organizations in his own district over community-based organizations in other districts. We know he did that. If you look at the numbers for organizations in his own district that other organizations in other districts across Newfoundland and Labrador did not get funding because they were fattening up the purse so that he could give it to organizations in his own district.

On top of that, we also know that when the Member for Mount Pearl North was deputy premier he steered money towards pet organizations that he had involvement in

previously before he was involved in politics. One of them involves a uniform. I don't think I have to name what uniform it is, but I know my son's in Beavers, Mr. Chair.

We know the Member basically bulked up funding for pet organizations that he favoured over others and that he bulked up funding and fattened up funding for organizations in his own district. So for him to stand here today on the floor of the House of Assembly and suggest the hon. Minister of Finance is somehow politically interfering or somebody else is politically interfering, he must be basing that on his own experience doing that very thing, because that's what he did.

There is a comprehensive list, if anybody wants to know. If the Member for Mount Pearl North has any dispute over what it is I'm saying, if he disputes it at all, there's no question you can produce a list very easily of the organizations that received funding in prior years until he came on the scene, and when he came on the scene it took a very distinct turn. So for him to suggest political interference on somebody else's part is entirely hypocritical. That may be what he did himself, but don't accuse Members over here or ministers over here of doing what it was that he did when he had an opportunity to do so.

We are trying to remove that from the process so that community organizations, be they in Mount Pearl North or Mount Pearl – Southlands or St. John's Centre, or any of the districts over here on this of the House of Assembly represented by MHAs in government, that that political element is taken out. Because children, and people who are involved in community organizations in other parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, should not have to go without funding because you have Members of Cabinet who have pet projects in their own district and pet organizations that they feel are more deserving of funding of, say, children in Labrador, or children on the Northern Peninsula, or on the Burin Peninsula, or on the Connaigre Peninsula, or anywhere else in this province. It's absolutely unfair.

So what we're trying to do is a number of things here. We're trying to make sure the political element that the Member for Mount Pearl North

very deftly employed when he was deputy premier, that element is removed from the process and there is more fair play for community organizations that receive funding from government. We also want to make sure there is more transparency involved in that process. That's why the Minister of Finance has taken great leadership, last year and now with this piece of legislation, to ensure certainty when it comes to core funding.

Now, the Member can get up and grandstand and fear monger and so on and so forth and talk about this and that and core funding versus project funding and all that, engage in semantics. Maybe he's trying to get himself primed up for his tour next week when he goes around the province trying to convince the current leader to stop asking everybody else to keep him on and actually have a real leadership debate, but I guess they'll have to solve that themselves over there, who's going to beg for the job or be pushed into it or whatever. Maybe he's priming himself up for the little trip he's going to take around the province next week, Mr. Chair.

I also wanted to come to the defence of my colleague, the hon. Minister of Transportation and Works, who I think has done an excellent job representing the people of Buchans, the people of Grand Falls-Windsor. I was actually out in his district last Friday. We met with four schools on a Friday. I had a great opportunity to go around and meet with principals and chat with teachers about the difficulties they have as they try to do their work and some of the great things that are going on in his district.

I just wanted to say, as he sort of suggested somehow there was a Boys and Girls Club in the minister's district that was not fairly dealt with. If you look at all of the funding that was provided for that Boys and Girls Club in Buchans, it's almost somewhere in the order of \$100,000 in funding; if you account for JCPs and other forms of funding that's provided to community organizations by government.

You can get up there and play politics and suggest this is the only form of funding, but, again, as the Member well knows, he also was able to steer funding for his pet organizations and for organizations in his own district through other forms of funding that government has as

well. So he knows very well that there are lots of other areas that community-based organizations receive funding from.

The Minister of Transportation and Works, in his district for that Boys and Girls Club in Buchans, they've been very fairly dealt with, and they've received something closing in on \$100,000 in the last year in funding through various grants, including the one that we're supposed to be debating here today. They are fairly being dealt with through the process that we have brought in since the election in December 2015.

I just wanted to get up and say I think it's very hypocritical when you do something yourself, you're well aware of what it is you did, then you get up here and try to accuse everybody else of somehow colluding, it's absolutely unfair.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. KENT: A point of order.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North, on a point of order.

MR. KENT: Section 49, "hypocritical" is an unparliamentary word, Mr. Chair. I expect better from ministers of the Crown, although we've stopped expecting better of this minister because it's a lost cause.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I would suggest that the tone of the point of order from the Member opposite indicates exactly what he's trying to do, which is just trying to interrupt the minister from speaking. "Hypocritical" is not recognized as unparliamentary. But again, the Member opposite has shown just where he wanted to go with this. No point of order at all.

CHAIR: Again, the Chair will take it under advisement and report back to the Committee.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I struck a nerve, and that's okay. I'm not going stop. I'm not going to be intimidated by that kind of behaviour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: For somebody who's responsible for our education system, to behave like that in this hon. House, Mr. Chair, it's offensive. For people that have advocated for anti-bullying campaigns, to behave the way that we're seeing this afternoon, it's unfortunate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. KENT: Mr. Chair, can you –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: He just had 10 minutes to speak; I don't know why he's chirping over there. I just wish the people at home could see what we see in this hon. House from the gentleman opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KENT: True colours have shone through for quite some time when it comes to the Minister of Education, and it's rather unfortunate. He cannot help himself but get personal and nasty.

Now, fortunately, in Question Period in the last number of weeks and months, he's shown a bit more restraint. Clearly, somebody had a talking to him, and that's fair ball. But you can hear from the noise opposite, Mr. Chair, that when they don't like what's being said, they get personal and they get nasty.

To accuse me of any kind of political interference –

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

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader, on a point of order.

MR. A. PARSONS: Standing Order 48: Relevancy; there's none coming from the other side. I'd ask that we'd be relevant to the Committee. It's clause 1 that we're debating here.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Again, I'd ask for the co-operation of all Members of the House to stay relevant to the bill that we're discussing here.

On that, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Minister of Education just accused me of political interference and nothing could be further from the truth. I will never apologize for advocating for organizations in my district, whether I'm on this side of the House or that side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: And like any good MHA should, I've encouraged lots of organizations in my district to apply for funding; but to suggest somehow if they're successful in getting funding it's a result of political interference, it's nonsense. It's ludicrous. In fact, I've often advocated to – certainly while I was in government and since leaving government, I'll advocate for organizations that are applying for government funding and, in fact, many have been successful, and I take pride in that.

If you look at the news releases from the last number of years, prior to my time as a minister and during my time as minister, what you'll see is a consistent pattern of funding for many organizations. That's not to say that there haven't been groups around the province who've received one-time grants. And again, if the minister had to make cuts to funding for youth organizations, I have no issue with project grants being more impacted than organizations that receive annual funding. That's fair.

One-time grants are not going to have a major impact on an organization's operations, but the

cuts that have been made by this government will have a major impact on the operation of organizations. So if members of the public are wondering if there's any merit to what the Minister of Education is saying, they should go back and look at the numbers. They will tell the story.

I will never apologize for advocating for groups, but to suggest that groups receiving funding was a result of some kind of political interference, that's unfair, untrue and disrespectful, and comments that are unbecoming of a Member of this House, let alone a Minister of the Crown.

Now if we were to review some of the numbers from the previous years, again they tell a clear story. You've got organizations like the Air Cadet League of Canada who received an annual grant who had it cut this year. So if you want to talk about political interference, there were organizations that received fairly large grants for the first time this year – good causes, worthwhile causes – but if you have an organization that's been depending on annual funding, year after year after year, and then all of a sudden loses that funding, partway through a fiscal year, for no good reason and then all of a sudden other organizations get funded instead, ironically it does raise questions around political interference.

Again, an organization like Allied Youth; funding cut from \$35,000 a year, which they counted on for many, many years, reduced down to \$23,000. Ascension Collegiate received a grant of \$2,500 dollars in 2015-2016 and received nothing in 2016-2017. The Boys and Girls Clubs, they were all cut significantly. Botwood was cut down from \$10,000 to \$6,500; the Boys and Girls Club organization provincially was cut from over \$50,000 down to under \$25,000. The Boys and Girls Club of St. John's, their funding was cut in half.

The funding for the Church Lads' Brigade was reduced. We had the Concerned Citizens for a Safer Community on the Northern Peninsula cut down from \$8,000 to zero. Easter Seals was reduced from \$10,000 to \$7,000. Gander Boys and Girls Club, \$15,500 down to \$8,000. Girl Guides of Canada cut from \$37,000 to \$25,000. The James Hornell Boys and Girls Club, \$37,500 to \$25,500.

The Miss Teen Newfoundland and Labrador pageant had received funding of \$7,500 for a number of years, cut down to zero. The Navy League of Canada, which had received an annual grant of \$5000, reduced down to zero. The Newfoundland and Labrador School Chess Association, speaking of education, received an annual grant of a thousand bucks. Cut down to zero.

The funding for Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Parliament was reduced; the Boys and Girls Club in Norris Arm was cut from \$15,500 a year, which they counted on every year, down to \$7500 dollars. The Radhoc Youth Leadership Organization doing great work for high school and post-secondary students was reduced by \$3000. The St. Anthony Boys and Girls Club were reduced from \$10,000 down to \$4500.

Let's talk about some of the grants that were cut in rural communities – not in Mount Pearl, not in St. John's. The St. Jacques-Coombs Cove Recreation Committee was cut from \$5,000 to zero – to zero – and that's in the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune. From talking to their MHA, who has been an advocate for that organization, this has resulted in cancelled programs. This has resulted in the after school program being impacted, and it's funding that this recreation committee counted on year after year after year. I'm not sure for how many years they received the funding.

MS. PERRY: Years.

MR. KENT: Many, many years.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Program was cut from \$60,000 a year down to \$30,500 a year. The Upper Trinity South Navy League cadets were cut from \$1,000 a year down to zero. The Wabana Boys and Girls Club on Bell Island was cut from \$36,000 a year down to \$17,000 a year. The Wabush Teen Centre, which had been receiving \$10,000 a year for many years, was reduced to zero. The WestRock Community Centre in Corner Brook was cut from an annual grant of \$10,000 down to zero.

The YMCA of Exploits Valley was cut from \$9,000 a year down to \$4,000. The YMCA of Western Newfoundland and Labrador based in the Corner Brook area – I believe they have

satellite operations in Bay of Islands as well, although I'm not certain of that, I do know where they're located in Corner Brook – they were cut from \$13,500 a year down to \$6,500 a year.

The YWCA in St. John's, a relatively new organization; a number of years ago a separate YWCA was established in this region. They don't receive a lot of government funding. They were receiving through this fund, the grants to youth organizations, an amount of \$5,000 annually which was cut to \$3,500 a year.

So that's the core funding I'm talking about, Mr. Chair. I'm not talking about one-time grants that organizations in all districts receive. It's not just about organizations in my area that may have received funding, there are dozens of groups around the province, like some of the ones I've just mentioned, who've not just received annual funding but have applied for one-time project funding.

Yeah, I'm glad that some organizations in my communities benefited and I'm glad that organizations throughout the province have benefited as well. I won't apologize for advocating for groups in my district, but to accuse me of any wrongdoing is offensive, it's wrong, and we deserve better from Ministers of the Crown, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do have to agree with my hon. colleague here from Mount Pearl North about the debate around core funding. We'll agree to disagree with the other side here about what was considered core funding. It was there, understand what the intent was, the value, the investment, the return on the investment and that's a debate we'll have forever and a day until we get to this point where this piece of policy will be adopted – which we support, no qualms on that. I personally support it, see the benefits of it – to get to that point and have that in play so that these organizations have some stability and can move forward.

I do have a question for the minister. She did outline about how we would do the accountability and the accessibility, but as I heard my colleague here mention the dramatic cuts that have taken place to a number of these organizations, I reflect on being at a function only this past week where a business gave back to a Boys and Girls Club some additional monies because, based on the principle of the cuts that had happened in this past budget around their core funding and saw the benefits of investing back in that.

So hats off to the business community who did it. D.F. Barnes did it for the Buchans Boys and Girls Club and for Big Brothers Big Sisters here in the city. Some car dealerships did it for the St. John's Boys and Girls Club. I have to give credit to Dick's Fish and Chips on Bell Island for making a \$5,000 support to the Boys and Girls Club this past Friday to show the investment. So they saw it as core funding, the organization saw it as core funding, and these business communities are stepping up to ensure that these organizations do still flourish and the valued service they've been providing does continue to be provided.

I do ask the minister; we talked about accountability in the process. She's outlined that and I agree with it. I, no doubt, know the bureaucrats will design something that's accessible. I did encourage her to reach out to the host organizations to get their input for it and she's agreed that, no doubt, she'll go back and talk to the different line departments because it spans probably five or six different departments here around core funding, and that's a very valued process.

As we talk about – and I reflect on the fact that a lot of these organizations lost a fair proportion of the core funding, particularly the Wabana Boys and Girls Club lost 60 per cent of its core funding. They have to emphasize now their time frames on being able to regain that through fundraising efforts, through lobbying other entities, through doing application processes to municipal and federal agencies, not-for-profit foundations and these types of things.

There are going to be a number of organizations who may not fit the criteria. But I do ask that you have a resource in place so they don't spend

a multitude of hours that they don't have now because they've already been cut and they've got to go find other ways to sustain their funding to continue the programs that have been so valued to the respective communities.

Can the minister ensure me there'll be a porthole, one avenue area to go to so agencies can have a checklist at the beginning to know whether or not they fit the criteria to move to the next level to fill out the application process for three-year core funding – if they don't, fair enough – so the time frames are only minimal that they put into it and the resources they had to support that process. But if there's a quick support mechanism that can be there, it can be one individual within government that can do the checklist based on here's our standard initial criteria for core funding and then you go through the rest of the process, fair enough.

I do ask, would the minister entertain trying to come up with a process that, if there are those organizations – because every organization would think they're entitled to core funding because, no doubt, everything that people believe they do is of value, and it is of value, but it may not be at the same level for core funding on a three-year funding source that we would see from a government point of view.

So I do ask the minister, would she engage some mechanism, some support? It doesn't have to be adding another person there. It could be potential one department takes the lead on that immediately to address it so that we can eliminate those and not ask those organizations to spend a lot of time in doing the process because there's going to have to be an encompassing process for multi-year funding. I know that. I know it because of what I worked at before.

Project funding itself is encompassing to a certain degree. When you're now talking long-term funding where there may have to be financial statements allocated, board regulations put in play, design of projects, resumes of staff. There could be all kinds of things that are important to this, and I know that hasn't been worked out yet. I understand that, but can you ensure organizations don't spend – because the ones who probably won't fit that criteria are the ones who have the minimal resources available

but you know they're going to want to be able to be part of that and they're going to try to put as many resources as possible to do it.

If they're not eligible right up front, can that be put in play so they can move on to doing what they do, and that's serve the people of the province? I ask the minister if she'd be entertaining in that.

CHAIR (Bragg): The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I'm very happy to stand and to speak to this bill. It's very interesting at this point in our history in our province, at this point in our economy, which we know is under incredible stress, to stand and talk about the issue of cutting back on funding for a number of groups. We're talking about core funding and how important many of these groups are to our communities, whether they are rural communities or urban communities.

We know that, particularly the ones that serve children, they are so crucial. When we look at the situation of cadets, of the Boys and Girls Clubs, for years they have relied on government funding. But this is not government's money. Let's make this clear, Mr. Chair. This is not government's money. This is money that belongs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, who with pride, they pay their taxes. They do their work. They're hard working and then out of their pockets, from the sweat of their brow, they pay their taxes. They entrust their taxes to the government of the province. What they're saying when they entrust their money to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, they are saying we want you to spend this wisely. We want you to spend this in the best interest of the people.

When we look at groups like the Boys and Girls Club, a number of Boys and Girls Clubs, when we look at groups like cadets, it would be interesting to see how many Members here in this House were members of the Boys and Girls Clubs or how many were members of cadets, whether its sea cadets or air cadets or army cadets. I bet you there are a lot of Members here

in this House who were members or whose children were or whose parents were or whose family members were.

These groups and organizations are so important. They help keep kids off the street. They help kids with leadership skills. They help kids with team building, learning how to work in a team. We've cut back in our school programs so much that kids don't have those opportunities in their schools about leadership skills, team building skills.

It's about keeping kids off the streets. It's about keeping kids away from drugs. It's about giving confidence to kids, whether it's kids with depression or anxiety or who are feeling isolated for whatever reason. These are not frills. These are not frills to our communities. These are essential services that help make our kids stronger and more resilient.

What we should be doing is not cutting back but, in fact, investing, investing more because we know how tough it is for families right now economically. Without these kinds of groups and organizations, a lot of kids who take advantage of those, a lot of families who take advantage of those, are families that are economically challenged. Without these organizations a lot of these kids, their families, can't afford hockey. They can't afford soccer. They can't afford football. They can't afford dance classes.

These are essential services for children; they're not frills. It's not an extra. It's about building stronger and more resilient communities by offering opportunities for our children to learn. To cut back at this point is unconscionable, particularly when so many of them also have to rely on fundraising from the private enterprise. We know that the private sector has cut back. The oil companies who have given so much in the province – let's not forget that they have made so much from the province – are totally cutting back on any of their contributions to non-profit organizations. And we've seen that; they've cut back.

So, Mr. Chair, the issue of multi-year funding is absolutely crucial but when we look at the multi-year funding, when we look at the history of funding –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Chair, I'm having a little bit of a hard time hearing myself here.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

There seems to be a bit of a squabble going on across the floor when we're talking about what's really important here. I believe this is very crucial – I believe that it's very crucial.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm having problems hearing the speaker.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

So, Mr. Chair, I believe that there's a lot of unparliamentary discussion going on back and forth across the floor, and I presently have the floor and I would hope that my colleagues would respect the fact that I presently have the floor and that they can take their squabble out back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

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

So when we look at the issue of multi-year funding, it's so crucial because it gives stability to these organizations that gives stability to our children. And again, let's remember, this is not government's money; this is the money that belongs to the taxpayers, who are entrusting it to government, who are saying to government we want you to spend this wisely. We want you to spend this for the good of the people of the province.

I can't imagine that there are people in Newfoundland and Labrador, hard-working taxpayers, who would agree to the cuts that have been made to so many youth-serving

organizations. Again, it's about strengthening our youth, keeping them off the streets. There's not a whole lot else happening, because we've seen huge cuts; huge cuts to sports organizations in the last budget when we look at the Jumpstart program – huge cuts there.

So to cut even further is absolutely irresponsible. We know that these funds are needed. We know that the private sector has pulled back on their donations, and so it's harder and harder for these kinds of community groups to raise funds from the private sector, and it's also harder and harder for them to raise funds from family members, from the families of the children who take advantage of these programs, because they too were hit so hard.

Young, working families were hit so hard in the last budget. They're still reeling from that. And we know that there are more and more bankruptcies in the province. There are more and more people – 158 per cent increase in the number of working families who have applied for protection before going into bankruptcy; 158 per cent increase in the past year.

So, Mr. Chair, absolutely, we need legislation that allows for multi-year funding because the funding has been so precarious for these groups that provide such an important role in our province, for instance, the Status of Women Councils across the province who are doing often life-saving work.

So without multi-year funding, the work is precarious because they don't know, often, until into the next fiscal year whether or not their funding has been approved. So it affects programs. It affects whether or not they can keep staff on because the staff doesn't know whether or not they'll have a job. And we know that the end of the fiscal year is March 31; oftentimes, they wouldn't know until April, sometimes even May, whether their funding has been increased or will be renewed.

I'd also like to talk about the issue of increase. Many, many, many groups – I'm hoping it's going to change for some groups this year. Many groups have not had an increase in funding in years, although their rent has gone up and their heat and light has gone up. One would hope that their salaries have gone up, but they haven't

been able to raise them. All their costs have gone up, whether they have vehicles to serve the people that they serve, and then the gas goes up. So all of that goes up.

It's really important not only that we have multi-year funding but that we also have increases in funding (a) to reflect the increase in the cost of living, but also the fact that more and more we are expecting civil society, more and more we are expecting non-profit organizations to carry a heavier and heavier burden of the increasing needs that people in our province have.

Again, we see an increase in levels of depression and anxiety. We see an increase in the area of mental health and addictions and we're asking our non-profit organizations to stand up and to address some of those issues.

So again, this is not government money. It's not the government's money to give away; it's the money that is earned by the hard-working people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are placing their trust in this House and in government to spend the money wisely for the benefit of the people. And I believe that the people –

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – do not want core funding cuts to many of these organizations.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to take a couple of minutes. I wasn't expecting this big debate this afternoon, to be honest with you, but I'm glad we're having the discussion in the meantime.

What we are debating here in Committee of the Whole is really a bill that deals with multi-year funding for not-for-profit organizations. I think, as I said in second reading, it's been a while ago

since we had second reading I think, but at the time I was very supportive of this.

I know all Members on both sides of the House, I'm sure there's not one Member here that is not supportive of this particular bill in providing certainty to the multiple organizations throughout our province who make up the social sector, who play an extremely important role in our communities throughout the province, to be able to provide them with some financial certainty so they can plan their operations on a multi-year level. Currently, they can't even plan from year to year because, as we know, under the existing formula, if you will, basically an organization would have to apply for core funding.

We can all play games with whether it's core funding or whether it's project funding. We can call it what we want. There is certainly a difference obviously because core funding is for your core operations, generally to pay salaries of your staff that you would have, and project funding is supposed to be just that. If there's a certain project that your organization wants to get involved with in any given year and they apply for money to be able to execute that project.

Now, we all know that over the years, whether it be core funding or project funding, it all kind of got mixed together. Everybody put in an application. The organizations didn't care whether you called it core funding or project funding or what it was called. The bottom line is they need the money to operate.

If they had to put in an application and say it was for a specific project in order to get that funding to pay for staff, I guess that's what they did, or if they put it under and they called it core funding. At the end of the day, what it came down to was we had organizations that could not function without some government money and they applied each year and each year, generally speaking, they received their funding.

We've seen the history. My colleague from Mount Pearl North has basically stated here and he's given numerous examples of organizations that year over year over year applied for funding and they received that funding. It may have adjusted upwards a little or downwards a little,

depending on the budget at the time and so on, but generally, it was a pretty consistent amount.

The problem, of course, they had is there was never a guarantee. Even though the history was there year over year, there was never a guarantee that when they applied for that money, that they were actually going to receive that money. So they couldn't even plan a year in advance, let alone three years in advance.

So what we're proposing, what the government has proposed in this particular bill, and we all agree with, is to allow organizations now to be able to apply for multi-year funding, I think it's for three years, so they can have some certainty in terms of planning their activities over three years and they know they can operate and do the good work they're doing. I commend government 100 per cent on doing that. I support it 100 per cent.

I think the issue we're seeing here now, though, is not really about – in a sense, a lot of the discussion we're having now is not even about the bill really. Technically, it has nothing to do with the bill we're even supposed to be debating. What we're seeing is that we're using this opportunity to point out shortfalls in last year's budget. Really, this is kind of – to my mind, we're having a budget debate or we're reflecting on the budget as opposed to actually debating the bill. That's really what's happening.

I suppose it is an opportunity to point out – and that's not to dismiss the concerns, because we all know in the budget, because of the fiscal circumstances we're under, that decisions had to be made. They weren't all easy decisions. Some people will agree and some people will disagree with what those decisions were, and what should be a priority and what shouldn't be a priority.

I think what my colleagues, though, are just doing is pointing out and taking the opportunity to point out the facts, which is a legitimate point, that while it is valuable and it's a good move to provide multi-year funding, as is the case now in this bill, while it's good to do that and we all acknowledge it's a good thing, we all support it, it's pointless in providing inadequate multi-year funding. I think that's the point really that's being made here. It's one thing to have multi-year funding, but the multi-year funding you're

providing needs to be adequate multi-year funding for the organizations to be able to carry out the important work they're doing.

I know every MHA in this House, every one of us have numerous groups and organizations in our various communities where we attend functions they have, we attend their annual general meetings, we attend their fundraisers, and the list goes on. We try to help them with obtaining grants and providing them with information and JCP programs and whatever might be available. We all do that, that's our job.

We all realize the incredibly valuable work all of these community organizations do in our communities. I think it's fair to say – I've gone to numerous events where they would ask me to say a few words or whatever. Whether that be something in my community or just in the region, generally, whether it be a particular walk or run or event. I think the last one comes to mind, I believe this summer I went to the AIDS Walk, the Scotiabank AIDS Walk. I said at that time – they asked me to say a few words. I said at that time, and I say it at all these events, government cannot be the be all and end all. They cannot be everything for everybody.

These community groups and organizations, whether it be the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, whether it be the Autism Society, whether it be the Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts Canada, Girl Guides, YMCA; regardless of what organization it is, they fulfill a need that government cannot possibly fulfill, because government simply would not have the money, would not have the resources to be able to do everything for everybody. That's why we depend on groups and organizations like the AIDS Committee, like the Autism Society, like the Boys and Girls Club, and the list goes on. The list is a mile long, of course.

We depend on those organizations to be able to deliver programs and services in the community for people, and to be able to do it in a cost-efficient manner. Everybody knows there's nobody who can stretch a dollar like these volunteer organizations. They really do, and we all know that. I'd say that the dollars, three to one. If we were to take some of these community organizations and turn it into a government department or agency, it would

probably be 10 times the cost of what they're doing it. So they do valuable work. But in order for them to do that valuable work, they do need some support – they need a reasonable level of support.

I think that this bill does go a long way, as I said, in providing that certainty so that they plan. Again, Madam Chair, it only works if the multi-year funding that they're receiving is adequate funding for them to be able to carry out the work that they did.

I think, as pointed out by my colleague for Mount Pearl North, as a result of the budget last time around there were a lot of organizations that lost a lot of money, and I think that's all that's being pointed out. Hopefully, they are able to carry on and continue to do the great work they're doing, but obviously it's going to be much tighter if you don't have the same amount of money to do it. That's the concern being raised

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CLERK (Murphy): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

CLERK: Clause 3.

CHAIR: Shall clause 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 3 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 66 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I would move, very slowly, that the Committee rise and report Bill 66.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee do now rise and report Bill 66 carried without amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House 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 Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that we have passed Bill 66 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 66 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 66, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 66 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 66)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 66 has now been read a third time and it is ordered that it do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act No. 3," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 66)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would call from the Order Paper, Order 2, Committee of Supply. I would move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee to debate the resolution and Bill 71 respecting the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to debate Interim 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 (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now considering 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.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going to rise for two minutes, Madam Chair, because sometimes there are statements made in the House of Assembly and also on social media that you have to stand and ask for clarification or ask for an apology. One such statement was just brought to my attention; the Member for Mount Pearl North made a statement on his Facebook about the Minister of Health.

Madam Chair, I know we always have debate and I said the other day in the House of Assembly we agree on stuff and sometimes we disagree on how to go about it. I know the Members opposite sometimes disagree with me, I disagree with them, but we always work together outside – we always do. There was a comment made today and questions about a

cancer drug and the minister answered it on many occasions that if there is ever a request from a physician, the cancer drug would be used.

The Member for Mount Pearl North went on his Facebook, and I just want to read it. There are times that you feel that this is why people take politicians and political life and dehumanize people and comments like this – I have to read these comments: John Haggie must be heartless. Here's a doctor, his life, who worked with people; saved people's lives; worked with people with cancer; operated on people; saved people's lives; spent time with people who passed away – and to make those statements on Facebook about a fellow Minister of Health who spent his life saving people.

There are times that we have to stand above that. I don't mind arguing, I don't mind policy, I really don't. I'll just go through it again, Madam Chair, the note that was sent to me. Even today when the minister was explaining that anybody can get that drug and the Member for Mount Pearl North stood up on several occasions and said it's not true. In his post, it's half true.

Obviously, there's an admission there that what the minister was saying is true. It's an admission there. When you go to it, here it is: Until that happens, we need compassionate and responsible leadership. How can you get someone more compassionate than John Haggie who worked his life saving people's lives? How can you get someone more compassionate?

I just ask that the Member for Mount Pearl North who made those statements – and we all say stuff in this House of Assembly, we have to stand and apologize for. We all say stuff. Okay, we see someone outside, we apologize here, we apologize outside. But when you stand up and say to a Minister of Health that you're heartless, you're not compassionate, you have shown no leadership into the field that he worked all his life, I think it does all of us a disservice, Madam Chair.

So I ask the Member for Mount Pearl North, and I'm not sure what can be said and what can be done, if the Speaker can interfere or legislative standards, I'm not sure, but I can assure you the Minister of Health is not heartless. I can assure

you he works hard for people. I think there are times that we stoop down, caught up in the emotion, and here's an opportunity for the Member for Mount Pearl North to stand, apologize. Take down this post, apologize.

He may have a difference of opinion of how it's done, what mightn't be done, but when you dehumanize a Minister of Health of being heartless, for people who are sick in this province, for people who need health care in this province; I haven't seen it in my 20-something years in government that we would do that.

I know all the times we debate in the House of Assembly, Madam Chair, we always debate the issues and sometimes we disagree. There's no one more disagrees with people opposite than me, and people know that. People know that I do it, but I can tell you, and I said on many occasions in this House, there's no one over there that fights for their district – there's no one over there that doesn't have their district best at heart.

We may disagree how to go about things. We always said it, we may disagree how to go about things, but I have yet to hear – in my 20-something years dealing with government, I have yet to hear someone say that a Member of the opposite is heartless; he's not compassionate towards any other individual. Because when you do that, it brings all of us down to a certain level.

I have to stand up for the Minister of Health, because your statements are totally false. I think it brings the House of Assembly down to a new level. I just feel that the Opposition – if the Member for Mount Pearl North doesn't stand and apologize, I think his caucus should take leave and say these statements – because if I ever said that to one of you – I know I said to the Member for Mount Pearl North before, we've said back and forth – not a problem, back and forth.

I know everybody across the room, but have I ever said to anybody they don't care about their district? Did I ever say you're uncompassionate about people in your district? Never, because I know we all are. That's why we all got elected. That's our role, is to defend people in our district.

So I just want to stand for a few minutes on that. I honestly feel the Member for Mount Pearl North brings us down. I ask his caucus, if he won't do it, I ask his caucus to put pressure on him to withdraw that post on his Facebook page.

I ask him to apologize to the minister. Let's say caught up in the heat of the moment. Let's just take it and move on, because I can tell you John Haggie is not heartless. He is compassionate. He is a man that's doing the best thing, especially for a man who's been in the field of medicine all his life, especially for a man who's helped people survive, who's been with people who passed away, to say he's heartless and not compassionate, it just brings the level of the House of Assembly down. So I just had to stay, because someone just sent me that. I noticed it there on his Facebook page about it.

To John Haggie – to the Minister of Health, sorry, to the Minister of Health, you don't deserve that. I know our Liberal caucus are supporting you on this. I hope the Opposition will stand up and say listen, this is beneath all of us and move on from here. Just take it, apologize, move on from here, because I know none of us deserves that.

I know the Member for Cape St. Francis, we have a lot of debates in this House but I can tell you one thing: did I ever say that Member is not concerned about every resident of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador? Not a chance. Not a chance, because I know he is. It might not be just his district, but it's all over.

I think we have to rise up above that. I for one, when seeing that – because I'm the one who's probably the most argumentative in this House sometimes, and sometimes people pick on me a bit, but it's never to the point to say I don't care about people. Because we all do, that's why we're in this House of Assembly and John Haggie – the Minister of Health is no different in being compassionate. Because of his past in working in the health care field, I think it's inappropriate, I think it's false, and it brings all of us down if we don't withdraw and apologize for a post like that in the social media.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thanks, Madam Chairperson.

It's an honour for me to stand on my feet again. I want to have a few more words about the Interim Supply bill, because we're probably getting close to the end now.

I just want to take us down a different road, because I hope we can end this week on a more positive note. Things get heated in here and people say things. Sometimes people take it personally and sometimes people make it personal, but it doesn't have to always be that way. Sometimes I think we have to rise above the rhetoric and try to set a good example for the House and the people we represent in here.

I just want to say a few words about *The Way Forward*. Earlier last year, the Premier released *The Way Forward: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Newfoundland and Labrador*. I encourage everyone who is watching and has an opportunity to review this, to look up the plan that the Premier, that our caucus put forward last year to help the province along a very difficult time that we're facing as a result of the fiscal situation and changes in industry in the province that we're experiencing right now.

We're in a period where a number of megaprojects are winding down. The fishery is facing a lot of challenges. People are hurting as a result of what has happened in Western Canada. There are a lot of challenges we faced, but we sat around and had some conversations in the summer about how we should move forward considering everything that had happened previously in the year. At our caucus retreat we had a good conversation about what we might be able to do. Cabinet took it back and the Premier and our team started to put together ideas on how we can emerge from this sort of dark period that we've been experiencing.

I just want to talk about some of the things that I really like in here. Now there's a lot of stuff in here to try and absorb, but there's stuff in here that I really like just because I think these are good ideas. I'd say they were good ideas if it was the Conservatives, if it was the NDP, if it was the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands

or if it was any Member of our caucus, or anybody outside. I'd point out that these are good ideas and ones that I like.

One of the ones in here that I like is the whole idea of reducing the blueprint, or reducing the building footprint of government. Over the course of, I guess, a number of years, government had really started to occupy an awful lot of office space, an awful lot of facilities. Subsequently, the province got into a lot of leases, many of them long-term leases that are costing us a lot of money.

The Minister of Transportation and Works, when he first started on the job, I remember when I started as minister, one of the first conversations I had with him in Treasury Board, he said we have to do something about all these leases. They're costing us so much money. In *The Way Forward* we committed to significantly reducing that footprint so that we wouldn't be paying out all of that money.

All kinds of interesting things have happened, great things for the province. I'll give you one concrete example. People had often complained that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, formerly the Eastern School District, was occupying this space in Atlantic Place that was costing over \$1 million a year for rent. Now they're in a building down on Elizabeth Avenue that was formerly occupied by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services and then the Minister of CSSD has subsequently moved up into space in the Confederation Building. So that's one thing that happened there. It was a bump, bump, bump and it's saving us over \$1 million a year. All across the province we're doing stuff like that. The Minister of Transportation and Works is doing things like that to save us money on leases.

I know, for example, in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, some of our folks who work in child care, in the area of child care in the department, they're moving into Confederation Building from space they were renting just outside the city. So, all kinds of things are happening with respect to that.

The government has basically announced details on the Corner Brook long-term care facility. We

know we have an aging population and we need to do things to try and make sure we can take care of our moms and dads, and aunts and uncles, and grandparents and so on as they move into their senior years, and that's one of the things that's being done. Yesterday, I was chatting off camera with the minister responsible for seniors about some of the challenges we're going to have going down the road as the population ages, but we are making concrete steps towards trying to provide more long-term care where we need it and so on.

Another thing that's happened that I'm really excited about, because I grew up on a little farm down on the Burin Peninsula, we're making more Crown lands available for agriculture in the province. If my father had to have lived to see this day he would have been very proud of the province for moving in this direction because he more or less had a struggle to try to get a bit of Crown land to try and start a sheep farm back in the '70s. He had a whole lot of trouble, a lot of community opposition. People didn't understand really what he was up to, but he persevered and fought through and he managed to do it. At one point in the '70s we had in the order of 300 sheep and lambs we were keeping and a bunch of other livestock and so on and so forth.

So it's a really excellent idea. We only produce about 10 per cent of the produce we eat here in the province. We have to do a better job of providing food to put on the table and ensuring that young people who want to get into agriculture have those opportunities.

Last week, when I was out in the Minister of Transportation and Works district out in Grand Falls, we had an excellent opportunity to visit Forest Park elementary. They were having a Rooting for Health event. They had a community breakfast and there was a whole bunch of young famers there. I really couldn't get over it because, for one thing, they were so much younger than me. People with their spouse or their partner were starting all sorts of new farming operations in Central Newfoundland.

Then the other thing was, that I was a little embarrassed about, is they could cite back to me more of the details in our plan for making Crown lands available than I even was aware of

myself. So I thought the message is really getting through to those folks, what opportunities and sorts of opportunities that are coming forward for agriculture in the province.

Another thing that's in here, being from a small fishing community, originally – my grandfathers were both trap skiff skippers. My father was a fish plant manager at one point and fished salmon and did a bunch of other things in the fishery, as well as farming – is the whole idea, the strategy for moving to a ground fishery again.

We know there are serious alarm bells going off when it comes to our crab and our shrimp. We're going to have challenges. We know we have to try and transition to some extent back to cod. That's why this announcement last week with the hon. Judy Foote and others from our caucus and our Members of Parliament was so important that we're getting \$100 million from Ottawa.

I believe somebody told me, one of the ministers told me the other day that we are after getting something in the order of \$365 million so far since the last election, I believe, from the federal government for the fishery, for various fisheries initiatives, coastal initiatives and so on and so forth.

So that's particularly important for our rural communities, whether people are fishing in open boat or going out in longliners, trawling or what have you, or even the aquaculture industry which is showing so much success in the province. There are proposals in front of government about expanding that, and let's hope that's going to work.

I don't have much time; I'll try to clue up. One of the things that is most important to me is the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes. It's something the Premier proposed prior to the 2015 election. We have a team of experts in the area of education who've been really working hard to come up with suggestions and solutions for a lot of the problems we've had in the K to 12 education system for some time now in the province.

They did consultations throughout the province in the winter. I think March 20 – so it's getting

close now – is the last day. If you go to www.ptfnl.ca, you can go there and complete the teacher survey, the parent survey, or the high school student survey and have your say. They'll be producing a report, and we'll subsequently produce an education action plan with a view to having changes implemented, however fundamental or revolutionary or whatever, for the September 2018 start of that school year. So lots of good things going on, Madam Chair, don't tell them it's not.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's great to have the opportunity once again to speak today. Of course, we're still on Interim Supply, and while I do agree with the points being made by my colleagues here, I've taken the approach that we're not going to stop Interim Supply. So if someone's going to speak it may as well be me as opposed to listening to the government speak all day, especially when you have issues to raise.

I just want to talk about an issue that hasn't been talked about for quite some time in the House of Assembly. It doesn't get a whole lot of attention, while I do believe it should get some attention, and that's the issue around workers' compensation. Of course, Madam Chair, workers' compensation is an insurance program, as we all know, for workers who get injured on the job or workers who are, I guess, victims of industrial disease and so on that occurs at the workplace. As we know, workers – well, there are three, basically three principles of workers' comp.

Number one, it's 100 per cent employer paid. So it's not costing any money to the taxpayer. Secondly, it's no-fault insurance. So regardless of who was at fault when the workplace accident or incident occurs, whether it's the employer's fault, the employee's fault or some combination thereof, there's going to be coverage as long as it's a workplace injury. Of course the final one, and an important one, is the fact that injured workers do not have the right to sue.

The minute an injured worker accepts their claim, puts in a claim and it's accepted, then they automatically give up their right to sue the employer for any kind of negligence which may or may not have occurred and led to that injury. So they become very dependent on that system. There's no doubt there are cases, I'm sure – I know of cases. I worked as a safety practitioner. That's what I did for a living prior to being an MHA, and I guess I've worked on both sides of the workers' comp side. I've worked on behalf of employers that I represented as an employer rep on workers' comp cases, and as an MHA. As I'm sure many MHAs here, probably all MHAs have had the opportunity to represent injured workers in their districts.

There are a lot of times when a worker perhaps – because nobody goes to work planning on getting hurt. Nobody goes to work planning on getting hurt or coming down with some kind of industrial disease after years of working, years of exposure.

They become very dependent because if it was something that was absolutely negligent on behalf of the employer, they have no choice but to put in that claim. Even if they wanted to sue, they really can't because it could be tied up in the courts for two or three years. And how do they live in the meantime? How do they pay the bills? How do they feed their families? So they're kind of forced to put in that claim. To get that claim in there and once it's accepted, then they're bound by it and whatever benefits they would derive from it – and they don't have the opportunity to sue at all. So once they're in that system, that's where they're stuck, basically.

Then they are very dependent on that system. In a lot of cases, there are issues that arise where there are differences of opinion, with different physicians, specialists and, of course, workers' comp and the employee. A lot of times these issues take an inordinate amount of time to get sorted through.

In the meantime, while we're trying to sort through all this, here you have a person who is home, they're injured, there's no money coming in through the door to pay for their expenses, to look after their family, their bills and so on. We find an awful lot of workers who get caught up in the system and an awful lot of workers who

come to us looking to appeal various aspects of things because they felt that they were treated unfairly, they felt they were treated unjust.

Now, I would say, like every system, there are very legitimate situations and there is some abuse, without a doubt. Unfortunately, a lot of people in society sort of stereotype that injured worker and say oh, they're lazy; they don't want to go to work and whatever. That's unfair.

Does it happen? Absolutely; there is not a system that can be put in place that somebody won't find a way to abuse it and will abuse it. It will always happen. There will always be that percentage, but there are an awful lot of people, an awful lot of legitimate claims and people who are suffering in the system known as workers' compensation.

One of the issues that we had, of course, was the appeal mechanism through the commissioners. We found out that basically the issue – and under the legislation if you want to appeal a decision of workers' comp, your caseworker makes a decision, you want to appeal it, you disagree. First, you go through the internal appeal then you go to the external commissioner.

There was a real backup – that, under legislation, is supposed to be dealt with in 90 days, but we found out there are cases outstanding for six months, a year, even longer than that. To the minister's credit, I will say – I did write the minister of the day and raised the issue. And I've had conversations with the workers' comp appeal board. To the minister's credit they did, I'm glad to see – they were down to three commissioners, I think they're up to five now, and there are two more that are in the process of being hired in some of the rural areas. I think Grand Falls, maybe Corner Brook, or what have you.

So that is being addressed. I'm glad to hear that; I acknowledge that. It's something we've been calling on for a long time. Something I called on as critic. It's happening, and that's a positive thing.

What I really want to get down to is under the workers' comp system; we have an automatic review process. It happens, I'm not sure if it's

every four years or every five years, that there's a statutory review of the workers' comp legislation. And through that process – there's a process set up where they go around the province and they have consultations. Injured workers can come and make presentations and so on. There's an independent committee.

The last time it was made up of someone from labour – I think it was from the Federation of Labour, if I'm not mistaken – someone from the Employers' Council, I believe, representing employers, and the chair of the commission, who was Mr. Tucker at the time. They went around – the last one that was done – and they took submissions, reviewed legislation, and then they come back with a report and a list of recommendations of things we need to change to make the Workers' Compensation system better, to improve it for the injured worker and the employers.

Now, we have gone through that process twice in the last eight years or nine years, whatever it is. We've gone through two of these statutory reviews. Both of those statutory reviews, to my knowledge, for the most part, are sitting on shelves, collecting dust and there has been very little done.

Now, I'll give kudos once again to the government and the former minister and so on. One of the things that were outstanding in the last two reports was presumptive cancer for firefighters. To the government's credit – they said they were going to do it. They announced it in the budget. We brought the legislation in and we all approved it because it was the right thing to do and it was a positive thing to do. Again, I commend the government for doing it. But there are still so many outstanding recommendations in two statutory reviews that nothing has been done; I haven't seen any legislation come forward.

These are recommendations. Like I said we've gone, we've done public consultations, consulted with employer groups, labour groups, independent committee made up of employers, made up of unions, made up of the chair of the board, and they collectively agreed on recommendations to improve things. So my question is: With all these recommendations, why aren't they implemented? Why is there not

legislation coming before the House, in addition to presumption cancer, which again was a great thing – why are there not more recommendations coming forward, legislation to improve the system for injured workers?

Certainly, I know we have new minister now of Service NL and I'm sure he'll be looking into this and looking into these reports and recommendations, and I'm hoping that we're going to see some legislation –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – coming before the House in the not too distant future.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is certainly great to stand to speak to Interim Supply. I don't know if I'll take my full 10 minutes. I didn't have a chance to speak to Interim Supply yet and we've been debating it for a few days now, but that's primarily the reason why I wanted to stand today, to speak to it. In particular to some comments that came from both the PCs and the NDP as well, which actually prompted a media article indicating that the Liberals are filibustering their own bill and, in fact, that we're speaking to Interim Supply as there's nothing else to speak to.

I believe the Leader of the PC administration indicated that they were ready to vote. He said we are ready to vote on Interim Supply. We do not need to discuss it any further. We then heard remarks from the leader of the NDP who also indicated the same thing; they're ready to vote as well. I find that quite interesting; I'm certain they were ready to vote.

So I want to stand today to let Members of the public know and be on the record in saying that's there's a very good reason why they're ready to vote for Interim Supply. There are two reasons really. One reason they're ready to vote for Interim Supply is because they're tired of hearing from us, because this is an opportunity for a backbencher like myself, as an MHA, to stand and speak to just about another I wish. Because the bill we're referring to is the state of the province's finances.

The Members opposite will know that when I rise to speak to a certain bill, I stick to the topic and speak to the bill. What I will tell you is, you don't want me to stand and speak to the state of the province's finances because you don't want to be reminded as to the state that you left us in where we are right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: I'm going to remind you of it. I won't belabour it. It's been belaboured on and on and on. We don't need to go there, but just for the record now, this is the reason why you don't want to stand and speak to Interim Supply. I think the record will show, we're approaching hour six or seven, somewhere around there, and the Government House Leader just stated on record last week, the average Interim Supply bill for your legacy of the PC administration went on 15 some-odd hours. We'll enjoy the other 60-odd hours of budget debate, and then you'll have all the opportunity to go there.

For the record, in a report completed by the Auditor General on an audit of the financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2016 it shows a deficit of the year for \$2.2 billion – the largest in the province's history. That's the deficit for the year. That's the just the \$2.2 billion for that year. The net debt, which is the difference in deficit and debt, for those listening, deficit is reflecting the actual annual year and debt will reflect the overall accumulation. The net debt as of March 31, 2016 amounts to \$12.7 billion dollars – the largest level in the history of the province.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. FINN: It is \$12.7 billion dollars, the largest in the history of the province.

This is the state of the province's finances, for those of you on the opposite side wanting to talk about the state of the province's finances as we're debating Interim Supply. Despite that, we've been told countless times again, Members on our side have stated it; we were all led to believe that that deficit for last year would be \$1.1 billion – being misled by a total of \$1.1 billion. So that's essentially the state of the finances there. That's one reason why the Members in the PCs opposite here do not want to hear what we have to say in Interim Supply.

And then they go on further to say, and have said, the reason that we don't want to talk in Interim Supply and the reason that we're talking in Interim Supply is because we have no legislation. We have no legislation ready. There's nothing that we can debate in the House of Assembly. There's nothing on the Order Paper, they said – nothing on the Order Paper, nothing to debate.

I'm going to draw you back to last year, in case it's too early into 2017 for you to forget. Oh, the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island, very good, very good, yes, there are two items on the Order Paper today; you'll see a bit more when we come back now after our short recess, but I just want to draw you back because this is where it gets really funny for me. This is where I've got to stop for a moment. In 2015, your government at the time passed 14 pieces of legislation –

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. FINN: Fourteen pieces of legislation in 2015. We have been sitting for three weeks now and we're on bill number seven in a three-week span. We did half of what you did in an entire year of 2015, in three weeks.

And do you want to know the reason for that, Madam Chair? Do you want to know the reason why they only had 14 pieces of legislation in 2015? Because they didn't open the House until after the middle of April and shut it down the first week of June – didn't even have the House open to debate legislation.

This government brought in 64 pieces of legislation in 2016.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. FINN: Sixty-four piece of legislation.

The PC administration had 14 pieces of legislation in 2015; they had 41 in 2014; a mere 24 pieces of legislation in 2013. We can go back – yes, you did a little better in 2012: 55. I go back to 2011, you had 31. We go back further again 2010: 47. I wouldn't even want to go further back because I'm pretty sure there's a fall there that you didn't even open the House.

What I will remind you is this, for you to be over there and to say that we're going to speak to Interim Supply because we don't have legislation, nothing could be further from the truth. There is legislation coming. You will see that as we get into the spring debate.

It's interesting to say that we don't have legislation coming, all the opportunities you had to pass legislation that we now have taken. And every time we put in a piece of legislation they say well, this is a good piece of legislation, we are going to support that or that was in the Blue Book. Yes, I'm sure it was; you had all the great intentions of the world.

I'm going to remind the Members opposite of some of the great – I'm just going to name a few of the 64 pieces of legislation that our government was proud to pass. Bill 3, An Act to Amend The Parliamentary Assistant Act and the Parliamentary Secretaries Act, I'll remind the Members opposite that was a bill in which our parliamentary secretaries revoked their salaries. I remind them of that.

We also had Bill 32. This is a bill that none of us were happy to pass, but it's your legacy that got us here. Bill 32 was the *Loan Act 2016*. I'll remind you that it was a bill that ensured that we had to borrow the largest amount that our province has ever seen in history; \$3.4 billion was borrowed under Bill 32 thanks to the PC administration – \$3.4 billion.

Here's another great piece of legislation that the Members opposite had every opportunity to introduce; that's the Procurement Act, Bill 46, procurement by public bodies. The Minister of Municipal Affairs brought in the Procurement Act. Everybody here supported it; that was great.

That was 12 years they had to bring in that bill. How about Bill 52, the *Consumer Protection of Business Practices Act*? That was the bill where we were going to look out for those people who were unfortunate and take advantage of payday loans and find themselves in some tight corners. That was a great piece of legislation.

How about Bill 55, brought in by the Minister of Health and Community Services, secure withdrawal management for young persons act? That was a great piece of legislation. How about Bill 59 that you all supported as well? That was An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, better known as the presumptive cancer care legislation. We brought in that piece of legislation.

Bill 64, the *Seniors' Advocate Act*; Bill 43, the *Access to Abortion Services Act*, brought in by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. And finally, what you took the whole afternoon to do, didn't want to talk about the state of the province's finances – I don't blame considering where you left them, you wouldn't want to talk about them. You spend the whole afternoon in Committee talking about Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act, the whole afternoon here talking about this bill – the whole afternoon. A bill that you all said you'd support from the beginning anyway, but you spent the whole afternoon talking about it.

What did that bill do? What did that bill do that we just passed just then? What did that bill do? Multi-year funding for community groups, core funding for community groups – that's another piece of legislation that you had every opportunity to bring in over 12 years.

For the Members opposite to sit over there, make a news story and tell the public that they're over there talking about Interim Supply, they have nothing else to talk about, I'm pretty sure we'll let the record stand for itself when we close Interim Supply. I'd be wagering to bet and I will stand back up on my feet and correct myself if I'm wrong, we'll have talked about Interim Supply a heck of a lot less than the average you had over 10 years, number one; and number two, don't ever stand up with the gall to say that we have no legislation to pass when you opened the House of Assembly for all of four or five weeks in April until June, passed 14 pieces

of legislation. We've done half of that in three weeks and we did 64 pieces of legislation last year.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's pleasure to get up here today and stand – by the looks of the time I may be the one closing debate, which is kind of nice as well. One thing I have to take exception is the Statler and Waldorf for the PC Party; the Member for CBS and the Member for Cape St. Francis get up and talk about we got no plan – we got no plan. Well, Madam Chair, this is a plan of 50 initiatives that we have.

We have a number of things that were put out in *Budget 2016* that got initiated.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do it; table the plan.

MR. KING: Oh, we can table the plan if they'd like to read it. We have a bunch of these kicking around.

They talk about us not having a plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. KING: We got a bunch kicking around – so they're laughing. They think it's a big joke, Interim Supply, when we just ran, it was said, faced \$2.7 billion deficit; but 50 pieces of action that we have here in *The Way Forward*, Madam Chair, so I'm going to talk a little bit about three of them right now.

The first one, 1.17: Transition to Groundfish; Action 1.18: Implement Regional Innovation Systems Pilot Projects; and Action 2.9: Support Growth in the Aquaculture Industry. So what I'm getting at with these three is support that we have for our fishery.

One other that we brought forward – and they won't talk about all this stuff and having a plan. This is one I really like that we talked about yesterday, Madam Chair, Action 1.12: Enhance Access to Crown Lands. These are all big actions that we have in *The Way Forward* that helps the District of Bonavista. It helps the people in the District of Bonavista.

So when they talk about not having a plan, it's foolishness. They would know about not having a plan. They didn't have a plan for Muskrat Falls which initially they said was only going to cost \$5 billion or \$6 billion. They couldn't give a good budget on it. Now it's double that, Madam Chair. They certainly didn't have a plan for their \$280 million phantom fisheries fund. This is where I'm going with this.

The fishery in the District of Bonavista has always been a vital industry and we still see it today. From 1497, when John Cabot threw the basket over *The Matthew* and hauled up fish, to right now, the fishery is of vital importance to the District of Bonavista, I would say, Madam Chair.

I'm going to give you a little bit of history on the phantom fisheries fund that the PCs put out in October 2013. I'm going to tell you a little bit about it and then I'm going to talk about the \$100 million that we received, that was announced this past Friday as the Fisheries Investment Fund from our friends from Ottawa.

They went out and got a phantom fisheries fund, which no one ever seen the money. We got a commitment of \$100 million, and that's just to start with. They talk about not trusting Minister Judy Foote. She got up – and the Member for Cape St. Francis was there. She got up and said there's more to come. So they had to lambaste us about not getting the whole \$280 million. If Judy Foote says there's more to come, who am I to disagree?

In October 2013, here's what the PCs did. They booked rooms and threw a big party. They brought out all the good grub. They popped the champagne, brought out their entire caucus and announced that they received \$280 million from the feds and then they patted themselves on the back like Barry Horowitz. I believe they even went to Dairy Queen and got an ice cream cake

that said: \$280 M on it. I don't know if that's true, but that's what I heard.

Now, the only problem is the feds didn't show up. I'm going to ask you a question, Madam Chair. Have you ever gone to an announcement where there is federal money on the table and someone from the federal government never turned up? Never, me either; and I've only been at this for about 15 months. Actually, I get invitations all the time.

So here are two things I figured has happened: either the invitation got lost in the mail, or Stephen Harper and his buddies threw it in the garbage. I think it was the latter. So they set up this big party, the big announcement, and a month later they put in a PMR talking about how good this \$280 million was that they're getting from the feds.

Now, the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands, and I'm not going to – because he came out and said he was hoodwinked on the Muskrat Falls. I appreciate it, and I think he was hoodwinked on that fishery fund as well.

After they had their big party and talked about it in their PMR, bragged it right up, there was no response from the feds. In fact, Madam Chair, the federal government actually emailed the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture and told them to stop using the Canadian government branding. You can't make this stuff up, Madam Chair.

So phone calls were unanswered in Ottawa; three-and-a-half premiers later, the former premier, he sits over there right now, went up there with his buddies. The doors were locked, Madam Chair, and they were left out on the corner of Elgin Street grumbling about it in the rain. They got nothing.

This past Friday, we actually worked with our federal counterparts to deliver the \$100 million. As Minister Judy Foote said, that's not the end of it. This is just the start. The reason why this is just the start is because we need to work with our key stakeholders. We are going to work with our key stakeholders. What does \$100 million mean to Newfoundland and Labrador?

We have innovation – and you looked at *Budget 2016* and it provided the Seafood Innovation and Transition Program, and that provided \$2 million to 41 fisheries and aquaculture-related projects, leveraging \$3.7 million from industry and funding partners. So if you take the small amount that we used and leveraged for 41 projects, just imagine what \$100 million can do.

You talk about the \$100 million, and like I said, this is not it. We always have to be using plan, do, check and adjust. This is a fluid thing, because we can't take \$280 million and – what they had planned on doing – give it to fishermen who are going to be out of jobs. We want to work to grow our industry, Madam Chair.

What you also have from this \$100 million is a transition from shellfish to groundfish. As you see the shrimp and crab stocks going down right now, you're seeing an increase in the cod fishery; research and development, new ways to conduct our fishery and also aquaculture.

Our key stakeholder who actually came out and said this was a good thing was FFAW. Processors and harvesters are all on the same page, saying this money is good money for this province. With crab and shrimp down, it makes challenges. So how do we transition from shellfish to groundfish? This is where this money could come in, to get plants upgraded to do secondary processing in the cod fishery.

The biggest thing that fishermen told me about the cod fishery last year is they went from 5,000 pounds in 2015 that they could catch, to 2,000 pounds a week. However, they never had a means to process all that fish so they had to stop. They could have kept going. There was lots out there, but they had to give up. So what we need to do is get back to our traditional groundfish. Supplement that with our shellfish, and this fisheries fund is going to help that.

What also came out of that fisheries fund, the Atlantic Canadian Fisheries Fund, is \$30 million, which is separate from the \$100 million that we're getting, for marketing. Because the market right now, Madam Chair, demands a higher-quality cod product. If we can get that higher-quality cod product to market, we're increasing our already \$1.4 billion fishery here in Newfoundland and Labrador. The days of cod

block and salt fish are gone. People want a better quality.

So I'm very excited about the \$100 million fisheries fund. We know there's more to come, contrary to what they're going to say.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

CLERK (Barnes): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye'.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay'.

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: Whereas it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2018 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: 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.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 71 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 71 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 71 carried without amendment.

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, Mr. Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now,

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that the resolution be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"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."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, that the resolution be now read the second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"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."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 71, and I further move that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 71, the Interim Supply bill, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "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," carried. (Bill 71)

CLERK: A bill, 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. (Bill 71)

On motion, Bill 71 read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the Interim Supply bill be now read the second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act 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. (Bill 71)

On motion, Bill 71 read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, that the Interim Supply bill be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act 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. (Bill 71)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act 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," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 71)

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

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

Given the hour of the day, I would move, seconded by the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, March 27.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, March 27, 2017.