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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We welcome to the Speaker's gallery today, Haley Crichton and Pegah Memarpour who are the subject of a Member's statement today.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in the Speaker's gallery today we have Dylan Donnelly, a level II student from Mount Pearl Senior High, and he is shadowing his MHA Steve Kent today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: In the public gallery today we have 24 grade four students from Vanier Elementary, the District of Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, along with teacher, Mme Hudson.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also have joining us in the public gallery Darren Buckle and his son, Jonathan, from Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Jonathan has just received his cochlear implant, so he's both happy to see us and hear us today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' Statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Harbour Main; Cape St. Francis; Harbour Grace – Port de Grave; Ferryland; Conception Bay South; and St. George's – Humber.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a young man from my district on his outstanding achievements. On December 19, Brady Ryan of Marysvale officially graduated from Ascension Collegiate in Carbonear. It was

clear to see that Mr. Ryan's hard work had literally paid off.

In addition to graduating with honours, Brady also received a number of prestigious awards, including the Warren and Catherine Ball Memorial Scholarship, the PIPSC scholarship, the Electoral District scholarship for Harbour Main, the NLESD scholarship, and the John H. Lyans Jr. Iron Workers Scholarship. When all was said and done, Brady took home a total of more than \$30,000, enough to put him well on his way to a degree at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Brady's accomplishments don't stop with academics. On April 28 he will be flying to Fiji where he will begin three weeks of volunteering with the Eco Students Abroad to help teach school children, build rainwater catchments and assist with repairs to a local school.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Brady Ryan on his remarkable accomplishments and wishing him the greatest success in years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the Pouch Cove Lions Club – District 4N on winning Recreation NL's 2016 Volunteer Group of the Year Award.

The Pouch Cove Lions Club is well-respected for all that it does for area residents. The club held its Charter Night this past November and celebrated 34 years of dedicated community service.

Since 1982, the club has organized numerous projects, activities and touched lives of many. With money they've raised from such events as bake sales, raffles, card games and bingos, the club has provided assistance to many throughout the community. They have provided backpacks for children, sponsored youth ball teams,

completed renovations to the club, sponsored the Come Home Year events and many more.

In 2015-2016 the club volunteered approximately 6,125 hours of service and donated \$31,000. The club consists of dedicated members whose service range from one year to an impressive 44 years of service with perfect attendance. With numbers like that, it's no wonder the club was named Volunteer Group of the Year.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me congratulating the Pouch Cove Lions Club.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm very proud to recognize and congratulate our Special Olympians who competed in the World Winter Games in Austria.

Crystal Young of Harbour Grace, Sandra Smith of Carbonear, Floressa Harris of Gander and Justin Dodge of Grand Bank proudly represented our province and country on the world stage. Not only did they compete with Team Canada, they brought home some fine hardware.

Crystal Young won two gold medals in snowshoeing, for the five kilometre race and for the 4x400 metre race. Sandra Smith captured two golds and a silver medal for the 200 metre race, the 4x400 metre and the 400 metre race. Floressa Harris took home a bronze medal for the 100 metre snowshoeing race.

Both Crystal and Sandra are members of the Tri Con Gentle Giants Special Olympians team and they compete year round. They also participate in the annual Law Enforcement Torch Run, raising awareness and funds in order to promote this inclusive organization. Not only are they athletes, Crystal, Sandra, Justin and Floressa, along with their teammates are all ambassadors we can be very proud of.

At a recent reception in her hometown of Harbour Grace, Crystal was awarded with a street named in her honour: Crystal's Way.

I ask that everybody congratulate these very special Olympians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand in this House today to recognize the Mobile Monarch's high school hockey team, coaches and the accomplishments of gold medal winners at the Tier 2 Confederation Cup held February 8-12 in the St. John's region. The Mobile Monarchs won 4-2 over the Holy Trinity High School Tigers in the championship game.

The Confederation Cup tournament began in 1999 as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Newfoundland and Labrador becoming Canada's 10th province in 1949. Teams participated from all across Newfoundland, as well as from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

Members of the winning team include: Brendan Houlihan, Logan Brothers, Noah Lynch-Walsh, Michael Clarke, Adrian Doyle, Christian Walsh, Gavin Coady, Nathan O'Brien, Patrick Maloney, Josh Colbert, Adam Lake, Kieran O'Driscoll, Kyle Whalen, Liam Colbert, Kendall Power, Stephen Dunne, Devon O'Brien, Blake Carew, Lee Colbert, Devon Popp, and Liam Shea.

Coaches included: Kevin Whelan, Kevin O'Brien, Kevin Walsh, Marc Coady and Sean Doyle.

The Confederation Cup allows a high level of competition while allowing new friendships and experiences to be made.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the Mobile Monarch's high school hockey team in winning their first ever Confederation Cup championship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on March 26, my colleague, the MHA for Topsail – Paradise and I attended the 7th Annual Art Exhibition and Sale at Worsley Park, CBS. This was another great success for the artists and the community overall. This event is free admission and showcases amazing local artwork.

The Studio 5ive is a group of retired ladies residing in Conception Bay South and they are the first local art group of its kind in our area. Local artists are: Glenda Bartlett, Tessa Crosbie, Shelley Blundon, Joanne Stone, and Velma Dalton Boudreau.

These talented ladies are members of the Art Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and meet weekly at each other's studios. They also bring in guest artists to teach art classes and put off workshops.

This group has travelled internationally to attend various workshops and art shows. Studio 5ive also support and donate to local charities in our area such as church groups, the Rotary Club, CBS Monument of Honour, Manuels River, and other worthwhile charities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in commending them for their great work and their love of art. I also want to wish them future successes at their art exhibitions and thank them for what they do for our community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. REID: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I had an opportunity to witness an incredible event in Corner Brook, called Start-up Weekend.

This event involved entrepreneurs pitching their business ideas and working with others over the weekend to develop their business plans. Mentors and coaches were available at Grenfell

Campus of Memorial University to help these teams with their business, to take their business from idea to actual business.

This event was held by Start-up Newfoundland in partnership with Navigate Entrepreneurship Centre, which is a joint venture of Grenfell Office of Engagements and the College of the North Atlantic.

Start-up Newfoundland and Labrador was built on the ideas that entrepreneurs helping entrepreneurs is the best formula for start-up success. At this event, over 20 people pitch business ideas and eight were selected for further work throughout the weekend.

I want to congratulate the entrepreneurs who came forward and participated in the weekend and wish them well in their ventures. I also want to recognize the work of the organizers and the volunteers who made this Start-up Weekend in Western Newfoundland such a success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

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

Since being appointed as Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I have envisioned a new approach to the justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was clear, that in our department, we needed to find innovative ways to address the number of people incarcerated, to look at why they are incarcerated in the first place and to determine how to reduce re-offence.

To that end, I strongly believe in restorative justice. We are currently evaluating measures that genuinely help people. I am pleased to announce today that we are also partnering with two impressive women with expertise in the field of corrections, Memorial University graduate students, Hayley Crichton and Pegah Memarpour, to conduct a feasibility study on a

bail supervision program in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 50 per cent of our current inmate population are serving on remand awaiting trial. At our justice summit last week, we heard we need to look at bail supervision. A potential bail supervision program empowers judges with an option for robust supervision of remand inmates instead of simply imprisoning them. The aim would be to more effectively rehabilitate alleged offenders while reducing the burden on provincial institutions like Her Majesty's Penitentiary. It is a win-win.

This study will look to build policy from the ground up with a view toward the unique characteristics of Newfoundland and Labrador. The study will come at zero cost to the provincial government as part of an innovative approach to policy development by working with those in our community with a passion for the betterment of this province's justice system. Working with our post-secondary institutions and scholars is a resourceful way to build programs that help people involved with our system. This is just the first opportunity for partnerships like these to achieve innovative, top-notch policy in a cost-effective manner.

I'd like to again thank Pegah and Hayley for their expertise, and I look forward to the results of this study.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today, and assure you we always welcome innovative thoughts and approaches of delivering services but doing so with the sole purpose of saving a dollar can be dangerous and problematic.

I'm not suggesting that's the only reason, but I did hear the minister this morning. We are encouraged that the minister sought the assistance from these two women with expertise

in the field of corrections. I'm sure the research will include checks and balances, and not allow cost savings to be the ultimate deciding factor in this very important process.

First and foremost, public safety needs to take priority. People need to feel safe in their homes and their communities. With accused persons on bail supervision instead of remand, it is imperative to make sure those decisions are done for the right reasons and strong assurances are provided to the public.

The minister states they can save significant dollars and that causes some concern for some of the people of our province, but it shouldn't be the primary rationale.

I again thank the minister. We'll be keeping a close eye on this. We look forward to seeing the results from the study.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I applaud the minister for working with academics. More decisions should be based on evidence, sound research and science. I'm really excited about the work grad students Hayley Crichton and Pegah Memarpour have been doing already.

Policy development is government's responsibility and must be done inside government. This work is long overdue. The minister boasts this justice work will cost the government no money when in fact they should be allocating whatever it takes to do this important work. It is a matter of justice, and I thank Hayley Crichton and Pegah Memarpour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to update this hon. House today on significant growth in our province's aquaculture industry.

In 2016, the Newfoundland and Labrador seafood industry achieved a record production value of \$1.4 billion with the aquaculture sector accounting for almost 20 per cent of this total. This represents a market value of \$276 million, up from \$161 million in 2015, achieving a new milestone for our aquaculture industry.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear government's strategic investments in support of aquaculture are providing real economic benefits for many rural communities throughout the province. We are delivering on government's commitment as outlined in *The Way Forward* to support this industry to more than double the production for farmed salmon and mussels.

This government will continue to work with key industry partners including the Newfoundland and Labrador Aquaculture Association, mussel growers and producers, and aquaculture leaders including Northern Harvest Sea Farms, Cooke Aquaculture, Marine Harvest and potential new entrants to reach this goal.

Mr. Speaker, this industry is poised for even greater growth and we will continue to seek new markets and strengthen the industry for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to recognize the positive growth of the aquaculture industry in our province. A decade ago, all government identified aquaculture as an innovative sector with tremendous growth potential, and it was our leadership that made the

strategic investments in aquaculture expansion to bring us to where we are today.

I have witnessed the economic benefits of our administration's aquaculture investments in my own district and I am pleased that the industry continues to expand and diversify rural economies across this province. We encourage the continued growth of aquaculture in a sustainable manner to support communities and people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As we expand we must ensure –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – that the investments made to date are protected and continue to thrive.

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. The 2016 production marks a significant milestone for the aquaculture industry, creating needed economic activity in rural communities; however, we need to minimize the impact of aquaculture on our traditional fisheries and to treat our marine environment respectfully to ensure aquaculture jobs are sustainable. To that end, I encourage government to give greater attention to the option of land-based aquaculture as other jurisdictions are doing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Many years ago in a former role the Minister of Education told a group of student protesters at Confederation Building, hang your heads in shame for a Liberal government doesn't care about you.

I ask the minister: Does that now not apply to the present day administration?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what the Member is referring to.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, I'll refresh the minister's memory in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the Education Minister stated that teachers with fewer resources, larger classes and heavier workloads is a clear recipe for failure, but when he was in power in 2016 teachers had less resources, larger classrooms and heavier workloads.

What will the recipe be for 2017 for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do understand this question. Mr. Speaker, the budget will be announced here by the hon. Minister of Finance on Thursday, and I anxiously await the release of that. There are a lot of positive initiatives, I believe.

After coming into office last year and being faced with a \$2.7 or \$2.8 billion deficit, I believe government has done a good job. Our colleagues have worked very hard to try and take us back from the brink. Our bond rating was about a couple of categories away from junk-bond status, and it's taken a lot of work to get us back on our feet again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, educators have spoken out about the negative impacts recent cuts implemented since you took power are having on our education system.

Will the minister reverse the cuts from last year's budget, or will he expect teachers and administrators to scrounge again for resources?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Once again, thank you to the Member for an opportunity to stand and answer a question.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we had some difficult decisions to make last year. Unfortunately, I think it's really the shame of the country. We spend more as a portion of our budget on debt servicing and paying our debt than we do on education. I'm not proud of that, Mr. Speaker, but that's the situation we have today. We made a lot of difficult decisions last year in the budget.

As I said at the time, I respect the fact that teachers work very hard in this province. There's no question about that. I've been to about three dozen schools since the new year began, and every school I go to it's the same thing. There are a lot of good things going on, a lot of challenging circumstances. We recognize that, and we will continue to work with teachers to make their job as easy as possible.

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.

Can the minister explain for this House, what criteria were used to determine what educational infrastructure was given priority in your recently announced infrastructure plan?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of things that we take into account when we make decisions around funding for infrastructure, whether it's for education or other departments in government.

In the case of education, of course, cost effectiveness is an important consideration for when we spend precious taxpayers' dollars on any initiative. We look at population growth or decline in communities. We take advice from the school districts. They prioritize projects and send them to us.

We work with the Department of Finance, Economics and Statistics. They do population modelling. We look at the annual general return in terms of the number of students that are in schools in September each year. Those are the sorts of things that we take into account when we make decisions on infrastructure.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government appeared angry and confused with where the public wasn't overjoyed with the infrastructure announcement. Maybe people don't trust the Liberal government, and for good reason.

Why wasn't Riverside Elementary included in the Liberal *Way Forward* infrastructure plan?

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member asked a similar question, I believe, three weeks ago. As I said then, there were modular classrooms added to Riverside Elementary in Shoal Harbour in order to address the capacity issue there. The previous administration used modular classrooms all the time. Holy Trinity Elementary in Torbay has

eight modular classrooms behind it. There are not quite as many behind Riverside Elementary.

I also mentioned to the Member three weeks ago that the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is working with parents in the community. They've conducted a survey; they're going to review the configuration of grades there with a view to relieving some of the pressure at Riverside and distributing grades around the system differently.

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 can only echo from, not only the parents of Riverside but a number of other communities, that those solutions are not appropriate when there was a plan put in place to build new schools and renovate schools where it was necessary.

What population projections were used to address the overcrowding issues in provincial schools?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of overcrowding in schools in the province over the past, I would say, decade. A lot of that has been concentrated on the Northeast Avalon.

Unfortunately, there was a period of time that it wasn't attended to. I know I met recently with a delegation of parents from the Witless Bay – Mobile area who indicated, amongst other things, that they didn't feel they had been listened to in the past. I've spoken to school councils on the Northeast Avalon who have that same sense as well.

There are a number of infrastructure projects underway. In the Member for Cape St. Francis district there's going to be a new school opening after the Easter holiday. We have a new school opening in the Member's district in September. The Member for Topsail – Paradise had a new

school open in his district this year. So there are lots of new schools coming online. I would continue to monitor population with a view to ensuring we have no capacity issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: I'm glad the minister outlined what the previous administration had done to address overcrowding but he didn't answer the question about what he's going to do to address overcrowding.

We are told that schools with more than 500 students are being asked to apply the 1-29 student ratio versus the 1-27 ratio followed last year. That means a minimum of two less teacher units for a school with more than 500 students.

Can the minister clarify his ratio process?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, at risk of sounding like a broken record, as I've said many times over the past year or so, it is the school districts in the province that are responsible for the administration of primary, elementary and secondary education. The Department of Education outlines a teacher allocation formula and provides its resources to, so that those allocations can be provided, distributed to schools.

I'm not aware of any communication from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that the Member is talking about. If he has such communication from the department or from either of the school districts, I'd appreciate him sharing it with me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Well, from the decisions made by that administration to change the ratios, my calculations is there that could be as many as 125 additional teachers coming out of the

education system this year, just based on that change that's been instituted or asked of by schools that have more than 500 students.

Over 25,000 residents of our province spoke out against the closure of libraries announced in last year's budget. A year later, libraries and residents have no idea what is happening with the future of these libraries.

Can the minister please outline the library plan for the future of libraries?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely fear-mongering for the Member to stand up and suggest that there are some well over 100 teachers being reduced in this coming school year. That's news to me. You can continue to make it up as you go along, if you like, but that's absolutely not the case.

As I responded several weeks ago when the Member asked about the library system, I indicated, as I will again, that the provincial library board and the steering committee that is reviewing the system, the library system, is going to produce a report based on exhaustive, extensive consultations that they have had with the public over a period of about 10 months, a jurisdictional review and other research that they have done.

As I've said a number of weeks ago I expect that in the spring – we're in the spring, so we should be seeing it soon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: So based on the minister's non-answer but giving some information, obviously he's acknowledged that there are going to be cuts and there are going to be teachers come out of the system.

Can he give us the numbers then, based on whatever ratio that he's going to be using?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I didn't indicate anything of the sort. I merely pointed out that the Member is fear-mongering again, suggesting that things are going to happen that are not going to happen.

One of the things that was done, that the hon. Premier promised during the election campaign that we were pleased to fulfill, is was that the Premier appointed a Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes. They, just last week, finished consultations; summits, if you will, all across the province; there were surveys completed by teachers, by parents, by students; they continue to do interjurisdictional research, with the view to trying to unravel many of the problems that were unaddressed by the previous administration that we are actively now trying to deal with.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the English School District and *Budget 2015* approved a new middle school for Mobile, Witless Bay school system.

Can the minister confirm that the English School District rescinded their decision to build a new school?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member knows, since he served in Cabinet during the time which this decision was made, that the school district does not make decisions on new school constructions. They make recommendations to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. They send in a priority list of projects for infrastructure annually, then the Department of

Education and Early Childhood Development, in collaboration with the Department of Transportation and Works, the infrastructure committee, Cabinet, make decisions as to which projects we have the money to pay for in a given year, and projects that we agree are necessary to address capacity or aging infrastructure issues in schools.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll ask the minister: Did the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District rescind their recommendation to the Department of Education?

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

MR. KIRBY: No, Mr. Speaker. As I said about three weeks ago when the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island asked a similar question, the school district made a recommendation to the department prior to this administration taking office.

When we came in, there were about a quarter billion dollars' worth of infrastructure asks on the table that the previous administration announced in the dying days of their time in office. We immediately set out trying to find out which of these projects were immediately necessary, to deal with capacity issues in schools and aging infrastructure issues. We have done that, and the Member is well aware of what the decision was.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the minister referenced the prior administration and the recommendation to build that facility in 2015. The BAE-Newplan consultant report in 2014 recommended a new five-to-eight school that was needed for the region based on the Department of Finance's own projection of student numbers.

So why are you not supporting the evidence and the information put forward, and why are you cancelling the new school based on your own numbers that indicate the school is needed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, we're making decisions based on information that is provided to us by the Department of Finance, Economics and Statistics. Folks in the department have analyzed the population data, and have decided that – we've decided, subsequently, that the extension to Mobile Central High is the most practical, timely, cost-effective way to deal with the capacity issue that exist at present, in particular at St. Bernard's Elementary in the Member's district. So that's what's happened. We have relied on the best information that's available to us.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister: Has the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District trustees approved or recommended the nine classroom extension that you announced in *Budget 2016*?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of both school districts in the province are very

clearly outlined in the *Schools Act*. They're responsible for the administration of primary, elementary and secondary education; that is very clear.

We have approved an extension to Mobile Central High that was approved in last year's budget, almost a year ago today. There was a request for proposals that was successfully responded to by SNC-Lavalin. They are very much into the process of doing the design of the extension to Mobile Central High. That extension will be completed in September of 2018.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm asking the minister is that you recommended in the 2016 budget, based on your own numbers, that a nine-classroom extension on Mobile Central High would alleviate what we've seen in terms of growth in the region, which is not supported by any numbers.

I'll ask the minister again: Has the Newfoundland English School District recommended that there be nine classrooms built on Mobile as a resolution to the issues that we are seeing with regard to overcrowding?

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, we had a meeting with the Member and a delegation from the communities affected. We disagree about the numbers that are being used. We are using the numbers from Economics and Statistics that every other department in government uses for projecting population growth in certain areas.

Based on the most likely population growth scenario – the most likely population growth scenario – as projected by the department of Economics and Statistics, this extension to Mobile Central High is the most practical, timely, cost-efficient way of dealing with the capacity issues in that family of schools.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, respectfully, I say to the minister what he just said is not supported by the evidence and by the numbers.

Mr. Speaker, the 2014 BAE-Newplan consultant report used numbers by the Department of Finance. The current review done by the Eastern School District used the numbers of the Department of Finance. There's been no change in those numbers. In addition, there's been tremendous growth in regard to the two municipalities and four local service districts in the region. That information was not included.

I ask the minister: The numbers haven't changed, it still supports a new school, so what information are you using to say that a new school shouldn't be built?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance, Economics and Statistics, produces a low, medium and high scenario. The high scenario is not the most likely outcome. The Member chooses to use the high, least or not likely outcome, if you will.

We are using the medium projection, which is, statistically speaking, the most likely outcome for population growth in that area. Therefore, we have decided that this extension is the most timely, cost-effective, practical way of dealing with the capacity issues in consideration of the most likely population growth scenario.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada recently indicated Witless Bay and the region was one of the fastest growing communities in the region. The numbers the hon. minister is talking about doesn't include growth of new homes which are estimated about 800 between the two municipalities of Witless Bay and Bay Bulls. It's not even included in your numbers, Minister, and you know that because the parents told you in the meeting.

The recent review of current stats for students will still support a new middle school. The number used by the minister still means in 2020-2021 new classrooms will have to be built in Mobile.

Minister, does this make any sense to you to build on extensions and, in 2021, you're still going to build on classrooms instead of building a new school?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, at the expense of repeating myself we have made this decision based on the most likely population growth in the area. I know the Member talks about housing starts, building lots and so on, we do not – the government, whether it's that government, this government, another government, does not build schools based on hope that building lots in certain areas will grow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KIRBY: You build based on what the population is, what the likely growth scenario is based on a variety of factors, not just one. You can't just cherry-pick the figures to fit your argument. We've seen that too many times in the past and it's not worked out. We have chosen the most likely population growth scenario in making this decision.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the issue here is identifying on the ground what is happening in terms of economic growth. I know the crowd on the other side don't have any economic plan for the province, but the reality is the region is growing. It has grown in the past decade, it will continue to grow and this is looking forward to making long-term solutions that you need to think about.

In 2021, based on your own numbers you indicated, meeting with parents, additional classrooms will have to be built in Mobile if you do not build a new school today.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Do you support this interim plan to use taxpayers' money when the extension will be inadequate in a couple of years and will not deal with overcrowding? Is that good use of public funds, Minister?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, there have been a significant number of decisions that this government has had to make that are choices based on the revenue that we have available to us. The circumstances that we face are directly related to the choices the former administration made around their spending and we are faced with a situation where we have seen revenues related to oil royalty shift. We have increasing spending that is outpacing what is affordable to the taxpayers, and what the minister has referred to in his earlier questions is the responsible approach to look at infrastructure investment as a whole throughout this province and as a whole throughout the education system, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

There are thousands of people directly employed in the inshore shrimp fishery and the snow crab fishery. The quota cuts announced yesterday and last week will have devastating impacts on

harvesters, plant workers, spin-off businesses and entire communities.

Minister, does your government have a strategy to deal with this looming crisis?

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, this government realizes the challenges the fishery is facing, shrimp cuts just last week and the crab cuts that came down yesterday. This morning I had the opportunity to meet with ASP, this afternoon I will be meeting with the FFAW. Mr. Speaker, I spoke to numerous fish harvesters and plant workers over the last 24 to 36 hours.

The Premier and I spoke to Minister LeBlanc last evening. We told him that we expect DFO has a role to play here for our harvesters and processors and plant workers in this province, but we will certainly work with the stakeholders, work with our plant workers, work with our harvesters, work with our processors and our communities as well, Mr. Speaker, because this is really the backbone of many rural communities in this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The general manager of the Fogo Island Co-op said that cuts to the shrimp quotas will mean that there will be only one shift working for just five weeks. This means there will be – there's a lot of talk of job losses and plant closures.

Minister, what advice can you give plant workers who are facing this dire situation?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Mr. Speaker, there is a stark reality here when we look at the shrimp fishery. In 2009, we harvested 85,000 tons of shrimp in this province, and it declined down to this year, which will be 7,000 tons. At the peak, we had 13 plants in this province. Last year we operated eight.

Mr. Speaker, what we can tell the plant workers in this province is as a government we'll certainly be there for them. There's a reality, it was the Members opposite, it was their government in *Budget 2015* that sunsetted the fish plant worker adjustment program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The Liberals boast about their cozy relationship with the federal government, but when the minister asked for a smaller reduction in shrimp quotas the federal government ignored him.

Minister: When will you stand up for harvesters and plant workers in this province and ask Ottawa to reconsider these quota cuts?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, this government will stand up for plant workers and harvesters in this province every single day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, let's do a little small history lesson here. I said a moment ago it was in 2010 that we reached our peak in shrimp production and it was in 2009 we reached our

peak in crab production. That was while the previous administration had their heads buried in a barrel of oil and forgot to invest in the fishery. They had an opportunity when we had \$25 billion in oil revenues. We had revenues that we could have invested in the fishery.

These trends that we've seen, Mr. Speaker, in the fishery, these started back in 2009 and 2010. This is not something that came about yesterday. There's a reality here, and I can assure the plant workers and harvesters in this province we'll stand with them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Frances for a very quick question, no preamble.

MR. K. PARSONS: Okay. Minister, you knew these cuts were coming; you said the assessment was coming.

Why did you wait until after the announcement was done to even ask for a meeting with the federal minister? Why did you wait so long?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for a quick response.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I met with the federal Minister of Fisheries two weekends ago in Boston.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Members opposite, we have a relationship with Ottawa. If I need to speak to the federal minister, like the Premier and I did last night, we can get those meetings. We don't have news conferences on the corner of Langevin Block, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

There will be no debate back and forth by Members who are seated. The only Members I wish to hear from are the Members identified to speak.

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On February 28, we held a public forum inviting people and organizations to draw on their experiences and suggest how government can build a better budget. The NL Medical Association told us we badly needed an effective chronic disease program. We have the highest type 2 diabetes rate in the country, and we must do more to prevent expensive complications, such as heart disease, kidney failure and amputations.

I ask the Premier: Where is the chronic disease prevention and management program promised in the 2015 election?

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

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

The chronic disease management program is a complicated piece of organization. It is underway. We have engaged the NLMA, and we have engaged other stakeholders as well. Within that framework of chronic disease management, there will be a piece on the provincial Diabetes Registry. That is coming forward shortly. We will also have a provincial diabetes strategy.

We have already brought to the House regulations around the Cancer Registry, and that is the prototype we will use for chronic disease in general and diabetes in specific, 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.

We also heard from people who can't get the home care they need to remain independent. This government promised an in-home assessment program to help seniors stay in their homes, but all we've seen is higher fees and cuts to hours.

I ask the Premier: Where is the promised in-home assessment program?

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

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

It was late last fall that we received a report from Deloitte on the Home Support Program in general. There are 24, maybe 25 recommendations there. They are being worked on and an implementation plan will be forthcoming before the spring is out – if we ever get spring. It will deal with these in a phased and co-ordinated way to address the issues that the Member opposite raises.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker.

The Way Forward promises a health-in-all-policies approach.

I ask the Minister of Health: Has he done an analysis of the impact of the cuts to the Adult Dental Program and over-the-counter drug coverage on the health of people affected, and on the other aspects of the health care system, including any extra costs?

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

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

We do have a health-in-all-policies approach, Mr. Speaker, with reference to the specifics that

the Member opposite raises. We evaluate both of those programs on a regular basis.

I refer back to my previous comment about over-the-counter medications. If these are medically necessary in the opinion of a prescriber, they can be sought through special authorization. The NLPDP currently covers 130,000 people. We have received to date just shy of 410 requests for authorization under that special process and have granted them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I am hearing in my office of people having to go to emergency because they can't get the Adult Dental Program covered anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of AES: Has he done an analysis of the impact of cutting people's bus passes on their mental health and an analysis of the extra time and cost to the health care system of repeatedly sending people back to get doctors' letters in order to appeal the denial of their bus passes?

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

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

We have in Newfoundland and Labrador – our program for Social Assistance for income support for individuals ranks, according to the statistics that have been provided to us that are made publicly available, one of the most healthy programs that are in the country.

We always seek to do better. In fact, what we've done is we want to make sure that resources are available in areas where they are needed. For example, in *Budget 2016* we provided an additional \$3 million to be able to ensure that people have access to home heating requirements.

In addition to that, we've also made sure that people have access to transportation services to be able to go to non-emergency, regularly

scheduled medical appointments. That is currently still available to them. There is a frequency and of course a distance test, but it is available and it is very important that we keep that in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 8 and section 10 of the *Public Tender Act*, I hereby table the report of the *Public Tender Act* exemptions for January 2017, as presented by the chief operating officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Answer to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will move the following motion: that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I also give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into Committee of a Whole on Supply to consider a resolution for the granting of Supply to Her Majesty, Bill 6.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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 there has been an identified lack of mental health services in our province's K-12 school system; and

WHEREAS this lack of services is having a significant impact on both students and teachers; and

WHEREAS left unchecked, matters can and, in many cases, will develop into more serious issues;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to increase mental health services and programs in our province's K-12 school system.

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

Mr. Speaker, given I was asked to present this petition, I felt compelled to do so in the House of Assembly, but I would draw people's attention to the recent All-Party Committee report on mental health and addictions. I'm quite pleased, as I know Members on all sides of the House are, that there are specific recommendations related directly to our school system and the need to improve access to mental health programs and services for students in our K-12 education system.

I'm also pleased that the All-Party Committee had an opportunity to meet with the task force on educational outcomes, and ensure that some of the issues that we were hearing about, through our work, were also on the radar of that task force as it reviews our education system and makes recommendations to improve the system as well.

Mental health is a major challenge in our society today. It's not just a challenge for government; it's a challenge for communities and it's a challenge for virtually every family in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country as well. There's an opportunity to help young people through the school system to access the services they need.

So in the recent All-Party Committee report there's a call to ensure that there are interdisciplinary teams available to provide support to young people in the school system who are in need of support, to work with students and to work with families as well.

There was also a recognition that there needs to be curriculum changes as well to ensure that there's age-appropriate mental health education that will raise awareness and reduce stigma and help young people be better prepared to deal with any mental health challenges that may arise, and have that embedded directly into the K-12 curriculum.

So those are positive steps. I do have a high degree of confidence that government will implement the recommendations that are outlined in the All-Party Committee report.

This is still an important issue, and I'm pleased to raise it on behalf of constituents who have signed this petition. I hope we will see prompt action to follow through on those recommendations, and to be honest, Mr. Speaker, I believe we will, because it's the right thing to do.

Thank you.

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 smaller class sizes, adequate learning environments and effective curriculums are paramount to success of our youth; and

WHEREAS recent budget decisions have negatively impacted student supports, educational resources and teaching allocations; and

WHEREAS the provincial education system should ensure that each child has the ability to reach his or her full potential;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to enhance the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador; introduce initiatives which ensure smaller class sizes which will provide more sufficient personal space per child and allow more individual learning opportunities; develop effective curriculums which will enable youth to develop both life skills and optimal academic achievement; provide resources to ensure a fully beneficial inclusion model is in place and to ensure all children in our province have equal standard of education in their learning environment.

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

Mr. Speaker, we've had this debate for the last number of months, as parents and educators and administrators and service organizations get a better understanding of the negative impacts that recent cuts are having to our education system. The impact – they are not only having on the immediate students in our system, but they can see the long-term effects they're going to have on our society as students don't meet their full potential. Some fall behind and some miss opportunities that may shape the careers they would have.

For example, intensive core French, being able to get educated in a particular area where that may open up certain avenues for longevity in a certain career; talking about not making particular investments in infrastructure around schools because of class sizes and all the impacts it has on that; ensuring that the system itself is conducive to what we want to do in our province here for learning.

This group of individuals, which are province-wide now, have taken it upon themselves to petition the government, and they have given me

the honour of sharing the petitions to the House of Assembly outlining their concerns. As they come in, you see them, they're from all parts of the province, they're from Labrador; but, they have a common concern. Class sizes, lack of curriculum, impacts on teachers and administrators, supervision, access to certain programs and services, the resources that are necessary.

We know there are some challenges there, but when you're making priority decisions they have to be around the longevity and the benefits of your society. What better way to do that than investing in your young people, and particularly investing in their education. So it's very important that we continue to lobby to ensure that not only no further cuts take place, because that will totally devastate the education system, but the ones that were put in place last year, the cuts that have happened have to be reversed. There has to be a movement to invest more money.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll have an opportunity to present this petition and many others as the weeks go by.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS government plans to remove the provincial point-of-sale tax rebate on books, which will raise the tax on books from 5 per cent to 15 per cent; and

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I wonder, did government do any kind of analysis at all of the rollout effects of imposing this provincial sales tax on books? Did they do that? How much money were they expecting to raise? Then, aside from on this one column what they expect to raise, have they looked at the economic impact on local businesses? Have they looked at the economic impact on the sale of local authors? Because at this point, with the 10 per cent extra tax on this book, on local books, for instance, our local writers will only make about 10 per cent on a book sale. So that means government makes as much on the individual books of local writers as do the local writers. There seems to be no fairness in that at all. There's just no justice in that as well.

Again, this seems like such a knee-jerk reaction to impose a 10 per cent sales tax on books. People who live in Newfoundland and Labrador will have to pay more for a book that was written and published here in our province than anywhere else in the country. People all across Canada will have those books at much lesser rates, much cheaper, 10 per cent cheaper, than the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, for our own writers. Government's imposition of this tax means that government makes more than the local writer does on the book that they have probably taken years to write. It makes no sense at all.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if government has done any analysis on this at all. I can only assume they haven't because it makes no sense whatsoever.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of Bill 4.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 4, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 4 be 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 Intergovernmental Affairs Act. (Bill 4)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 4 has now been read a third 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 Intergovernmental Affairs Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 4)

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

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that Bill 5, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 5 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law.” (Bill 5)

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

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

Again, as always, it’s a privilege to be able to stand here and speak in this House as it relates to the legislation that goes through here.

On many days we get an opportunity to speak to very substantive pieces of legislation, legislation that affects the lives of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, legislation that can have a pressing effect or a very noticeable effect on the lives and the well-being of our citizens, legislation that in many cases changes – can be very fundamental to this province.

This bill is probably not one of the most substantive bills that we will debate here in the House of Assembly. In all senses and all aspects, this is very much a piece of housekeeping legislation.

Mr. Speaker, basically what we have to do here is – I guess in my role as the Attorney General and under the *Executive Council Act*, it is my duty to administer all acts, orders and regulations that are not assigned to another minister. It’s a significant number of pieces of legislation that I’m responsible for.

In that capacity, from time to time, the Attorney General will bring a bill to this Legislature to make various administrative revisions to other statutes. Again, it is very much a housekeeping matter. That’s not to detract from its importance. Obviously, it is very important that our legislation be up to date and that it be reviewed on a regular basis.

This being said, in many cases, reviewing legislation is a very difficult process. It’s extremely time consuming; it requires a very good eye. In a lot of cases, you can alter one piece of legislation and it affects another piece of legislation that you may not have contemplated. Again, it doesn’t have an out-and-out effect, but this is a chance to review all legislation and to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

There are a number of conversations happening in the House. I ask Members if you can’t keep their volume to a minimal, to take their conversations outside.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I understand, there are a lot of conversations about this bill. It’s pretty significant, so I understand that this bill would generate significant conversation. I appreciate the fact that all Members of this House are listening and talking about this bill because it’s important. I expect them all to know every change that we’re about to make here.

In all seriousness, this is a housekeeping bill, but it is important and that’s why I am going to go through it. Sometimes it can be typographical errors; it can be repetitive language, obsolete language, another anomaly. In some cases, a change in one statute can reflect the change that has been on another piece of legislation. Again, it’s a matter of consistency, and that’s what I have here today.

That is basically the purpose of Bill 5. I do understand that the Opposition has been briefed on this and our caucus has been briefed on this. The last bill of this nature was, I believe, in

2013; it would have been the last *Statutes Amendment Act*.

So again, our department periodically reviews the legislation. Sometimes we receive issues from other departments and we look through those. Generally what happens, instead of bringing one of these bills where you talk about one thing, it's a matter of waiting and complying a number of these changes and doing one bill, which I think is better for everybody involved.

On that note what I'd like to do – when you look at the bill – sometimes, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about pieces of legislation, I talk about its size. This is a sizeable bill, as it references a number of different pieces of legislation. I am going to go through the legislation here and some of the incorrect references – there are a bunch of changes here. For the purpose of making sure this is on the record, I want to refer and I'll go through this.

It changes the reference from *Municipalities Act* to *Municipalities Act, 1999*. There are actually six different clauses in that bill where it's referenced. So that's a pretty important change. Again, I notice that there are a lot of people interested in this bill and sometimes you got to have a bit fun, Mr. Speaker.

It changes the *Engineers and Geoscientists Act* to *Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008*. Again, another significant change to this piece of legislation. *Environment Act* to *Environmental Protection Act*; *Waste Material Disposal Act* to *Environmental Protection Act* – that's pretty much a whole-scale change to the title there.

Hospitals Act to *Regional Health Authorities Act*; *Hydro Corporation Act* to *Hydro Corporation Act, 2007*; *Public Inquiries Act* to *Public Inquiries Act, 2006*; *Registration of Deeds Act* to *Registration of Deeds Act, 2009*; *Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Act* to *Royal Newfoundland Constabulary Act, 1992*. Again, some of these changes are a long time in the making, Mr. Speaker.

Urban and Rural Planning Act to *Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000*; and finally, it changes the reference from *Workers' Compensation Act* to *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation*

Act, and that's a change that happens in a number of different clauses.

In some cases, it had to change the names of departments. Some of these have been changed very recently. So Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is now changed to minister, and again that department has seen a number of changes over the last number of years. Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is just changed to department, which hopefully will prevent having to come back here and debate this later on.

Department of Environmental and Labour is just changed to department, and then Department of Environment is changed to department. So again, a lot of very simple changes here, just cleaning up the language.

Some typos and errors: Clause 1 corrects the typo in the Schedule to *Abitibi-Consolidated Rights and Assets Act*; replaces the reference “Zone 2” with the reference “Zone 1.” Again, a small change; we could have a debate about that piece of legislation and how that process unfolded and talk about that expropriation that happened then, but in the spirit of moving forward with this bill, I'll continue on. Everything is fairly peaceful here.

AN HON. MEMBER: Filibuster.

MR. A. PARSONS: That's the one – if we are going to filibuster, we should filibuster that one.

Clause 6 corrects a typo in the definition section of the *Change of Name Act, 2009*. A couple of Members on the other side would be very interested in this. Clause 7 corrects a typo in subsection 135(2) of the *City of Mount Pearl Act* and it corrects the placement of a comma. Like I say, as the old commercial said, the more you know.

MR. LANE: You got me on board now.

MR. A. PARSONS: The Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands was about to vote against this bill, but he is now on board.

Clause 10 in the *Correctional Services Act* changed from “expended” to “extended.” Like I say, P to T; it's big stuff here, Mr. Speaker.

Clause 11 corrects a typo in sections 14(4) of the *Denturists Act, 2005*. Clause 22 amends section 2 of the *Partnership Act*, and clause 27 changes a typo in subsection 5(5) of the *St. John's Municipal Council Parks Act*.

We're moving forward, Mr. Speaker. References to repeal provisions of legislation – basically, in many cases, you change a piece of legislation, there would be a repealing of a clause; this is a chance now to delete the references to that repealed clause in other legislation. So there are two different acts there.

Clause 8 amends a paragraph in the *City of St. John's Municipal Taxation Act*, which no longer exists. Clause 15 amends the Schedule to the *Highway Traffic Act* to delete offence and penalty provisions that no longer exist. Clause 16 amends the *Highway Traffic Demerit Point System Regulations* which relate to the *Highway Traffic Act* – provisions that no longer exist.

Finally – no, close to final, it corrects references to amend the provisions in other legislation. Clause 16 amends the *Highway Traffic Demerit Point System Regulations* related to bus regulations and now those are covered in the *Highway Traffic Act*.

Clause 16(3) changes the same act, but now it falls under the *Highway Traffic Licensing Equipment Regulations*. Finally, clause 17 amends the *Hydro Corporation Act* to correct section references in the *Corporations Act, 2007*.

Thankfully, I'm at the end of my presentation of this bill, Mr. Speaker. Amendments required due to the enactment of other legislation – this is somewhat important. Clauses 3 and 26 add reference to the Seniors' Advocate; that is a piece of legislation that we debated here recently. The provisions relating to Officers of the House of Assembly as it relates to the *ATIPP Act* and the *Public Service Commission Act*, because of that change there, we had to change two pieces of legislation.

Clause 21, amend the *Municipalities Act* to replace the words Registrar of the Supreme Court with the words Trial Division. There were some changes made in the *Judicature Act* back in 2013, these are now changed.

Like I say, Mr. Speaker, this is purely a housekeeping bill. It's not to say that it's not important, it shouldn't be done but certainly it's less substantive than many of the bills that we have the pleasure of standing here and debating. This one falls to me as the Minister of Justice handling all bills that are not specifically referenced to another minister.

So, like I say, I'm very happy to speak to this. I do want to thank the staff of all the various departments that put the time into this. Like I say, this is not easy work, so I appreciate the time they put into this.

On that note, I look forward to the commentary from my colleagues on the other side. I look forward to the conclusion of Bill 5 second reading, and then moving on to the Committee stage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've been strategizing over here and this could be a long debate, because it's a long bill; but, no, it probably won't be a long debate.

I think the House Leader has done a job of outlining what this legislation is all about, and this is something that happens every so often in the House of Assembly. There's a tremendous amount of work that goes in to each and every piece of legislation that's brought before this hon. House. In some cases, months and even years of work goes into the legislation that's brought before this House, and as you just got a sense following the House Leader's remarks, there's legislation and regulations for all kinds of things that people wouldn't necessarily even think about in the province.

Some of that legislation goes back 50 years. Obviously, government evolves, society evolves, the environment that we're living and working in evolves over time; therefore, legislation needs to evolve over time. Sometimes legislation just becomes outdated because it no longer reflects

current practice, and it's not that anybody's operating outside the law. It's just that procedures change, the way of doing business changes, the way government operates changes. So this legislation, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law, cleans some of that up.

Sometimes there are drafting errors as well, and sometimes in this hon. House people like to have some fun with those kinds of things as they come up, but the reality is when you're dealing with complex legislation it's quite possible for there to be a typo or a minor error or whatever, and these things get discovered and then dealt with over time. So rather than bringing in a bill to address every one of these individual pieces of legislation individually, there's an opportunity to bring in one bill that addresses a whole bunch of anomalies and errors throughout the legislation that is in place in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This brings to the House of Assembly matters in statute law that require legislative correction as a result of amendments or enactments made in previous sessions. It's about updating the legislation to make it consistent with subsequent legislation and to make it consistent with current realities and practice. This happens quite frequently. I don't think it happens necessarily every time in every sitting of the House, but at least every two or three years I've seen a bill like this come through here. It corrects titles. It repeals legislation that is no longer relevant and no longer needed. It doesn't contain any substantive changes. There are no cost implications here. These are technical amendments. There are no policy shifts, no changes.

It is rare for us to all be in heated agreement in this House, but, in this case, this is just part of the regular business of the House of Assembly, and it is part that I've witnessed before. I know some of my colleagues have seen this before. For that reason, we have no problem standing today to support Bill 5. Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my comments there.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm very happy to stand and speak ever so briefly to Bill 5, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law. I would like to thank the fine folks in the Department of Justice for their briefing.

This bill in fact, is a testament to the incredible work being done in the Department of Justice by those who are responsible for legislation to ensure that the legislation is tabled properly and to ensure that all of our legislation, no matter what kind of legislative changes we do, that it all falls in alignment as well. It takes painstaking attention to detail, and that is what this act reflects, Mr. Speaker.

So I would like to thank the folks in Justice for their briefing and also for their committed and painstaking work, and the commitment to ensure that the integrity of our legislation is followed through right to the last crossing of the t's and dotting of the i's.

This is an omnibus bill that is passed from time to time by the House of Assembly, and it is a collection of minor corrections and amendments resulting from amendments or enactments made previously in the House. Some of it is about typographical errors; some of it is also about just little parts of the law that need to be adjusted so that all legislation is in alignment. This act corrects these technical errors in an effort to keep statutes as accurate as possible.

We know, Mr. Speaker, as well that legislation –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

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

We also know, Mr. Speaker, that legislation is a living thing in that it needs to evolve and respond to the realities of our communities, to the realities of the people of our province. That's

what we see and that's what we would hope to see. Legislation can be a very complicated process, but it needs to be responsive to the realities of our lives.

The bill contains 31 clauses, each of which amends existing legislation to fix errors and anomalies, as the Minister of Justice so clearly explained to us. For instance, if we look at clause 31, this is just an example, Mr. Speaker. In clause 31 it says: "Clause 31 of the Bill would amend paragraph (3)(1)(a) of the *Waste Management Regulations, 2003* to delete the reference 'Department of Environment' and replace it with the word 'department' – with a small d – "to reflect current practice."

That shows us that when we look at some of these clauses they are actually a thumbnail sketch of a number of pieces of legislation that have passed before the House in the past while. Also, it's a bit of a map of the work that has been done in the House over a period of time. That one, for instance, reflects the fact that there is no longer a department of environment that it comes under Municipal Affairs.

There are some questions I would ask about that, but that's not what we're debating here today, Mr. Speaker. Clause 31 is not only just a minor change, it also tells a story of legislation that has been either presented to the House past and or enacted.

In a manner of speaking, Mr. Speaker, when we see that, really this is about making sure the acts refer to the proper acts. It's really, in a manner of speaking, this is all about the Department of Justice getting its act together. That's really what it is, getting its act together. It's an attempt at humour, Mr. Speaker, but it's the Department of Justice getting its acts together.

Human nature being what it is, there will always be small errors and other overlooked issues which need to be addressed, and that's what we see happening here. So I'd like to thank the people who paid close attention to these minor errors and collect them in order for bills like this one to be passed from time to time.

So they're not mistakes; they are simply, again, aligning all past legislation with current legislation. Accuracy, as we know, in the statute

law is important and that we have people who take the time and the trouble to ensure our statutes are as accurate as possible is a wonderful thing and I would like to thank them, one and all.

That's all I would have to say at this point, Mr. Speaker. It's not a substantive piece of legislation. There have been a few pieces of legislation that have come before the House in this sitting that have not been heavy on substance. There are a number of issues that are outstanding in the province that I'm sure people would like to see the House debate at this point, but this is where we are at this point.

Again, I would like to thank the people who have painstakingly taken note of any errors or omissions so that all of our legislation, in fact, aligns with each other.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a couple of moments to speak to Bill 5, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law. Really, I just wanted to stand to offer my support of this piece of legislation. I'm not going to repeat everything that has been said, but, basically, it is important. We do pass an awful lot of legislation in this House of Assembly.

There's been an awful lot passed over the years. There are lots of laws, statutes and regulations that govern our day-to-day lives, and it's important that the laws that we have, that they are accurate. We know that you can take a sentence, Mr. Speaker, and depending on where you put that comma, you can totally change the meaning of what that sentence is. So the same thing can happen with legislation.

We wouldn't want to cause confusion. We wouldn't want to have a situation where legislation is unnecessarily challenged because of technical errors and so on, the costs, the time and everything that could be associated with it. It's important, as has already been said, to ensure that as times change, department names

change, divisions within government change, and legislation changes that the other legislation that's in place is up to date and is using the same terminology and the same department names and so on, again for clarity of the law, and that's really what's being done here.

There are a number of pieces that have all come in together under this one bill. Nothing that's here, as has been said, is what one would consider any drastic change. There's no change or direction in policy that we would have to debate. It's simply just going through legislation that's in place, finding any errors that may exist, identifying any changes in department names and so on or other references and making those changes to the legislation so that it's all current and up to date and provides clarity to this House of Assembly, to our legislatures, to the public. For that reason, I will be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Government House Leader speaks now, he shall close debate.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I appreciate the comments as it relates to this bill. I will say talking about the sheer number of bills that we deal with in our Province right now, we have approximately 400 statutes and about 1,500 sets of regulations, so there is a tremendous amount of legislation.

I just have to follow up on a comment made by my colleague in the NDP who talked about debate in the House. I will point out that in the last session our government handled 71 pieces of legislation. Actually, I appreciated hearing from the Throne Speech because I started to forget some of the stuff that we've done. Again, that Throne Speech did a good job of going through it.

Now, just to get some context in the years before that: The session before that, there were 15 pieces of legislation; the one before that, there was 44; and then the one before that, there was 25. So I have to provide some context. The fact is we do have substantive debates here. The

other thing if we talk about having the debate, I will say that right now we are doing Address in Reply – no, we did Address in Reply and we did actually do some, back in the last session, when it came Interim Supply. It is a chance for Members to get up and debate but if you want to have a substantive debate in this House, you actually have to stand up and say something.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The motion is that Bill 5 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law. (Bill 5).

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 5 has now been read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 5.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 5.

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 5, An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law.

A bill, "An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law."

CLERK: 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 33 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 33 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 33 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Remove Anomalies And Errors In The Statute Law.

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 5 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: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 5.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 5 carried without amendment.

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 Bill 5 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 5, 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: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 1, Address in Reply.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege anytime I stand on my feet in the House – I'm waiting for my light here, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, I'll start again.

It's always a privilege to stand on my feet and speak when I have an opportunity in the House of Assembly on behalf of the good people in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

Before I start and get into my 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker, which will go much too quickly, I do want to, on behalf of the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, just mention again Mr. Rompkey, the late Senator Rompkey who passed away last week, who served my little corner of the world very, very well for just over four decades. I would have been a pretty young girl when he started.

We were quite familiar with him coming to our house and many cups of tea, and he did well for that area. We can look back to the airstrips along the coast in Labrador. We can look back to monumental things like securing the money for the Trans-Labrador Highway and things like that.

Mr. Ed Roberts certainly did a good job giving a eulogy at his service on Friday. Our thoughts have been with Mrs. Rompkey and with Peter and Hilary and the two grandchildren as well.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I came into the House I had just gone through my district. I left here on Friday, three hours on a plane to Goose Bay. In three days I drove 1,125 kilometres, six hours on a plane, I met with two different municipalities. I met with the school council and dealt with a number of constituency issues.

Mr. Speaker, every time I go back to my district I'm reminded of how far it is from here on the Avalon. I have colleagues that commute seven minutes, seven minutes to and from, and when they come up in my area they say what an eye opener it is.

Mr. Speaker, every year around this time we have a difficult time with the *Apollo* in the Labrador Straits, in the Strait of Belle Isle. We have heavy ice that moves in. I want to say thanks to the wonderful federal relationship we have with Ottawa. This year we've been really, really fortunate with icebreaker support. There are times we've had one icebreaker breaking out

the harbour, and then we've had another icebreaker, the *Fox*, usually escorting across.

So the flow has been better this year than previous years, but, Mr. Speaker, sometimes that is too much. When you have people who are disrupted for days and days on end, the families I get that are stranded for days. We were able to put flights on last week, which is something the previous administration never did, ever, Mr. Speaker. We were able to put flights on to help these people move back and forth and that was certainly, certainly appreciated.

Where I'm going with this, Mr. Speaker, is this is one of the reasons why we need to find out if a fixed link is actually feasible. If it is doable, Mr. Speaker, we have to find out once and for all. When I came in and I hear them asking questions – and the question of the day on VOCCM is about whether the timing should be right now for a fixed link. I want to explain to the people that are watching, the reason the time is right, right now to determine if a fixed link can be done.

We are looking at a full Labrador marine transportation strategy. Minister Hawkins, along with the Labrador caucus Members, has been quite involved in that. We have ferries that have passed their life expectancy. Do we want to lock into a longer-term contract with ferries? We need to know that. We need a full feasibility study that includes cost analysis, geological assessment.

People that get up and ask questions about whether that is needed or not, need to talk to the people that are stranded five days on one end or the other, that are racking up bills of \$1,000 and \$1,500. Mr. Speaker, there was a family whose mom passed away last week, the ferry wasn't moving and they were a week trying to get the body home. Serious stuff, Mr. Speaker, but that's what we deal with.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. DEMPSTER: Absolutely. Then they come in and try and spin words and talk about, did the money get taken from Lab Grenfell. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to spend most of my time looking forward, because I always say your windshield is bigger than your rear-view mirror and there's a reason for that. We're moving forward but sometimes we have to glance back to learn valuable lessons from that.

So, Mr. Speaker, that's why I reference the importance of the fixed link and the reason it has to be done now. So that we can make the right decisions as we go forward and look at the marine strategy and putting ships in place that will provide the best service for residents and for commercial, to have the least disruption in the flow of traffic there.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I drove on a pretty bad road. Some of you seen the pictures. People in Labrador – and not just people in Labrador, the road in the spring and the fall, because it's a gravel road, it becomes atrocious.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I thought about as I was driving back into Goose Bay on Sunday was how the former government failed to make meaningful progress on the Trans-Labrador Highway. December 10, 2001, we got connected to the outside world. My daughter, it was her fifth birthday, so I'll always remember December 10, 2001. Now she's 20 years old, and in that period of time we have 80 kilometres of pavement.

Mr. Speaker, 80 kilometres, despite having 12 years of the previous administration, \$25 billion in oil, 12 years and \$25 billion in oil. Many of those years they were running a surplus, we didn't see the progress on the Trans-Labrador Highway. What we did see was them getting bogged down in contract negotiations, doing favours for friends.

Humber Valley Paving, most will remember, I took a bit of a beating for that, Mr. Speaker. I got kicked out of the House because I refused to withdraw something, and that wasn't something I liked to do but I stood on principle. When you pay \$19 million for 80 kilometres of highway, you get 20 kilometres of that done, and you still pay the person who was about to run for the PC leadership for 60 per cent of the work – \$19 million.

Mr. Speaker, I am really, really pleased to be part of a government that clearly showed the commitment to Labrador last June. Mr. Speaker, we formed government. Every single day we hear about the difficult, tough choices that had to be made, but in June I travelled with the Premier and a number of others on a plane into Mary's Harbour and we made the single, biggest announcement to date on the Trans-Labrador Highway, because this highway is not for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, it's not just for Labrador. It is, in fact, a provincial highway for the people of the province. That is why, Mr. Speaker, we can't wait another 15 years to get it done.

Every year there is a commitment from the Premier, from this government and from our federal colleagues that we will push this through, and it will be done in short order. In 2019, 2020, we're going to see most of that road completed. That's the only thing that keeps me going sometimes, Mr. Speaker, when I'm on that road in that condition and I see –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – what some of these people have to drive on.

Another thing, too, that I want to mention is everyday Members opposite get up and they say, where's the plan? Where's the plan? You have no plan.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know where they're living, I live up in Coastal Labrador, a long way from here but we have lots of things in our plan. I look at *The Way Forward*, where we clearly outlined the vision. We outlined the guiding principles where it talks about how we will do better with less.

I grew up in a home, seven boys, two girls. I guess I was number 10. I was raised by my grandparents, a family of 12 on the Labrador Coast. There's a term that I became very familiar with, Mr. Speaker, and that was making do with what you got. I don't know if people here heard that. I'm not that old, not as old as some of my colleagues, but my grandmother often said, we'll make do with what you got.

It is unfortunate to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador when we look back 12 years and we see that we had an administration that did less with more. We didn't get the (inaudible). They did less with more. Going forward, I see many examples of where we are going to be doing more with less.

We look to the pilot project in Transportation and Works. People talk about what is wrong with our pavement. One time pavement was good for 20 years. Pavement is expensive. We have a lot of gravel roads. We have a lot of roads provincially to keep up. Now the Premier and the Minister of Transportation, they want to see why the pavement is not holding up. We can't put money into something and in 10 years we need to be spending millions again. So there is a pilot project being carried out on that.

Mr. Speaker, another wonderful example of us doing less with more is the changes that have been made to the public procurement and tendering act. In Labrador, which has got significant construction happening right now, we have short seasons because of the climate. We are making changes to that act. We are bringing in multi-year contracting, so that a contractor can get in and get started and then, as soon as the snow and ice thaws in the spring, they can get back. What will happen, there are two things: It's the most efficient way for a government to operate, but it also provides the best service for people instead of waiting years and years to see something, once the tender rolls out the door.

My colleague, the Minister of Finance, stood a couple of weeks ago and talked about the multi-year funding for groups, and that's another positive thing that I am very, very proud of. We have a lot of community groups that do very, very valuable work in our area. Sometimes when you're living on a contract, it is hard to do planning. It's hard to say, am I going to take out that loan because I don't know if I will have a job in six months. But with the multi-year funding, it will provide stability to staff. They will have less turnover. There will be more stability in programs and services.

So there are many, many wonderful things. I say to the Members across the way, if you're looking for our plan, come and talk to me; I'll sit

down – they don't seem to understand it. They haven't seen all of the wonderful things we have put out. One of the things that our Premier and our Cabinet and our caucus have talked about from day one is the importance of a report card. Most of us here have had children who have been in the school system. So they go off to school every day –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – and we want to know how they are doing. Then when we get to parent-teacher days, we would be very anxious to go and to sit down with the teacher and say, let's see the report card and let's see how they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, we have a team that have been working very, very hard on the first range of initiatives that were announced through *The Way Forward*. We've already got the report card on that – very much on track. We have achieved more than \$45 million in savings. This is a government, unfortunately – and you've heard it again and again – that didn't have the money at their disposal that the previous administration had – just didn't have it.

It goes back to we have had to make do with what we have. We have had to find ways to do more with less. And, Mr. Speaker, how did we achieve \$45 million in savings? There were a number of things that happened to do that. The zero-based budgeting where departments no longer just got the amount of money that they would normally get to operate, but build from the ground up – why do you need this money, justify the money. It is after all, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers' dollars.

When we think about the taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have aging demographics right across the country but Newfoundland and Labrador we know is the oldest province in the country. The area that I represent, a rural district, we know that's more pronounced in rural, so we have to be very fiscally responsible and make wise choices with money that don't actually belong to us.

We are put in privileged positions here, Mr. Speaker, in the House of Assembly, very privileged positions, and we have to be mindful of the decisions that we make. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the previous administration made choices that we are living with. I guess that's how it happens. The Member for Cape St. Francis got up yesterday and he made a reference to the fact that we were mean. It's easy to get up now and say you're mean when they made decisions on projects –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I recognize the hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is easy to get up and say oh, the other crowd is mean and the Minister of Education getting lots of questions today – I can't believe every day – I know no matter who is in government, Mr. Speaker, that's it's very important that you have healthy debate, it's very important that you have Opposition ask questions; but I am always absolutely amazed that some of them are able to get up and ask the questions about what are you doing and why did you make these tough choices when they know very well, we've got the fifth largest project in the world, a megaproject that's happening in my backyard, and it is the biggest mess that you've ever seen.

Thanks to Stan Marshall at the helm with Nalcor, we did have a little bit of hope last week in terms of them trying to rein in spending, get this back on track, mitigate the cost as much as we possibly can, and mitigate the cost to the ratepayer because there are lots of concerns around that, Mr. Speaker. Then you have Members that can post things about dark days and things that the Liberals are doing. We're just trying to make responsible decisions with the things that have been left to us to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a few minutes about my district. The fixed link, I already mentioned, is something that more than the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair or Labrador supports. When the ferry didn't move a couple of weeks ago for a week, the people

that were coming into my office were the people from Gander, were the people from Grand Falls, were the people from Lewisporte saying when am I going to get out and you guys need to be more vocal and how come this has not been looked at before. So I share that, Mr. Speaker, just to say that this is certainly supported by a lot of people across the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Trans-Labrador Highway will continue and I have every confidence that the Premier as the minister for Labrador and Minister Hawkins that we will see great progress over the next two or three years, working in partnership and leveraging federal funds on the Trans-Labrador Highway, and we will get the pavement in much shorter order – it will be more progress than we've seen in the last 10 or 12 years.

Broadband is something that I have stood on my feet and petitioned many times when I was in Opposition; tremendous need for enhanced broadband in the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair. Businesses need it to be able to operate; schools need it for children to be able to go online at home. We've made provisions in all our schools, fortunately, that they're able to function and do their Centre for Distance Learning courses.

Mr. Speaker, in medical, as we see more outmigration and aging demographics in our small communities we're moving more towards technological things in our clinics where somebody can come in and sit down in front of a TV screen and maybe meet with their doctor here in St. John's.

These are all the reasons why we need to see enhancements to broadband, and I want to say to the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair that I have had multiple meetings with the minister for that department, with my federal counterparts in Ottawa, people like Nunacor, people like NunatuKavut, that are being engaged now and looking to see what they can do. I'm optimistic that we're going to see some movement on that file in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Speaker, tourism – I have a beautiful district. Wednesday night, tomorrow night actually, we're going to see Battle Harbour

receive an award at the Delta for their contribution –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: – their significant contribution to the marine industry. I'm happily looking forward to attending that.

We have places like Red Bay, a world heritage UNESCO site, absolutely beautiful place. We have the oldest maritime archaic Indian burial site in Point Amour. We have the tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada, the second tallest in Canada. Lots of things.

Mr. Speaker, as some projects wind down and people wonder where their employment is coming from, we could have a great future in tourism in our area, I believe that, as we get the road finished, as we get the broadband brought in. We are seeing significant increase in our tourism numbers. Just that little town of Red Bay last year saw 11,000 visitors, an increase in their tourism of 26 per cent. Right on down through, Mr. Speaker, our roofed accommodations, the hotels, they all saw an increase in tourism numbers.

People love to gravitate to places that are off the beaten path. I like to call us one of Canada's last frontiers, Mr. Speaker. I would encourage anyone watching to come and visit Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and Labrador. Travel up the coast, a beautiful area, a memorable experience. Battle Harbour, that little island in the middle of the ocean, a memorable experience you won't forget.

Mr. Speaker, we have a ferry that moves about 150,000 people a year – 150,000 across the Strait of Belle Isle; more than 83,000 passengers, just from May to October last year. So people are coming and people want to see the region. These are the reasons why we have to make decisions and prepare for that right now.

I want to speak for a moment about the All-Party Committee that I was a member of on Mental Health and Addictions; a good report, 54 recommendations. I have every confidence that my colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services within his jurisdiction, will implement as many of these recommendations

as he possibly can. Unfortunately, there are a lot of unwell people in our province. Mr. Speaker, the truth is we can have all the infrastructure we want, we can have all the community programs and services we want, if our people are not well it doesn't matter.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be a part of that, happy to play a little role up in Labrador where there were some great recommendations about land-based programming and getting curriculum into schools that are culturally relevant for the diversity that we see in places like my backyard, and I'm looking forward to seeing some of that roll out.

Mr. Speaker, I had much, much more here that I wanted to talk about: the seniors, the supplement that's going out again tomorrow –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – on behalf of this government, but I look forward to continuing the next time.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to stand here today and give an Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne which was given a week ago today. First of all, I would like to thank His Honour, Frank F. Fagan who delivered that great speech and there's quite a bit good in this document. I have a lot of things highlighted and I have a lot of notes made here today. So I'm going to get to that.

Certainly, the Throne Speech, being my second, is always a big deal. The pomp and circumstance that surrounds the Throne Speech – I'm getting a bit of feedback, I think, Mr. Speaker, from what I'm saying. So I asked the Member opposite to take my cellphone. Sorry.

What I was saying, there's a lot of pomp and circumstance around the Speech from the Throne. It's always a nice occasion. I get to dress up. I put on my medals, any such time I'm in the presence of the Lieutenant Governor. Also, it's nice to see some of my navy colleagues who are, one is aide-de-camp to the Lieutenant Governor, the other is the commanding officer for CFS St. John's. So it's always good to touch base with them and have a quick chat.

Talking about the Throne Speech, it covered quite a bit that affects the District of Bonavista. I'm going to get to that shortly, but I want to make a couple of general announcements here.

I don't know if people have been looking at social media over the last couple of days, but there have been quite a few polar bear sightings in my district, one of which is in Melrose today. It went up to some people's houses. It actually ran the base pads of the old Melrose ball field, but what I say to people is be very cautious with the polar bear. I was talking to wildlife officials today. They're on their way down and are hopefully going to have a trap set up before the end of the day. So just keep your safety. They're following all sightings on the Peninsula.

I also want to highlight something the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair just highlighted. It's the Enhanced Seniors' Benefit and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will be released tomorrow. So if you're wondering, my GST cheque is really big, why is that? That's because we put extra money into that going towards seniors and low-income people.

I want to talk about some good things that are going on. I want to talk about some good things. Now, the Third Party got up the week before last during Interim Supply and talked about how you shouldn't be talking about good things, like Brad Gushue winning the Brier. I think that is absolutely ridiculous. All you hear from that crowd over there is doom and gloom, and I think the Minister of Health and Community Services aptly named them that.

So what I'd like to do, right off the bat, is give recognition to the Bonavista Pee Wee Cabots. They are the regional finalists for Newfoundland

and Labrador for the Good Deeds Cup. If you go to Chevrolet Good Deeds Cup, get in a vote for them. They're currently in seventh place. We want to get them up beating the Cape Bretoners who are well ahead. We have to get behind these young players who are doing some good things in the community and supporting our food bank. That's why they got nominated.

I want to talk about Team Gushue, who are currently 5-0 at the World Championship. It was an honour to see them down at the Brier, but it's even more exciting to see them competing so greatly on the world stage.

MUN Curling Team needs to get some recognition as well for winning the USport championship in curling.

What can I say about our Special Olympians who did us so proud just recently in the Winter World Games. It's great to see, and kudos to you guys.

I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about my friend, the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, in Kaetlyn Osmond who won silver medal this past weekend at the world championships.

And what else can I say about *Come From Away*? It's tearing up Broadway.

All these things are good news stories here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Third Party doesn't want us to recognize good things that are going on in this province. It's a shame. They couldn't close debate quickly enough on Interim Supply, but they're yet to get up to speak on this Address in Reply. The cat must have their tongue.

Now, I have to comment on the Leader of the Opposition. He got up immediately after the Throne Speech and went on a revisionist history of their 12 years in government. He's worried about his legacy so much, he's got so much revisionist history that he takes no responsibility for the financial state we're in. His head is in the sand. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, *Wrestlemania* was on Sunday and *Wrestlemania* is more believable than anything that comes out of the mouth on the PC Opposition.

AN HON. MEMBER: Are you saying it's not real?

MR. KING: No, it's not real.

One good piece of legislation that we brought forward in the fall was Bill 65, which is an act respecting the tabling of Public Accounts. So we call that the Davis '15 bill. The reason why we call it the Davis '15 bill is because they came out with their budget that said there was going to be a deficit of \$1.1 billion, and it turned up being double to \$2.2 billion. You can't plan a campaign around that. The public going into an election should be aware of the public coffers and what's there.

He also said the backbenchers on the other side should get up and stand up against their own government. Well, I find that a bit funny coming from that Member, because when Bill 29 was brought forward, none of them got up and stood up against that.

AN HON. MEMBER: What bill was that?

MR. KING: Bill 29.

When Muskrat Falls was debated, none of them got up to say no, this is wrong. We were hoodwinked –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. KING: Oh, sorry, I am talking about the Official Opposition.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, when they got up and talked about the phantom fisheries fund of \$280 million that they got from the feds, none of them got up and talked about no, this is not true, we did not sign an agreement. The former Fisheries Minister even put a letter into *The Telegram* that was totally false. I had to write a letter, which was in there last Thursday, that clarified things.

It's unbelievable how they get on and pretend that the previous 12 years didn't happen. But getting back to the District of Bonavista, because I've already spent too much time talking about that crowd, I'm going to get back to the good news again. Getting back to the Speech from the Throne, right off the bat, there was a reference to John Cabot and the importance of

the cod fishery. As you are all aware, John Cabot landed in Bonavista. The cod fishery has been a vital part of the District of Bonavista ever since.

This year, we marked the 25th anniversary of the cod moratorium that immediately sent 30,000 people out of work, and my hometown of Catalina was one of the worst hit. The Port Union plant employed roughly 1,400 people year-round, and they were automatically thrown out of work.

We are still feeling the effects from that. Businesses closed down, people moved away, and now we are starting to see a boom on the Bonavista Peninsula. We are actually a growth centre. So that talks about some great things that are going on, and the Speech from the Throne talks quite a bit about that. Our *Way Forward* – I have several sticky tabs here and I might get to read some of this out – is going to be beneficial to the District of Bonavista.

Also, Roots, Rants and Roars were referenced. That is the premier food festival in the province. It is becoming world renowned. You are getting chiefs from all over Canada, the US and other parts of the world. You are also getting people come from everywhere to come to Elliston to take part in this festival. I've had the pleasure of attending this past year and the year prior, it's second to none, and I encourage my colleagues to come out in September and enjoy the three-day festival. You'll certainly enjoy yourself. It has been a boom to our economy, and it certainly put us on the map.

What came out of the Throne Speech, one of the things that struck me right away is we're building towards a sustainable future – building towards a sustainable future. From what I seen from the Throne Speech, what I've seen from *The Way Forward* is that the District of Bonavista will be front and centre in building that sustainable future. As I've mentioned, we've seen new businesses open up over the last two years.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation has been there several times; he sees the potential. He spoke to the Chamber of Commerce last year. He sees the value in the District of Bonavista when it comes to business,

tourism, culture, especially innovation and industry. You hit all of them on the head.

So there are several things that were highlighted in the Throne Speech and *The Way Forward* because you can't forget about *The Way Forward*. They often say you guys haven't got a plan and I challenge them to pick up the document; I don't think they have.

Like I say, I think there are 70-odd actions in it and over half will certainly relate to the District of Bonavista, Mr. Speaker. Page 6 of *The Way Forward* says we have to do better with less. When they were out spending like drunken sailors with \$25 billion in oil revenues, and we can't forget the \$4 billion in lost tax revenue that they gave up – \$29 billion, Mr. Speaker. When they were out spending like drunken sailors, not looking at any outcomes on anything, we have to face their poor planning. One of the Members said our overspending is kind of on us. At least someone over there admits it.

So we need a paradigm shift in how we do things as government, and this is where we get to do more with less. We need to focus on outcomes, Mr. Speaker. We can't throw money at something and not measure the outcome. How do we know whether or not we're getting value for our money if we don't measure outcomes? For example, education, health care, they've thrown money at that year after year and never did once measure outcome. We have a Minister of Education and a Minister of Health and Community Services who are out looking at education outcomes and health care outcomes. We want to use the money correctly.

A report card came out recently and I thought we did pretty good on that, and it is Realizing our Potential. So for a stronger economic foundation, here's what we plan on doing: establish a Cabinet committee on jobs – now imagine, not rely on just oil or one industry, our Cabinet is actually going to focus on jobs and diversification – increase the number of social enterprises in Newfoundland and Labrador; introduce status of the artist act; release a cultural plan; improve a sense of arrival for travellers to Newfoundland and Labrador; increase water area for aquaculture to 50,000 metric tons for salmon and almost 11,000 for

mussels; increase timber allocations and harvest levels by 20 per cent in 2020.

I'm going to get to some of these things, hopefully – I'm probably going to run out of time, so I'll get to it in my response to the budget because a lot of what we're seeing here is hopefully going to be coming out of our budget as well, because everything is based on *The Way Forward*.

We're incorporating the women's employment plan on infrastructure projects; offer online block training for select trades. I really like that one; it keeps our tradespeople in the workforce while they're still going and writing their exam for their journeyman tickets. I think that's a huge move forward.

We're going to make Crown lands more accessible to stimulate the economy, agriculture; support tourism industry by doubling resident and non-resident spending; establish a fisheries advisory council, appoint a chair – which was done a couple of weeks ago – and one of the biggest things that we did was the *Public Procurement Act* that we brought forward in the fall. I think that's going to change things. Instead of going to the lowest bidder where you know there are going to be arisings come up and you end up spending more in the long run, what this public procurement does is it gives you more money for value. So it might not necessarily be the lowest bidder, but you're going to get more value for your buck.

I talked about the groundfish and the fishery in a speech a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. I feel it that important that I should mention it again. On page 11 of the Throne Speech, it is highlighted, a return to groundfish. It says: "A return to groundfish is a centerpiece of our economic development approach." When I heard that, Mr. Speaker, it was music to my ears.

Right now, we have seen the struggles that we have in the shrimp and crab industries, and it's going to be a tough year – we know that. I commend the work of the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources. He's there talking to the federal government. We need an approach on that, I think, that doesn't make the drastic cuts such as were made recently. The Fisheries Advisory Council, I've already talked about, but

we're going to have an action plan on harvesting, processing and marketing and the \$100 million of the federal fisheries fund that we just received are going to go a long way into that.

Also, talking about the fishery, one of the biggest complaints I heard from fishermen last year, last fall, was the fact that they couldn't get their cod fish to market in time. So you saw a lot of people stop fishing into November and December when if they had a place to process it, they could have kept going and going and going. It started off with 5,000 pounds, which was their quota, and ended up with 2,000 every week. What the \$100 million fund can do is help processors innovate and return back to the ground fishery and give the fishermen a better option to sell their fish locally, and you get processing done locally as well which does create jobs.

We talked about aquaculture which is Action item 2.17 in *The Way Forward* – and I forgot to mention a return to groundfish is Action 2.20. The reason why I'm actually saying the actions, the PC Opposition likes to say we don't have a plan, but I am talking about things with actions attached to them.

Agriculture, another important industry in the District of Bonavista – we're going to see new developments through Crown lands; double the amount of land that's actually given to our farmers. We're going to see double our food security by 2022. Currently, we have 10 per cent of our own food produced here in the province; we are going to double that, Mr. Speaker.

Also, one thing that I really liked coming out of the Speech from the Throne was the development of curriculum for junior and high school students. Getting young people into the classroom, learning about our farming industry will certainly get us on the right path to growing our industry and getting more young farmers in that sector.

I've got roughly two minutes left, so I'm obviously not going to everything. Tourism: You can't say the District of Bonavista without thinking tourism and culture. I often call it, every time I speak, the historic District of Bonavista. Tourism here in Newfoundland and

Labrador is a destination of choice and we've had a remarkable tourism session in the District of Bonavista last year. Looking at the numbers for this year, bookings are going through the roof. Operators are very excited about the year. Even right now we're seeing out-of-province licence plates and some from the United States, so it's a good time.

We've got 500,000 visitors; 8,000 people employed; we have \$1 billion in spending. We want to increase that spending by \$1.6 billion by 2020 – three short years from now. That's \$600 million, Mr. Speaker, and that will have a positive effect in the District of Bonavista. That is actually Action item 2.12. We want to give people a sense of arrival so when they come to our airport; when they go to Port aux Basques or Argentia, we want to point them in the right direction. We want to make them feel welcome. So we're focusing on getting them here and giving them experience right off the bat so they know where to go. That's Action item 2.13.

Also, with tourism and culture, we are supporting culture through the Status of the Artist legislation, and I'll look forward to that one coming forward because I'll certainly say a few words on that. The culture industry goes hand in hand along with the tourism industry – and now that's Action item 2.10.

So I've just gone through three of my four biggest industries: the fishery, agriculture and tourism – and I didn't even have time to touch forestry and others.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his speaking time is expired.

MR. KING: Thank you for the time and I look forward to speaking more on the district in the budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure this afternoon to stand in the House and to speak to the Speech from the Throne that was tabled in this House last week on March 28 by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. I've taken some time to read the Speech from the Throne, and I would only hope that folks at home who weren't able to tune in to the House at the time last week actually were able to get a copy off the government website and have a read through, because it certainly highlights the plan that we have, the things that we want to do as a government.

Mr. Speaker, for three weeks now I've listened to the Members opposite talk about and allude, incorrectly, I might add, to the fact that this government has no plan. Last year, we tabled *The Way Forward* and it highlights about 50 actions that encompass all aspects of the great things that are happening in this province and the things that we need to do to bring this province back on track.

One of the things that we certainly recognize after we took over government after November 30, 2015, is that – it's been talked about in this House that we have a \$2.7 billion deficit. I think it was suggested \$2.2 billion. The Opposition said in their plan that it was a \$1.1 billion deficit. Regardless, Mr. Speaker, we have significant challenges before us and one of the things that the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has pointed out to this hon. House is that our fiscal problem was not caused by a drop in oil prices. Rather, Mr. Speaker, it was caused by overspending by the Members opposite – by the previous government.

Now, as I travel my district, some days I can appreciate that when the Members opposite were in government and why they found themselves into that real mess and such a large deficit, the luxury that they had at the time with upwards of \$28 billion in revenue was to say yes to everything. Yes to this, yes to that. Well, the thing that we inherited and the challenges that I encounter as I travel the district is that we now can't say yes to everything. We have to be strategic about the things that we're going to invest in.

I'm keenly interested – and Members opposite now are starting to chirp and respond as I'm speaking, as they generally do when I get up in

this hon. House. They like to chirp in response to some of the things that I would say.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, our province is facing complex, wicked problems that require complex, wicked solutions. Now, I just want to read out a definition of what's a wicked problem because that's where we really are in this province. A wicked problem is a problem that is difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize.

Now we've been blamed, since we formed government, about saying one thing when we ran for office and doing another thing. Well, it goes back to the definition, Mr. Speaker, when you have contradictory or changing requirements, or incomplete information. I know that our Premier wrote the former premier and asked him what's the lay of the land, where are we fiscally? That was done in September of 2015. Of course, that response never came. So we were making an election platform based on the information that we could gather.

I know the Leader of the Opposition has said many times, oh, that information was out there. You could get that anywhere. Well, Mr. Speaker, I worked in government prior to being elected as an MHA and, yes, I knew we had some challenges, but only the premier of the day and the Cabinet of the day really knew what was going on fiscally in this province.

Mr. Speaker, when you think about complex problems, the other thing you have to consider is that there are complex interdependencies. So while you might decide to fix one thing, there is an effect on some other aspect of what's going on in our communities, in our regions and in the province. So the effort to solve one aspect of a wicked problem may reveal or actually create other problems.

Here's where we find ourselves today. I know the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development talks about that last year we were spending more on debt servicing than we were on education. This year it was projected, if we look at the forecast that was tabled by the Minister of Treasury Board, that we would pay as much as \$1 billion in debt servicing.

Now, as I travel my district people are saying to me, can you get money to fix this road? Can you get money to fix that road? Can we invest in a new fire hall or a town hall? When you have to take \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker, you can't put it in education.

I know earlier today it was talked about, one of the schools in my district, Riverside Elementary, overcapacity. That's not lost on me, Mr. Speaker. I know there are overcapacity issues there, but as has been said in this House already today because of the wicked situation we are in, we have had to find creative, cost-effective solutions. So while there might have been promises made, and there were many of them as the election was unfolding, lots of promises that were made by the Members opposite, we unfortunately have had to find more creative solutions to the wicked problems we have inherited.

To build sustainability, Mr. Speaker, we must become resilient. This means we must all work together. Last year I stood in this House and I pleaded with all Members opposite and on our side of the House, let's work together. We recognize we have a tremendous issue to try to resolve for the betterment of the people of this province, so we must all work together.

I can tell you *The Way Forward*, those are some of the things we have put out there, that we want to be collaborative, we want to work together. We want to row, Mr. Speaker, you're thinking about the history and the culture of this province, we want to row in the same direction. By collaborating and creating stronger partnerships, new partnerships and more importantly perhaps, Mr. Speaker, partnerships that have never been thought of at this point, but we must find efficiencies in the programs and the services we deliver

Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this House before, and I'll reiterate what I say to people in my district. When you think about your budget, there are a few things you can do. One, you can raise revenue. You can try to generate new revenue. So we did that last year. We increased taxes.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I heard it just like all the Members I'm sure on this side of the House,

and most definitely on the other side of the House, that raising taxes and fees gets you so far. We've had a fair amount of opposition, there is no doubt. We've all heard it as we've gone around our districts. We've had so much opposition to raising taxes and fees. So that's one aspect of when you're trying to balance a budget.

The other thing you can do is you can borrow money. Of course, that is tied to our bond rating. We know when you go from a plus to a minus or you move from an A or a double A, all of that impacts the amount of interest we're going to pay to the banks, to our lenders. So we don't want to do that. As a government, that is not a preferred option for us to go out and borrow more money because we're giving away more of that, the precious dollars we need to invest in programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, the third thing we can do in terms of trying to balance a budget and to deal with unprecedented deficit is to find efficiencies in the programs and the services we deliver. So, Mr. Speaker, that is the option that is before us, and we have seen that in some of the approaches, some of the strategies that have been identified in *The Way Forward*.

Now, I'll talk just a little bit – in *The Way Forward* we have said we have a vision that has three guiding principles. That we will do better with less, find efficiencies. As I've said already, we will collaborate, but we will also challenge ourselves. We will challenge our departments and our boards, our agencies and our commissions. We will challenge our staff. We'll even challenge the Members opposite to find better ways to deliver on the important services and programs for this province.

In *The Way Forward*, we've set out three different stages of how we're going to move forward our plan for creating a better tomorrow. Securing our footing; we're going to reduce the spending; realizing our potential. So we want to reverse the negative social and economic indicators, and we've talked about that in this House.

I think about my background. I did a fair amount of work, prior to being elected, doing social and economic development in the community. I did

a lot research with places like Memorial University, and consulted a lot of community groups and individuals. I've even written a fair number of papers, and it's all been about social and economic development, but the more important piece, and it goes back to this word about indicators. We can invest all we want in the people and the communities in this province if we don't change indicators. We need to change indicators. I'm glad to see we've put that into *The Way Forward*.

Building our future, and I think this is where Members opposite continue to stand up with the fear mongering that goes on in this House and around the province. I see Members shaking their heads. They're in denial to say that there is no fear mongering. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, fear mongering is a matter of course for Members opposite.

So we want to invest in the future of the people of this province, Madam Speaker, We want to redesign our government services, and we want to do it based on the demographics of the province. There is no doubt, we have an aging population. We see that – and as has been raised in this house already today when we talk about what's happening with our school systems. Now, we might have overcrowding that's happening in some schools, but it's not happening in all schools. Yes, we have growth centres that are happening around the province, but there are some schools even in my district, Madam Speaker, that do not have overcrowding issues.

When we think about Riverside Elementary, some parents now are taking it upon themselves to go to Random Island Academy because they see that there is an opportunity for their child not to be in an overcrowded area – and it's generally in the common areas in that school – so that they can go to a school which may have a bit more room. So parents are starting to recognize that they need to find creative solutions as well to some of the challenges that are happening in the education system.

Madam Speaker, I just want to talk a little bit about, as my colleague for the District of Bonavista highlighted, some of the things that we put forward in *The Way Forward*. When we talk about being more efficient, having a more

efficient public sector and using zero-based budgeting – now, that’s, I’m sure, novel for Members opposite who, remember, I said they had \$28 billion in oil revenue. They spent like there was no tomorrow and they just said to departments you can have; yes, please take; go spend. Because we’re out in the districts and we want to be able to say yes, to everything. Yes to this, yes to that.

Well, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that with zero-based budgeting, now departments will be submitting their requests based on what they actually need. They will build their budgets. There won’t be surplus at the end of the year that will be spent because you’d be afraid of not getting the extra money when the new budget came around. Now you will have to identify and make a case for every dollar that will be allocated to your division and your department. I think that’s a great step forward, Madam Speaker. There are no assumptions any more that you will need this dollar or that dollar. So in terms of us trying to reduce the expenditure, reduce the deficit in this province that is a wonderful step forward.

I also want to talk about in terms of how we provide better services. One of the things I highlighted in the 50 actions of *The Way Forward* is to improve services for clients with complex needs. I think back to my time, Madam Speaker, about when I was involved in the regional action committee on affordable housing. The previous administration had recognized – and I will certainly give them some kudos for that today – that there were individuals in our communities that needed some extra supports, certainly around housing.

One of the things that have been recognized as well is that there is a segment of our population that had a combination of issues. I go back to my earlier definition of wicked problems. It’s not only about finding them somewhere to live; they also have mental health and addiction issues and they have poverty. So there’s an inter-relationship. Finding them somewhere to live is only one aspect of that.

We have identified, as one of our 50 actions, that we will look to improve the services to clients with complex needs. The REACH housing board that I was involved in, and the great work of the

housing support worker, last year, about a year ago, were able to identify a temporary housing situation where they could house people who were without accommodations, without somewhere to go, for a short period of time.

They also recognized, in their own strategic plan, that we have individuals with complex mental health issues and we need to find other solutions; we need the support of Housing. I know the Newfoundland and Housing Corporation has been undergoing consultations with the community. They want to understand where their strategic investments and priorities should be. I was at one of the consultations in Clarenville about a month ago and we quickly identified that we need to continue to find ways to support individuals with complex needs in the community.

I have just a couple of minutes now, Madam Speaker, and I just wanted to reference the Premier’s Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes. The task force was in Clarenville, at Clarenville High, on February 20. There were about 30 people who attended, school councils and parents. They talked about the need to address the issues in the education system. Having been somebody who spent a lot of time in the education system many, many years ago, I certainly appreciate the perspective that they brought to that discussion.

We heard in this hon. House last week that there was an idea brought forward, a resolution brought forward to have a summit on inclusive education. I have to say, Madam Speaker, I went out to the people in my district and said I thought it was premature to have that summit. It is important for us to hear from the Premier’s task force on educational outcomes. They will set forward a number of recommendations that we will consider as a government, and we will make the right investments so that we improve educational outcomes, which goes back to one of my earlier points, educational outcomes for the students and their parents in this entire province.

I’m looking forward to that report as it becomes tabled into this House, so that I can go back to the people in my district and I can say the input that you provided to the Premier’s task force on educational outcomes was heard. You were

heard. There were some great ideas that come forward and we, as a government, will take those seriously and we will make the right investments to fix the mess –

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): Order please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: – that the previous government created –

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please!

MR. HOLLOWAY: – in the Education Department in this province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: I will remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's always an honour and a privilege to get up and stand in our spots here and represent our great district. I proudly represent the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I want to address the Speech from the Throne and, in particular, what interest I have from the Speech from the Throne is *The Way Forward*. And this, right here, Madam Speaker, is indeed –

MADAM SPEAKER: I remind the hon. Member she is prohibited from using props in the House.

Thank you.

MS. P. PARSONS: Pardon me, Madam Speaker.

But this is a plan, and I will talk about what is in the plan. I'm happy to say, and I'm proud of our Premier, and I'm proud of ministers, I'm proud of our team that there is plan for Coley's Point Primary School.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: There is finally a plan for this long overdue replacement. I will give a summary about Coley's Point Primary as it is a top priority in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, the former district of Port de Grave, and it has been for quite some time.

I remember the hon. Roland Butler back in his time as an MHA advocated hard for that. We know that there has been a promise in previous administrations, but nothing has materialized. I am happy to say that there is quite the contrast over here, and I am very confident that I will continue to be very vocal about it and I have great support from my team on this side of the House for Coley's Point Primary School.

We do know that the building itself is a 65-plus-year-old building, and servicing the student population of over 350. This services communities such as Port de Grave, Bareneed, Coley's Point, Country Road, Shearstown, Butlerville and Clarke's Beach. There are children there currently who can say that their great grandparents were educated in that same building. As we know, space is in issue. We live in an area with an expanding population in Conception Bay North for quite some time, but it's certainly good.

I also want to pay recognition to the passionate, dedicated citizens in the district and in the Town of Bay Roberts and surrounding area. For example, Ms. Joy Brown, a former principal of Coley's Point Primary who has been recognized worldwide for her dedication to her young students and staff in that school community. So Ms. Joy Brown, thank you for your dedication. Ms. Belle Butt, another former educator, and former educators and current educators for Coley's Point Primary have been very vocal. They've been very active and dedicated to their school community. Also, I want to take this time to recognize the initiative and the advocacy given by the Town of Bay Roberts.

This as their number one priority, as a municipal government, is the replacement for Coley's Point Primary school. They've made that clear to the previous government. We all know – we've had meetings here. I'm happy to say we've been here; we've been in meetings with the ministers, with the Premier. I've met with the Premier multiple times.

Actually, the Premier made a visit – and I'll get to that a little later – just last year when a very important announcement was taking place and it was signed in Bay Roberts. A lot of my hon. colleagues also came to that very important announcement, which was beneficial to the entire province. Mayor Phil Wood, Councillor Charlene Dawe-Roach, Councillor George Simmons, Councillor Deputy Mayor Walter Yetman, Councillor Wade Oates, Councillor Dean Franey, Councillor Bill Seymour – forgive me if I'm missing any, but these elected officials for the municipal government of Bay Roberts have been very active about this, and it is certainly a team effort. So we are looking forward to that.

For this fiscal year, \$750,000 had been announced to start the process. We do know that the land has been expropriated by the previous administration, but that's pretty much it. There was a sketch – we found a sketch. We found a letter, after doing some research, what was then addressed to former Education Minister at the time, Joan Shea, by a consulting firm strongly recommending, back in 2009, that this building has exceeded its usefulness. So we know it was a want on the table for years and years and years, but I am again happy to say we will keep the feet to the fire.

I look forward to having that shovel and I invite all hon. colleagues on all sides of the House to come out and celebrate this very, very important cause – this long overdue cause. So \$750,000 and I'm informed as well that there is more money actually totalling to \$950,000, almost a \$1,000,000 for this fiscal year, to begin this process, and of course there is a consecutive plan to 2021 for its completion. So again, Coley's Point Primary school –

AN HON. MEMBER: Teamwork.

MS. P. PARSONS: Yes, absolutely teamwork – is finally on the way.

I want to pay tribute to everybody who took up this cause. Again, it starts with the passionate of parents, the teachers – current and former – the town councils out there. This is certainly a team effort. And I want to thank again my colleagues because the support I've received on this side of the House from our Premier, from the ministers,

of course the Minister of Transportation and Works, the Minister of Education, and anybody who took the time to listen to me and to also advocate for this, it's wonderful, so good news and again –

AN HON. MEMBER: What a Member.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

It is important and we will keep the feet to the fire on that.

Again, it's also important to talk about the wonderful things because, given our fiscal times, we all know we are in the most challenging fiscal time in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's no surprise and that's devastating, but there's hope. There's hope, Madam Speaker, with our federal counterparts and there's hope here throughout our provincial government. We won't give up hope and we will listen to the people.

I know as an MHA – that's my favourite part of this job is to get out there in the district, to go to the garden parties, to visit seniors home and whatnot, to go to the local Tim Horton's, whatever it takes to make yourself accessible to listen to what the concerns are, the input that your constituents have – because as we know, this is about the constituents; this is about our people. Everybody here, all Members in this hon. House, all 40, were put here by our people. So they are our first priority and, of course, we will listen to them – I'm confident in this team – the input that we have from our constituents.

Given our fiscal times there are good things happening in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, and all throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to reflect on the times now we're facing with the shrimp and the crab and that being a member of the all-party fisheries committee, it is something that we take very seriously here in our province. It's, no doubt, a devastating blow that we will experience this year, but we've known this has been coming for quite some time. Science has been dictating this for quite some time.

One thing I want to reiterate, and I will and I have been advocating with DFO, with the Minister of Fisheries – I meet continuously with

harvesters in my district. I have a lot of harvesters, both in the inshore and offshore industry for the fishery. Something that's very important, we need to take that information and that experience – experiences like no other – from the harvesters and input that into the science, combine that with the science when making decisions such as quota cuts and decisions going forward with regard to the species.

We do advocate, of course – as we know, it is in the minister's mandate letter to establish again a commercial cod industry. So as the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, I'm certainly dedicated to doing everything I can to support my harvesters. We've heard the minister, time and time again, stand up and say this government is committed, and we will stand by our plant workers and our harvesters, inshore and offshore.

Also now, to promote some tourism in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, Bay Roberts is an absolute hub, as well as Harbour Grace, for tourism. For instance, we have our Song, Stages and Seafood Festival coming up. I'm proud to say we have the Minister of Culture, the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, that was the former name for the district, came out and experienced the festival last year, the Small Plates.

What this festival does, it features our top chefs from across Newfoundland and Labrador, featuring our seafood cuisine. So the minister came out last year; we had a lovely time. I'm happy to say that our government committed \$15,000 to that last year, and I'm confident, going forward, we'll have that support.

The Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival can be found on the Bay Roberts website. Again, it's great for our culture. It's a mixture of our fine seafood, our best chefs. I will give some recognition now to a chef in my area who I'm very proud of and you probably may have seen on some local broadcasting: Chef Garry Gosse. He's phenomenal, he's renowned and he does an amazing job. He's one of the chefs, of course, that take part in this every year. Again, a great dedicated citizen to the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

A lot of great music, of course; I'm a big fan of music myself, Madam Speaker. I've been known to break out the guitar once in a while and have a tune myself, but we also feature some wonderful music in this. I invite everybody to come on out; come and experience the Songs, Stages and Seafood Festival in the Town of Bay Roberts happening in May.

Also now to pay some recognition in times like this when we are facing very challenging fiscal times, based on decisions that have been made in the past to land us, unfortunately, where we are – and it's like the old saying goes: trying to squat some blood out of a turnip. Well unfortunately, we're working with a lot of turnips here lately, Madam Speaker. But we depend on the good company such as Avalon Coal Salt & Oil Ltd, which is located in the Town of Bay Roberts. This has been a main economic driver for not only Bay Roberts, but for the entire region and the entire province, serving Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for over 175 years. Again, many great things to talk about in our district, given the times – there is hope.

I can't stand here and not talk about our support and the relationship that we have with our federal counterparts. I was listening to *CBC Radio* this morning – it was CBC's Rosemary Barton – and our very own MP Scott Simms was on there talking about the flow of communication and how important it is to have communication between the federal government and all MHAs. Ministers, of course, our Premier, but all MHAs; he made a point in saying that. I know he's a huge advocate for a good working relationship between our two levels of government.

That brings me to a time now and, of course, the Premier did come to the district in the Town of Bay Roberts and he was accompanied by our very own Minister Judy Foote. I have a lot of respect and I'm very proud of Minister Foote. I like to refer to her as the Wayne Gretzky of politics in the House of Commons. Of course, a lot of my hon. colleagues also came out to the announcement, and it was actually multi-million-dollar announcement which was signed in the Town of Bay Roberts – it was for the entire province.

I also want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs over there. He's also very passionate about capital works and about Fire and Emergency Services, but I will get to that in a moment.

It was amazing, the interaction, the visits that we've had from the elected officials in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. It's been very active; there's been a lot of attention. Like I said, the Premier and Minister Foote signed that very, very important multi-million-dollar agreement in the Town of Bay Roberts. There were many municipal politicians on hand from all over the entire region, and not just the region but from across the province. They made the trip to come to this very, very important signing of this deal and to witness first-hand that outstanding working relationship between our federal government and our provincial government.

I'm very proud to say that after that meeting – and the mayor of Bay Roberts and some town councillors were there. The topic of Coley's Point Primary has always been a top priority here in our district. So a meeting was then planned, right immediately following this super announcement. It took place down in the Town of Bay Roberts. The Premier and myself sat down with the town council, we discussed this priority. Clearly, it did not fall on deaf ears, because again I'm over the moon about this announcement. It's long overdue. In this day and age, it should have been done years ago, perhaps a decade ago, arguably. But it's happening now; that's the main thing.

We're committed to solutions. Yes, we hear the situation that we're facing, and it's sad and people of the province are feeling it, Madam Speaker. I hear it on a regular basis in my constituency office, and everywhere we go we hear how it's affecting constituents. But I will say there's hope – there is hope. There is a lot of hope. It certainly helps when you have a strong team to work with.

Now, I have to talk about the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I know he's very passionate about Fire and Emergency Services. Myself being a first-time MHA, I often reach out to my colleagues, especially my veteran colleagues who are there to give advice. I have to say, every

concern I've taken to him, whether it be a municipal issue – which we've certainly had them in the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I've turned to him with Fire and Emergency Services in particular. There was a recent fire truck announcement, as we know, prior to the election, but I'm happy to say the minister honoured that deal, and that is delivered for the Town of Bay Roberts. It's our largest town in the district.

AN HON. MEMBER: What a minister.

MS. P. PARSONS: Absolutely.

It makes a world of difference when you know that you've got a team who you can reach out to, when you ask for help, that they're there, and they're going to go above and beyond to try and help you. Obviously we don't have magic wands over here. We're not Harry Potter. We sometimes wish we were. We sometimes wish we could have that invisible cloak such as Harry Potter.

But we try our best, and that's what we do. We owe that to our constituents, and that's what we do. We listen and we go the extra length. We're honest. We exhaust all avenues that we can. Again, I'm happy to say that the team here is strong. There's a lot of hope. We won't give up for the people of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave district; we won't give up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. JOYCE: We'll be honest with you.

MS. P. PARSONS: And we will be honest with the people, and that's the thing. We can't, I guess, mislead the public about what the numbers really are. It's an insult – the truth can be ugly, but sometimes we've got to deliver that ugly truth. As long as we're committed to doing everything we can and we are honest, that's all we can do, Madam Speaker.

Again, I want to talk about the importance of Coley's Point Primary. I am thrilled that this will soon happen. The money has been announced – close to \$1 million this fiscal year alone. It takes a team effort. It's the team in here. It's the team on the ground in the Town of Bay Roberts and those surrounding

communities, the parents, the town council, the former educators and the current educators.

Again, this will happen and I will certainly be more than happy to provide updates. I'm sure you're all counting and looking forward to the updates I will be providing on the progress for Coley's Point Primary.

So, Madam Speaker, having said that, I will take my seat and allow my colleagues to get up now as well and talk about their great districts.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and we won't give up hope.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It is a pleasure to rise today in Address in Reply and to have some time this afternoon to speak to the Throne Speech, and also to talk about some of the implications of decisions made and what people may look forward to on Thursday when the budget comes on Thursday afternoon.

We know from the budget last year, Madam Speaker, that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were struck with an unprecedented amount of taxation, fees, charges, a burden placed on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians like never had been expected, and it's put people in a very difficult position.

The government's own budget documents and expectations show job losses and a shrinking economy as a result of the decisions they made. The only province today actually, in Canada – what the Premier has referred to himself – going in the wrong direction. The indicators are going in the wrong direction are words he used when he was in Opposition. We're the only province in Canada today, even though other provinces were impacted by the oil, where the decisions that the government has made, the current

government has made, has caused that to happen.

The Member for Terra Nova in his remarks earlier this afternoon – I'm not mentioning the Member for Terra Nova for any reason to criticize comments he made, but we've heard Members opposite, he mentioned it today, about them not knowing what the circumstances were. In the late fall of 2015 before the election, the Leader of the Opposition had asked for a fiscal update. We weren't prepared to provide it until OPEC had met, and OPEC weren't meeting until early December. Because, as I'm sure the government realizes now more than ever before, I'm sure the Member for Terra Nova does as well, is that when OPEC meets, they make decisions about oil production and decisions that impact sales and value of oil around the world. They do that in December, and in December 2015 they didn't change the stand they had where there were large quantities of oil available in the world which drove prices down.

If you look at the five-year graph that is available online – it's very simple to look at – it will show you from the middle of 2014 until the end of 2015 a significant drop in oil that occurred. And most of that, that first six or seven months in oil went down and it stayed down, but it's recovered in the last number of months. In the last year or so, there's been a recovery.

As a matter of fact, we know that value is higher than what has been anticipated by the province today, which is a good thing, because it's going to put the province in a better financial circumstance. Also, production is increased significantly. Just last week, the CEO of Nalcor in their annual address and public meeting talked about how production in 2016 was, I think the number used was four times greater than what it was in 2015.

That's significant for the province. It's very significant for the province and should – should – significantly reduce the projected deficit that was presented by the hon. Minister of Finance in last year's budget, and it should have that impact and significantly reduce that deficit. That's a good thing for the province. If they can reduce the deficit for the 2016 budget, it should be a good thing.

Back to the Member for Terra Nova's comments saying well, we didn't know – we didn't know. What I say to the Member of Terra Nova was it was long before last fall, long before the fall of 2015 when the Leader of the Opposition of the day asked for a fiscal update, long before that that Members opposite were making comments and promises. The Leader of the Opposition did it, who now is the Premier. The Finance critic, who is now the Minister of Finance, did it, stood here in the House and criticized the government of the day when we did things like a reduction in public service in 2013. We actually reduced the public service further in 2014-2015, criticized us for doing that. We went to a campaign in 2015 and we said we have to reduce the size of the public service and we have to increase taxes as a result of the falling oil prices, which is revenue for the province. As a result of that loss in revenue, we had to do things to counteract that.

The Premier of today made some – and it was earlier 2015, when he was talking about taxation, increase in taxation, and I quote, he said this on CBC: I just knew it was the wrong thing to do in this economic environment. He said I just knew it was the wrong thing to do. There's no doubt, that increasing taxes in the province is a job killer. He said it stunts the economy and it takes money out of the hands of hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The negative impact, the economy cannot take any more stress right now. This will hurt the economy.

That was the Leader of the Opposition in early, mid-2015, long before he asked for any particular information that the Member of Terra Nova referred to, and had already taken the position it was the wrong thing to do. So it's a little bit disingenuous to try and say: Well, the premier of the day wouldn't tell us, we didn't know and only Cabinet knows. I just say to Members opposite, I believe it's a little bit disingenuous for doing so, and I want to take a few minutes to point that out.

People in the province consider – I talk to people, and we talk to people every day, and they express their views on what they expect from the government and where they're frustrated with what the government actually provides. I went to the grocery store last night on the way home and I had three or four people

stop me and want to talk to me about the government and what is going to happen on Thursday. That lady yesterday evening said to me: What happened to people? What happened to a government who is there to lead people?

I remember a retired US rear admiral who used to use the words: you manage things you lead people. I think it's a very important statement, because it seems like the government has forgotten about putting people first; instead of putting their own concerns or issues first. Then someone might say, why would you think that? Why would you think of not putting people first?

Well, if you just think about some of the decisions they've made, when they've looked after their own people first or their own affairs first, politics first. We saw it last year on appointments the government made, even though they were very proud of their Independent Appointments Commission, continued to make unprecedented political appointments to government. That's not always in the best interest of people or government, especially when you make the clerk of the executive council a political appointment.

People look for a government that is going to create a condition for growth. I never believe that government should be the sole entity that creates employment. I believe, and we believe, that government should create an environment to stimulate an economy to cause employment, to create opportunities for business. We saw business growth in the decade that was significant, but just this week the CFIB barometer that just came out, they do quarterly, indicated that businesses, for the most part, are expecting to reduce their businesses in the next three months, which is troublesome and problematic.

I really believe this, Madam Speaker. I can't be any more serious and honest about this, when I say that if you have a government who stands before the people and says it's bad, it's bad, it's bad, it's bad, then people start to believe: Oh, my goodness, we're ruined. We're never going to get out this this, everything is so bad. People believe it. You become your environment and people believe that. When commentary, like the lady last night who said, what about people?

What about our future? What about hope? All of that is gone. In the last 16, 17 months, all of that has disappeared.

If we think back to the early 2000s – Members opposite like to criticize the previous administration all the time. If you think back in those days when we transformed as a province, we transformed in saying: you know what? I'm not a second-class Canadian, I'm a first-class Canadian.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: And Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are first-class Canadians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: And we should never think anything less of ourselves than thinking that we are absolutely the best in the country. We can be the best in the country. We can have the best province in the country. We should stand tall and be proud of ourselves and who we are and what we stand for. All of that, Madam Speaker, seems to be lost in a very short period of time. It seems to be forgotten about. If we hear more of that from government – I hear Members over there snickering, but if they want to talk –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order please!

MR. P. DAVIS: – about hope and future and vision, they should do that, because I believe if you believe in the future and you explain and talk about and focus on that belief and have a strong belief in ourselves, then we will achieve that and we will become that because we will believe that inside of us. We will believe how good we are, not how bad we are, not how negative things are but how positive the future is.

Madam Speaker, that's how and why we should talk about and focus on stimulus rather than cuts. The Members opposite, when the government was over here, continuously used to tell us, don't cut, don't cut, don't cut. The Premier, as the quote I used in 2015, said the same thing. The Minister of Finance said it herself, but leaving employers and leaving Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians with less money, employers less money to hire, to invest, by leaving them with less opportunity to do that, it causes hurt to the economy and to our province.

Leaving consumers with less money to spend is not a good thing. Reducing taxation, and I firmly believe – and I hope on Thursday the government is going to reduce taxation, they're going to undo some of the burdens they put on people last year. I believe they're going to do that, and I really hope they do that. I really, really hope they do that because I believe it's going to be better for the province.

If you alleviate some of that choking that's happened over the last year it's going to be better for the province. There's been a lot of that happen in the last year, Madam Speaker, where the economy has been smothered, where it's been stifled. Growth has been stunted, and we've moved in that opposite direction. One of the areas that has had impacts on that is our public service, because for over a year now the government has been talking about cuts to the public service and they've done all kinds of code names. They do code names for revenue generation.

In last spring's budget, the Minister of Finance spoke about revenue generation, which was code for taxation. Then in the fall there was going to be a cost reduction decision point, or mini budget, or budget in the fall, and the public service went uh-oh, they're going to cut costs. We know there's no larger expense in government than paycheques for public servants. So public servants are going to take the brunt of that and there have been lots of messages and discussion, and doing more with less.

I remember when the Premier was on the David Cochrane show on CBC when that was still around back in 2014, and he said you're going to do more with less. Yes, what are you talking about? Are you talking about making nurses work harder? He said, yes, exactly what I'm talking about. I hope they don't make nurses work harder because they work very hard right now, and we certainly don't need less of them. We need them having a better opportunity to do their jobs, but we certainly don't need less of them.

They talked about that, but in the fall last year there was supposed to be this cost-reduction budget. I know public servants who wanted to buy a new car, who wanted to do some repairs, spend some money. I have a large number of repairs to do on my vehicle but I'm not going to do it because I'm afraid I'm about to lose my job.

We saw what happened in the housing market. By the way, Madam Speaker, we know, and people in Finance will quite often tell you that two really main indicators, two really good indicators and easy to look at indicators of the state of economy is car sales and property sales, home sales, and home values. Right now, the trend for home values is decreasing.

I talked to a car dealer about a couple of weeks ago, within the last couple of weeks, I had a discussion with him and I asked him, can you be honest with me and tell me where sales – because car dealers like to say: oh, we're booming, we're really busy because our cars are so popular and good. But I want to have a really serious conversation about what's happening with your business, your industry.

This dealership owner expressed to me his very sincere concern about his business right now and what's in store for the future of his business. I won't say anything else about him, other than he was quite sincere about his concerns for it. Car sales are a major indicator that economists quite often look at when it comes to the state of the economy, and housing sales is the other one. We know housing starts have fallen off, housing sales have dropped, value has dropped and so on and some of that is because of the strangling of the economy and the uncertainty.

So last fall came, when people expected public service cuts, and they never came. We saw the Flatter, Leaner Management system government talked about. They sent a bunch of senior executives out the door, deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and replaced many of them with Liberal friends, former Liberal candidates and so on.

Now, just recently, we saw a circumstance where directors and managers, and non-unionized and non-management employees had to compete against each other for a fewer

number of jobs within departments. Many of them have been walked out through the door in the last number of weeks, but the public service, front-line workers, are still waiting.

I hope that the budget on Thursday will finally put that to rest so that people know where they stand in the public service. So instead of coming forward on Thursday seeing, well, in the next 12 months we're going to make more cuts that's going to harm the economy, I think it's time that public servants know exactly where they stand so that someone who wants to buy a new home or wants to repair the roof, or they're planning to put new siding on their house or new windows or doors, or they're planning to take a vacation or they don't go to restaurant as often as they used to because instead of spending that money in a restaurant somewhere downtown they'll eat at home, save the money because they don't know what the future is.

I know a gentleman who's in the kitchen renovation business, does bathrooms, kitchens, cabinetry that kind of stuff and the number of orders and customers who cancelled orders last year who were public servants because they didn't want to spend that money – kitchen cabinetry and that type of thing can be very expensive. Renovating homes, bathrooms, washrooms and so on in your home can be very expensive. A number of public servants cancelled their orders because of unknowns; that's not good for the economy.

One of the things that I hope the government does on Thursday is to put to rest the concerns of public servants of the unknown, not knowing what the future has.

Madam Speaker, it's very important as well for government to identify strategies to drive regional growth. We know the government doesn't believe in strategies, and they said so in their *Way Forward* document when it was released last year. They talked about how, for years, our province had a strategy of strategies with purpose-built programs and special offices. This model of public administration has never been sustainable.

Essentially what the paragraph goes on to explain is a criticism of strategies. But it's interesting to point out that there are many times

in the House where ministers will stand – the Minister of Business, for example, will talk about the tourism strategy and the importance of continuing to build the tourism industry. We know that has been very effective. In broadband, there was a growth and a strategy put in place many years ago.

So the strategies have been very effective. Tourism is of significant financial benefit to our province. We had an aquaculture strategy. If you talk to my colleague right here behind me, she would talk about the importance of that in her district, where almost everybody works and has employment – and not just for a few weeks a year, but all year long. Now, there are highs and lows in the industry, like there is in any, and there are periods of higher level of employment and lower levels of employment; but, for the most part, people work down there throughout the year, probably like never seen before in the history of her district. That was because of the aquaculture industry. There is still huge potential, and we know that the government today believes and supports aquaculture. There are some questions about process and what they're doing and so on.

The innovation strategy is a really good example, Madam Speaker, on a strategy that's been very beneficial. Look at some of the businesses and industries that have been created here. One that I think about a lot – and I always do think a lot about not only here in the House, but outside the House as well – is the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

I remember, long before I was involved in politics, back in the early 2000s when the premier of the day, Danny Williams, was talking about the Poverty Reduction Strategy. I know a lot of people kind of rolled their eyes at it and said, oh really, how do you do a Poverty Reduction Strategy and how does that work.

At the time, Madam Speaker, we had the worst level of poverty in the country – the absolute lowest and worst level of poverty in the country. But do you know what? That strategy worked. That strategy worked. Because by 2014-2015, we had the lowest level of poverty in Canada, and we should all be very proud of that. All Newfoundlanders and Labradorians should be proud of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: And that's a strategy that worked. It was a significant investment, yes. There was an office set up – because they criticized having specialized offices set up for certain strategies. There was an office set up. There was a requirement that government policy and government departments have the continued thought of poverty reduction and what implications would that have on poverty reduction. So it was a requirement for any policy decisions, legal decisions and so on to have that discussion about how will that impact poverty, what can we do with that particular policy discussion, or that policy decision, what can we do to have a positive impact on the level of poverty. That's what the strategy was about and yes, it was a silo in many respects but it worked with all departments, branches, agencies, boards and commissions that were all impacted by that.

And interesting, about the same number of people that were removed from levels of poverty in the province is about the same number of people that the government estimates will lose their jobs in the coming year because of the budget decisions that the government has made.

Members opposite have talked about – in recent weeks and recent times, Madam Speaker, there's been discussions about equalization. My colleague, the Member for Ferryland, has raised this many times publicly and I know he's continuing to do so. Equalization is a process used by the federal government. It's a federal government program and it's used to provide reasonableness and fairness across the country. That's what equalization is about, is to provide fairness. The words used are reasonable levels of taxation for reasonable levels of service. That's what equalization is about so that no matter where you live in Canada there is a fairness; there is a reasonable equity of taxation with services.

The Premier has talked several times – they like to stand up over there and say oh, look, you had to stay outside the office, you couldn't get in the office, and you couldn't get a meeting and so on. They like to do that and that's the theatrics sometimes in the House, but it's not true. He says in 2014, the government of the day didn't

do anything to represent the province when it came to equalization discussions.

Well, Madam Speaker, that's not true either because the discussions actually happened in 2012. The Minister of Finance at the time was Minister Tom Marshall. He became premier after, Minister Tom Marshall – a highly respected man in the province, well known, highly respected out on the West Coast as well, and a man that I refer to as a very good friend and I have a tremendous amount of respect for him.

In 2012, those discussions did take place because it was 2012 that the equalization discussions and debate took with ministers of finance and the federal minister at roundtables, data was submitted by the province, presentations were made, arguments were made around equalization in 2012. It was in 2014 when the equalization announcement – discussions were made by the federal government, but those discussions don't always have to happen strictly within the boundaries of equalization. There are opportunities to step outside of just the equalization formula to find other means to create equity, a levelling or a level of fairness.

I remind Members of 2005, when the premier of the day, Premier Danny Williams went off to Ottawa. Members opposite like to sometimes mock the efforts of Danny Williams of the day back in 2005, but it resulted in a significant return, because around the discussions of equalization, around the discussions of saying, well, for the next few years equalization was going to change because the revenue is increasing by the province.

The argument was made, well, oil revenues should not be considered and a three year period of time was agreed upon. In exchange for that, the premier came home with a \$2 billion offset payment for the province – \$2 billion. So while it was done under the theory of equalization and being fairness, the premier, separate from equalization, came home with \$2 billion; not \$2 billion for the federal government to come in and spend and decide what it goes to and so on. It came in for the province. It was brought into the province, \$2 billion, and it was used here in the province by the province.

I think it's a good argument to show and speak that our premier of the day and the government of the day can pick up the phone and call Ottawa and say, we have a problem today, can we have a discussion about the problem we have today? Can we find a solution? If the federal government is not willing to open discussions around equalization then let's have a sidebar discussion like Danny Williams did back in 2005 and say, well, what's fair and reasonable here?

Without opening equalization for the entire country, what's fair and reasonable for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are looking for relief on taxation; who are looking for relief on things like gas tax and the increased HST, coupled with the taxes on insurance, all the other fees that were placed on them – I think there was 300 all together last year that either were created or put on the people of the province. It's only a matter of picking up the phone or to meet with the Prime Minister and to say, we have a problem, I need your help to fix it. We don't seem to be able to get that because the government of the day makes that decision and they choose not to do so.

Madam Speaker, a fiscal plan dealing with attrition – I know Members opposite in government very early talked about attrition. We don't know what the numbers are today in the public service. We've asked a couple of times here in the House. We asked last fall. We asked again in the New Year numbers, and we haven't been able to get the straight numbers.

I know the minister committed last week to provide us with the impacts on changes. I asked in the House here if she could provide us with impacts and change by departments. We did have a graph that was provided by the minister – I greatly appreciated it – a couple of weeks ago when they made some reductions. I've asked for an updated one and the minister – I was very pleased – acknowledged or said in the House here she would provide that. So we look forward to receiving that, but I'd like to know where the public service is today compared to 2015.

We've heard talk of numerous hirings, temporary jobs and contracts and all that kind of stuff in different departments throughout government, but we don't know where it is. We

certainly haven't seen any work or continuation of the attrition plan which was working for government in the past when the size of the public service continued to be reduced.

As a matter of fact, in 2015 when we left, numbers were down between 2009-2010 numbers. So there were reductions in the public service without shocking the economy. When I say shocking the economy, what I mean is like right now we have all the public servants who are afraid to make any significant expenditures because they don't know what's in the future for them. Well, that shocks the economy because all of a sudden you got 40,000 people who are reducing their spending.

Instead of doing it that way, reducing the size of the public service through attrition has been an effective way of reducing that cost. We recognize as well that there has to be a continued reduction in the public service. We agree with that, but it's the process that has caused us some issues.

The signature bill for this government last year was the Independent Appointments Commission, and it was one they campaigned on in 2015. I referenced this a little earlier, but I wanted to reference it again. The Independent Appointments Commission was about taking the politics out of appointments. I don't know how many times the Premier said in 2015 they are going to take the politics out of appointments.

The ironic part is there are branches of government which those appointments weren't politically motivated and directed in such a way in the past that are now politically motivated and directed from the clerk to deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers. There were several of those that were done since last year. While government talked about the cuts in the size of public service, at the executive level of government through deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and so on, we don't know, there was a large number that were backfilled with liberal friendlies. I have an issue with that.

If you want to take the politics out of appointments then take the politics out of appointments, but don't say you're going to do it because it's going to end and then go do it, and that's what has happened here. Is they've done it

in a different way but they still have a political lens on appointments. The Independent Appointments Commission doesn't have any authority to appoint anybody. They just make recommendations to government. Maybe it should have been called the independent recommendations commission or something, because they don't have any authority to appoint.

Madam Speaker, I've talked about some of the strategies, aquaculture and tourism, but immigration and population growth is a good one. That was a new strategy that was developed under the previous administration, but the current government is changing the covers. The content seems to be much the same but is trying to create a new plan or a different plan, but there are a lot of similarities in the previous plan. We're glad they're looking at population growth at an important time like now when we hear talk of people leaving the province, leaving Newfoundland and Labrador, losing their jobs, losing the value in their homes and then looking for a new opportunity somewhere else other than here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

A multi-year infrastructure plan we brought in, in 2015 as well, and the current government this year has announced a new strategy, but to have a multi-year infrastructure strategy is not new but for them to do that is new. While there are not a lot of details, especially after the immediate time, there are people looking for – and one of the topics that is raised with us from time to time, and I say us collectively of our caucus.

One of the matters that is raised with us from time to time from talking to constituents, especially municipal representatives, and I think it's worthy to point out, Mr. Speaker, is that we've talked to municipal representatives and leaders, mayors and councillors who are apprehensive in having discussions. They say I don't want to be seen as talking to the Opposition because I'm afraid it might impact my municipality. I'm sure that's not the case. I hope people don't feel that way because we all have a role to play in the House no matter where we sit.

We have a role as an Opposition and also as MHAs to represent our constituents, all of us collectively. It's important for us, and for all

Members of the House, to hear honestly from municipal and community leaders, as well as those who run and operate and function within volunteer groups, and community organizations and so on.

Ocean Technology Strategy was a great strategy as well. I was very concerned this past winter when we heard the federal government announcement that the centre for oceans for Atlantic Canada was moving to Nova Scotia, at a time that we're building a reputation as a future gateway to the North, building the infrastructure. We have C-CORE Marine Institute and Memorial University as second to none in knowing and understanding what happens in and on our oceans. Of course, we're surrounded by oceans and having the centre here made so much sense.

It seemed like this new focus, new centre in Nova Scotia, has just slipped through our hands without any concern or opposition from the current government. It's really too bad. I think it has the potential to be a significant loss. I don't think we understand right now the gravity and importance of this change in what appears to be a federal focus from Newfoundland and Labrador to Nova Scotia. We, as an Opposition, will keep a close eye on developments, funding and so on that happens as a result.

The fisheries fund we've talked about at some length, and we're still at a loss from the current government and the federal government to know what is really contained in that. The most recent comments were, well, that's not everything, there's going to be more but we don't know what that is. It's a time when the people of the province are being told well, trust us – just trust us. Mr. Speaker, that's a challenge for a lot of people that I speak to in trusting the government in protecting their best interest and the unknown.

We have significant impacts on our fishery. In the last few days, in the last few weeks, my colleague for Cape St. Francis has been on his feet in Question Period talking about it. I know he has been consulting significantly with people in the fishery and processors, offshore and inshore, not just inshore but offshore as well, and gathering as much information as he has. He's a man who knows a lot about the fishery himself and has many families, own constituents

as well that rely on the fishery, so it's not a new topic for him. There are significant concerns right now, and one of the issues around the fishery right now is looking for a plan.

I spoke earlier, Mr. Speaker, about the future, about believing in opportunities that are going to lie ahead. Hopefully again in the budget on Thursday, there's going to be some discussion about the future and opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador, because people need that. People need to believe, yes, there's some light at the end of the tunnel. There's a horizon ahead. There's a future and opportunity for us.

The fishery right now is one where people are not hearing that. I have family members and friends who rely on the fishery and are in processing jobs. Right now, they are saying well, I don't know what's ahead for me this year. Similar to what I talked about with public servants, when people are really concerned, have significant concerns about their future employment and income, then they stop spending today and again that crushes the economy.

So this is another area where people are looking at what the roadmap is going to look like for the future; what's going to be in the fishery for the future; how is government going to work with harvesters and processors to ensure that there is stability in local communities and rural communities of our province; to ensure that the fishery won't decimate and wipe out small and rural communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and that people will not only be able to stay there, but will see an opportunity in the future to say, let's not just work our way through this crisis we have right now, but we believe that, in the future, there will be opportunity for us, if we stay and live in this rural community here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a couple of minutes about the Energy Plan. I know there are many topics that I want to talk about today, but I want to mention this one as well. I won't go in too much detail. I'm glad the Minister of Natural Resources has talked a number of times now on what is happening in offshore, and talking about the exploration in the bidding process. When I

hear the minister talking about it, I'm glad that she is focused on it and sees the value in it, and how important it is. Exploration is significant for the long-term future of our province.

When you have a high number of bids for offshore – we've seen in the last number of years. I remember in 2014, we had significant discussions as a government around exploration and how do we shorten the time period from exploration to production. There are some countries in the world who have done that really, really well. For Newfoundland and Labrador, it's been going in that direction, but there is still work to do – and I have heard the minister talk about that. I'm glad she did. Because reducing that time period means benefits for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, as long as those benefits stay here.

So when offshore creates opportunity and rigs are needed, when infrastructure has to be built to service the offshore, it is so important for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to receive the benefits from that first. We should see engineering and design work done in Newfoundland and Labrador. We should see construction work happen here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need the centre of those developments to be here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to see the jobs created for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first.

When companies start talking about, or hinting about, or you hear scuttlebutt that there is only going to be small piece built in Newfoundland, and there is going to be a lot of pieces sent around the world, we know that, quite often, and quite conceivably Newfoundland and Labrador doesn't have the infrastructure to build all the components. That's been the case in the past. But we want to see maximum opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians from engineering design work from the very inception and beginning right through to operations and production of offshore oil facilities where Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have done great work offshore for the last number of decades and continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the government has talked about, for some time, creating a Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. When they

made the promise to the people of the province – just reading from their *Stronger Tomorrow* –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, it was actually really hard to find. You can't find it on the menu on their website anymore, but I managed to find a copy. Under establish a seniors' advocate office, here's what it said. It said: "To ensure seniors have the strong voice they deserve, a New Liberal Government will introduce legislation to create a Seniors' Advocate Office, which will be third of its kind in Canada. The Seniors' Advocate will be independent of government, and will report to the House of Assembly instead of a Minister."

Then it goes on to say: "The Seniors' Advocate Office will improve the health and well-being of seniors by: Advocating on behalf of seniors and their families, investigating individual complaints" and then there are a couple more bullets and towards the bottom it says: "Serving as a navigator, providing seniors and their families with the information they need to access government programs and services in a timely manner."

Now when the Premier and the Liberal candidates were campaigning and they sold to the people of the province the benefits of a Seniors' Advocate I was skeptical, because we have an advocate for citizens, citizens' advocate office, as it is. And we have people who work in different areas and different departments or different branches for seniors and for all citizens. What we saw was the legislation that was not that. We actually saw legislation for a Seniors' Advocate who can't advocate for seniors, individual seniors, and forward them on to the Citizens' Representative, which we argued earlier when they said they're going to do a Seniors' Advocate we said we have a Citizens' Representative that does a lot of that work anyway. What we have now in the legislation is a Seniors' Advocate who takes complaints from seniors and forwards them on to the Citizens' Representative.

The other part of it was – I think it says – investigating individual complaints, which is what the Child and Youth Advocate does. The Child and Youth Advocate investigates

individual complaints from children and youth; by legislation, has rights to files, government agencies and departments and officials and records and so on; by legislation, can walk in to a department and say I want this, this and this. The Seniors' Advocate has none of that. As a matter of fact, the Seniors' Advocate cannot do investigations on behalf of seniors. The Seniors' Advocate can only pass that on to the Citizens' Representative.

I'm concerned about the workload on the Citizens' Representative who we've met with. The Citizens' Representative believes that they can handle the workload, but did stress and express the significant work that is going to happen there. I suspect before long we're going to see a need for more resources because the Seniors' Advocate doesn't have the right under the legislation to investigate or to advocate on behalf of individual seniors.

The Seniors' Advocate will speak to systemic issues, but I'm really not sure how the Seniors' Advocate is going to speak to systemic issues if the Seniors' Advocate has no ability to look inside government, to look inside operations and departments, seniors programs and the like to investigate what's happening.

The Child and Youth Advocate does this. The Child and Youth Advocate will do investigations based on complaints or information that she receives regarding children and youth and then go to work and do an investigation and, quite often, will look at how government responds to a particular circumstance or how they handle the circumstances that that child or youth finds themselves in and they make recommendations on how to correct that.

Well, the Seniors' Advocate does not have the power to do that. So I think if you're going to bring in legislation for a seniors' voice, what you really brought forward was giving a senior an advocate without any real power and I think is a miss by the government to do that. I talk to seniors from time to time who every now and then will have discussion about the Seniors' Advocate and what can the Seniors' Advocate do for them, and there's really not much that the Seniors' Advocate can do for any individual senior, only to refer them on to the Citizens' Representative.

Mr. Speaker, government made significant promises. It made statements that it was going to reduce the size of the public service. Those statements put a stranglehold on our economy. As public servants stopped spending, businesses lost revenue, they had to reduce their staffing levels and their future does not look bright. As I mentioned, the CFIB barometer recently released in the last week refers to that.

We need a budget on Thursday that's going to paint a picture of future opportunity. We look forward to – and I think the government is going to do this, going to reduce the level of taxation burden placed last year, because it's been alleviated now by oil revenues, by increased production in our oil, by increased value in our oil. It's going to decrease the deficit from last year and increase opportunities for the government to take the stranglehold off hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and reduce the level of taxation.

When you reduce the level of taxation, you reduce the level of taxation on insurance, on gasoline, on books – we're the only province in Canada which has a tax on books – then it puts more money in people's pockets so that they can put that back into the economy. That's simply how it works. If people have more money to spend and a belief that their income, their own jobs and their own environment is stable enough they can spend their money, then that's going to drive the economy. And all that's reversed in the last 16 or 18 months and it has not done Newfoundlanders and Labradorians any good. We have businesses closing, we have a drop in car sales and we have value in properties that have dropped.

We're starting to see circumstances now where people, instead of saying I'm going to sell my house and move away, knowing they are going to take a significant loss, they're better off taking the keys sometimes, going back into the bank and saying here's my house, get on the plane and leave, because I can't take that hit. I can't sell my house at a significant loss and be left with the burden of that unpaid debt. I'm going to give the house back, leave it to the bank; it's their responsibility and walk away from it.

I have a good friend of mine who is a bankruptcy trustee and the significant increase in bankruptcy work that he's done in the last year, never saw the like of it. The man has been in business for years and never saw the like of it before, and wonders – and I've talked about this – where it's going to end, how is it going to stop and turn it around. You turn it around by believing that there's a future opportunity, by settling the province down, settling people down, and say to people you're going to be okay, things are going to improve and there will be a future. Don't leave; stay here. Don't close up your business; keep your business open. We'll work through the hard times together and look forward to better times in the future. Don't walk away from it, don't let your guard down and don't think that all is gone, that there is an opportunity for us in the future and that there is going to be a brighter future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's the message that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians need, not doom and gloom and negativity. I'll give you an example, and I'll raise Muskrat Falls for a few moments because the Premier talked about excess sales and said, look, nobody wants our power. If nobody wants our power, rates are going to double.

Well, for starters, they've said that countless times over there that people's power rates are going to double. Just last week, the Premier's personally appointed CEO of Nalcor said rates are not going to double.

AN HON. MEMBER: That's not the case.

MR. P. DAVIS: That's right. He said it's not the case; they're not going to double. He's saying he knows that the loan guarantee is going to reduce rates. He knows that excess sales can reduce rates. There's a rate of return to Nalcor which can be utilized to lower rates, and their own CEO last week publically said rates are not going to double.

Now, I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, for a long time I've been trying to figure out how do I and how do we, as an Opposition, tell people your rates are not going to double. It's an easy sound bite for a politician to stand up and say, your power rates are going to double and Muskrat Falls is bad and because of Muskrat

Falls, your power rates are going to double and that's it. It's an easy sound bite, and people immediately understand that line: your power rates going to double. When your power bill comes to you, if it comes from Newfoundland Power or it comes from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, it is going to double because of Muskrat Falls.

I've been a long time saying well, how do I tell people, no, hang on now; it takes an explanation to say, no, no, it's not going to double because here's what they have available to them to ensure they don't double. That's what they have available to them.

But it doesn't make a good sound bite. It doesn't make a headline or a sound bite in news to say well, here is a PC Opposition Member, or Paul Davis's explanation, or anyone else's explanation on why power rates are not going to double. Because when you start talking about that, people go well, it's easier for me, if rates are going to double, I don't really want to listen to all of that lengthy explanation.

One of the best things that could have happened was, last week Stan Marshall, CEO of Nalcor said rates are not going to double. Oh, they're not. No, they're not going to double. I was like, oh finally. I can say it till the cows come home but no one will listen to me because I'm the bad Opposition Leader. But when Stan Marshall said it everyone said, okay, power rates are not going to double. And they are not.

That's why they're not because the government has the ability to mitigate and to lower those costs to consumers. If the Premier was to talk about the great natural resources we have and how we can sell those to markets outside of Newfoundland and Labrador, then maybe people would feel better about it. There are 500 businesses, Newfoundland and Labrador companies, that are involved with Muskrat Falls. At least there was back in 2015. Five hundred businesses that are involved with the development with Muskrat Falls and every time the Premier says the project is bad, or the project's a mess, or the project's in a bad way, every time they do that, people are thinking, well, that's the businesses that can't do the business. That's Newfoundland and Labrador

companies. That's Newfoundland and Labrador skilled tradespeople.

He paints a poor picture overall of not only Muskrat Falls and that massive development, but also all the companies that do business in our province, outside our province, and all the skilled tradespeople and people that work on the project. It paints a poor picture of them. I've heard from some of them myself, business owners, people who work for private business and people who work on the project who have said, I wish they'd stop talking about how bad we are. I don't think they're bad for a second, Mr. Speaker, I don't.

I think we got great Newfoundland and Labrador businesses. We got great skilled tradespeople –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: We do, and we got great people working in our province who have lots of talent and ability, but when you go and try and sell that and sell our business outside the province, and you just spent a year talking about how we're no good, well then people outside the province say why would I do business with you? You just told me how you can't handle the project, you can't do the job.

So I really hope in Thursday's budget, for that reason as well, that we see a transition in messaging from doom and gloom to one of hope, vision and future, and opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Politically, if the government opposite started talking about the opportunities that are our future and things are going to be good and things are going to be fine, as an Opposition Member, politically that could be bad for us. Because people will say, good, government got things moving forward, but you know what, it's best for the province, Mr. Speaker. It's best for the province if people believe that the government has moved into a good place and moving forward and there's an opportunity and future for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's how the language should change and evolve, one of doom and gloom to one back to hope and future, like we used to have; belief in ourselves.

It's no good for us to come in here in the House and beat each other up. I know we have Question Period and we ask questions and we get answers, or we don't get answers, and we call it out and we do all that. Members opposite have talked about it, talked about working together. I think the Member for Terra Nova actually referenced some time ago about – I don't know if it was today, but at some point in time – talked about working together and having Members work together and so on.

The All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions I think did fantastic work; a long hard go, a long hard go for Members on the Committee. I was there as an alternate, but I was still from 10,000 feet away, as Members were in doing their work and worked then – I think they produced a really good document. I know the Minister of Health believes firmly it's a good document as well, and I'm glad government takes it seriously.

We look forward in the budget as well to see how the government is going to try and transition some of those what we heard and where we need to go and turn them into solid plans and projects to move forward with the recommendations from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

We really should be careful about getting personal in the House, because quite often we leave the House when a session ends, like Christmastime we'll shake hands, or most of us will shake hands and walk away and go back for Christmas.

MR. K. PARSONS: Not all.

MR. P. DAVIS: Not all, no, but most of us will, and that's what we should do.

I've got to say, I'm hesitant to raise this, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to raise it anyway, because there was a personal comment made yesterday here in the House about my father, and I was a bit upset about it. I thought it was a cheap shot and a low shot, but I'm not –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: So –

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I think there was an inappropriate comment just made here in the House that the Member opposite should be asked to withdraw.

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

MR. JOYCE: I withdraw.

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

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

Anyway, I thought it was a low shot to talk about in the manner that it was talked about. I'm not going to say any more about that and I'm going to move on from it. I just felt it was personal comments like that that get us into trouble in the House here sometimes. I'll try to stay away from it. I'll try to move on from it, and if Members opposite are hesitant to do so that's fine, but I'm going to try and move on from it, Mr. Speaker. Only to say that as a parliamentarian, I'm going to try my best not to do that. I am. I'll question policies –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: I'll question policies and decisions and actions or inactions of Members' opposite, the government, the ministers and so on, but I will do my best not to get personal with Members opposite. Members on this side of the House or Members on the other side, I'll make that commitment. If I do that, someone tell me that I've done it and I'll rectify it. If I've been inappropriate and personal I'll certainly rectify it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a few minutes left, but over the last hour I've mentioned many areas that involve governance and areas the government has responsibility for. Many areas of government – there are many I haven't talked

about, but there are many areas that I've talked about. There is one more I'd like to raise just before I finish up this afternoon.

I want to talk for a few minutes – the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I heard him on the radio this morning on CBC and then on VOXM. He did a Ministerial Statement here today talking about a partnership with two graduate students who are doing work on studying a better way for those people who are on remand, look at a better way for supervised bail options to not only reduce the pressure on our system and Her Majesty's Penitentiary and how people are detained, but also – I know he talked about it from a cost perspective as well – provide opportunities for people who are remand.

So what remand means is a person who's been accused of an offence or charged with an offence and the courts have decided under one of the grounds of the *Criminal Code* that the person should not be released – because everyone has a right to their freedoms and presumption of innocence until proven guilty, but in certain circumstances there is in law a judge or court will say, the person should not be released, and the person will be held in custody until the time that they have a trial. Sometimes they can stay in custody for a long time. I think the minister said today about 50 per cent, up to 40 or 50 per cent of people who are incarcerated are actually on remand – which means they have not been convicted. They're not in jail or in prison or at Her Majesty's Penitentiary because they've been convicted; they're in there because they awaiting a trial.

He wants to look at ways to change that. He talked today about the importance of partnering with academics. I know my colleague from the NDP talked about it as well, the importance of academics and the value they can bring to the table as well, and talking to stakeholders and partners.

I have a concern about policing and the future of policing. I'm hearing now about a third of the management of the RNC, their jobs have been terminated by government, or they've given notice of retirement – that's about a third right now of their management. It has the potential to leave a significant hole in leadership and management at the RNC. I raise it because it's a

concern of many. I know it's a concern to police officers within the RNC, and it's also a concern to people in the public as well, what's going to happen to the RNC by June and July about a third of management, so far, will be left in the RNC, and I've heard talk of managers who are considering leaving as well.

I have to raise it because safety and security I know is a paramount concern to the minister and to the government, and it takes a long time to train police officers. Back in 2005, under the PC government, the RNC started training officers through Memorial University. The decade before that, from the early 90s to early 2000s the RNC went down about 100 police officers, and it's been ever since 2005 to now trying to retrain and rebuild and create the experience.

So there's a big gap between the current senior management and those who trained at Memorial University at the start of 2005. There's a big gap of lack of experience there. I'm sure the minister realizes that. I just raise it today because it's an important matter to ensure that consistency occurs, we don't lose leadership, the very much strong leadership that's required at the RNC, and that the government takes steps now and ahead of time to plan for the losses of very skilled management people who are leaving the RNC in the coming weeks and months. Like I said, that would be about a third of the entire Royal Newfoundland Constabulary management team that's gone.

So, Mr. Speaker, I've covered a number of areas today. I look forward to Thursday's budget – tomorrow is Private Members' Day, we have some debate tomorrow morning, and there will probably be further debate on Address in Reply. As well on Thursday, I really hope the budget alleviates some of the concerns that have been expressed by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians over the last year.

I hope there is a stability provided to the public service so that they can continue to be contributors to the economy, greater than they have been for the last year, and they know what's in their future for them. And that we start to focus on hope and future opportunity and we get back to the belief that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are second to none. We should all believe that and be proud of that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Noting the hour I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It's been moved and second that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.