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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I would like to welcome to our public gallery today Carol and Laura Lowe from Nova Scotia. They saw pictures of the massive iceberg in Ferryland and were inspired to come and visit our beautiful province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: They are joined by their friend Micah Maddelena – and I hope I pronounced your name properly. He is currently living in St. John's and a friend of the Lowes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: As all Members of the Legislature are aware, and for the benefit of those in our public galleries and those who are viewing at home, about once a session we invite individuals who have done something absolutely inspiring in our province to the floor of the Legislature to be recognized.

Today we have the great pleasure of welcoming Steven Sullivan to our public gallery. He is joined by his parents and friends, and we'll say a little bit more about Steven now in a few moments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also have in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Jeff Hunt, owner of the CFL franchise the Redblacks; we also have Brad Sinopoli who is a CFL player, and Greg Ellingson, a CFL player, as well as guests of Mr. Hunt from the franchise as well.

Members may have noticed, probably the first time we've had a non-living item as a guest in our Speaker's gallery, but the Grey Cup is actually behind the door of the Speaker's gallery as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Today, I'm very proud to welcome nine-year-old Steven Sullivan to the

Speaker's gallery, and in a moment to the floor of the Chamber. He is battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Steven is the 2017 Champion Child and was chosen to represent sick and injured children from all across Newfoundland and Labrador. He recently travelled to Ottawa representing our province. He met with other representatives from across the country.

Steven also represented our province when he travelled to Disney World and participated in various Children's Miracle Network celebration activities, followed I'm sure, by lots of fun time and playtime at Disney World.

Steven has fought more than his share of battles, but through it all he's been an ambassador of hope to sick kids at home and across the country. Steven doesn't go to school these days with his friends. He spent the past year at the Janeway making sure he spreads his strong spirit and his message of hope to other sick children. He wants to let them know they should never give up.

I will now ask the Member for Cape St. Francis, a friend of Steven's, to say a few remarks.

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

I'd like to welcome Steven Sullivan and his family to the House and congratulate Steven on being named this year's Champion Child.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: Steven was diagnosed with a type of blood cancer almost two years ago. Since then, he's fought quite the battle and has spent over 300 days in the Janeway. I know Steven has a great attitude and a loving heart, and he has faced every day with courage and a smile. He has made many friends at the Janeway, including patients and staff and he's always there to support and encourage other children.

Steven's amazing spirit led him to be chosen this year's Janeway Champion Child. As the Janeway Champion Child, Steven recently represented all the sick and injured children in

this province in Ottawa and also at Walt Disney in Orlando. I know he had a great time because I saw all the pictures on Facebook.

Steven, you are an amazing boy and I know you bring great joy and hope to everyone around you. You are an inspiration to all the sick and injured children in this province and you are an inspiration to all of us here today.

Thank you, Steven.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Steven, I'm going to ask yourself, Steven, and your parents to come to the floor of the Chamber. I'm also going to invite the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Third Party and the Member for Cape St. Francis so we can present you with a flag and get some pictures.

All Members of the Legislature signed the flag as a keepsake for your bravery, Steven, and how you've represented the province.

(Presenting of flag.)

(Applause.)

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, it's a pleasure now to recognize our next special guest for today. We've been given a very special opportunity this afternoon. We have here in our Chamber a special cup that is very special to the people of this province. We don't actually have a major league football franchise in the province, but the owner of the franchise is from Newfoundland and Labrador, so we feel incredible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Many of us in this Chamber and people throughout the province are very aware of the achievements of a remarkable Newfoundlander and Labradorian by the name of Jeff Hunt. Jeff was born and raised here. He is a proud son of Newfoundland and Labrador. His dad was an RCMP officer and he and his family had several postings throughout Western Newfoundland and Labrador West.

Jeff and his family moved to Ottawa at the age of 19, and at 19 years of age Jeff opened a carpet cleaning business in the Nation's capital. From there, you could say he really cleaned up. Within a few short years, his first-ever business expanded to 250 locations throughout North America. Jeff sold his empire to another empire, Sears, and he did very well for himself in the process.

Jeff was always an avid sportsman. While in Newfoundland, but especially while in Labrador City, his life was touched by several mentors and sports heroes who helped shape his life. Shortly after selling his business, the twitch to blend sport and business followed its predictable path. Jeff became a partner in the Ottawa 67's, a championship team within the OHL. This team has become one of the most successful Major Junior Hockey franchises in North America.

More recently, however, Jeff took an interest in professional football. From the best traditions of the Ottawa Rough Riders, Jeff had a group of enthusiasts and brought Ottawa back into the CFL with the formation of the Ottawa REDBLACKS. Very early on in the team's history, the Ottawa REDBLACKS became the 2016 CFL Grey Cup champions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: There are several Newfoundlanders and Labradorians throughout the world who have really made Newfoundland and Labrador proud and showcased to the world what Newfoundland and Labrador have to offer. Mr. Jeff Hunt, you are certainly one of those individuals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I now call on the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, who I understand is a personal friend of Mr. Hunt's, and who helped organize the tour of the Grey Cup here today.

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

What an incredible opportunity for this House. Before I begin, I want to follow up on an introduction that you've already made. I also

want to introduce, I want to say a special mention to someone who's come back home, to Mr. Paul Harrington who is with TSN. Paul, of course, a native Newfoundlander and Labradorian, grew up here in St. John's, worked at CBC and now is one of the most pre-eminent producers for TSN.

Welcome home, Paul.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Another distinguished – incredibly distinguished – guest amongst us, Mr. Brian Williams; known to all, seen by all and appreciated by all. Mr. Williams is known as the dean of the Olympic sport broadcasting in Canada. Mr. Williams is here with us.

He, with TSN, of course, are looking at this particular tour, the first time ever that we were blessed to have the Grey Cup in Newfoundland and Labrador, and of course with a special, special significance here with the connection with Jeff Hunt.

Thank you, Mr. Williams.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Now, of course, whenever anyone comes to our House, we always have a tradition in Newfoundland and Labrador. The first thing we ask is: Now, who's your people?

Well, Jeff Hunt is no stranger and he's no visitor. Jeff Hunt is one of us. Jeff Hunt from Newfoundland and Labrador he hails. He was born in Stephenville in 1964; moved to Flower's Cove in 1966; Corner Brook in 1970; to St. George's in 1972; to Stephenville Crossing in 1973; back to Corner Brook in 1974; went on to Lab City in 1978; and then back to Corner Brook in 1982. After a short stay in St. John's, then was off to Ottawa at the age of 19.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very fair to say and true to say, Jeff Hunt could be a qualified candidate to run and would be elected in any one of seven provincial districts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is an impressive resume for any Newfoundlander and Labradorian, as you've

stated, but we'd also like today to thank Jeff's father and his family for their service to us all with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and I thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hunt's story certainly does not end there; it only just begins. While living in Lab City and attending Labrador City Collegiate, a very special visitor came to the students at LCC; that visitor was Gerry Organ, an icon of the Canadian Football League, and member of the storied Ottawa Rough Riders. Gerry Organ spoke to the young students of LCC and to Jeff about the power of commitment, of setting goals and about the need for discipline and courage in overcoming any adversity life may throw at you.

The students that day left the gymnasium, made to feel very, very special by what Gerry Organ and the league had done, that a Canadian sports legend had taken the time to talk to them. Jeff walked away forever changed. He took those messages and he made them his own. Soon afterwards, he found himself Ottawa, and in a bitterly cold month of January – a place I know very well – at the age of 19, Jeff measured out two dreams he held: one, to complete university, and the other to start his own business.

As you referred, Mr. Speaker, while waiting out the cold on an Ottawa Valley winter for a September enrolment at Carleton, Jeff decided to start a small business on the side, cleaning commercial and residential carpeting and, yes, Mr. Speaker, that business grew to 250 franchise locations.

Having nurtured that to the point where any other competitor in that industry would have to step out of Jeff's way, he sold the business to another business and made sure that everyone kept their jobs in the process.

With now time on his hands, Jeff and some partners bought into the Ottawa 67's, a storied member of the OHL. Their contribution to this strong franchise was to enrich it. Enrich it with development. Make it fan-centred, sport-centred and community-centred. Colleagues, Jeff Hunt enriched the community and the sporting world, and that is the secret to the growth of the 67's.

Well then, of course, we know that Jeff maintained his connection and he maintains his connections to the 67's, but now has an additional venture, the Ottawa REDBLACKS. Where, again, applying a fan-centred, sport-centred and community-centred philosophy, it has really brought it to its full fruition. Congratulations, because of course a young franchise in the CFL is now the CFL Grey Cup champions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit more personally and to say, because of my own connections and my own association in Ottawa, in the Ottawa Valley, Jeff Hunt, the 67's and the REDBLACKS, they do something more to the community and for the community than just play hockey and football. They add such a dimension; it is beyond understanding and belief. They attend to community events. They sponsor community events. They see needs of the community and attend to the needs of the community.

Today, Steven Sullivan asked the REDBLACKS or the 67's to come down to Newfoundland, to come down to St. John's, not for any other reason, to see a wish child. Jeff Hunt and the 67's and the REDBLACKS would be here in an instant because that's what they've been doing in Ottawa for quite some time.

I want to introduce as well, because the nature and the spirit of a team are its player: Bradley Sinopoli is a Canadian football wide receiver for the Ottawa REDBLACKS of the CFL. He's got a multi-talent, multi-threat. He originally was a quarterback with the Calgary Stampeders before showing the league that he could be a powerhouse as a wide receiver for the REDBLACKS.

We've got Greg Ellingson, also a wide receiver for the REDBLACKS He played college football in the US at Florida and he also was a member of several American-based teams as well as the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Mr. Speaker, the 67's and the REDBLACKS have made quite an indelible mark on the nation. They have embodied all that sport is in terms of enriching us. While hockey is our national sport, football is becoming our national sport as well. A lot of it has to do with the fact that the

franchise and the leagues itself are such a powerful and incredible force in our communities.

The Grey Cup, it's the oldest sporting championship cup in all of North America. It's an incredible opportunity we have here today and I sincerely want to thank Jeff Hunt for his team, the family members that he's brought with us and, as well, Mr. Williams, each and every one of them.

Thank you for going to Corner Brook and hosting sporting clinics. Thank you for going to Lab City and inspiring kids there. Thank you for coming to St. John's and hosting sporting clinics. Thank you for raising money for amateur sport through your quarterbacks corners which have been held, or will be held now in three locations in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the money, the proceeds, going to help offset the cost of amateur sport in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I seek you and the unanimous consent of the House to ask the REDBLACKS, Jeff Hunt and the cup to enter the floor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I was about to stand and say your 20 minutes are up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: It is with great pleasure that we invite Mr. Hunt and the two CFL players to the floor of the Assembly with the Grey Cup. I'm going to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to open the doors. There they are.

I'm going to ask for two pictures here. I'm going to invite the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party, as well Steven Sullivan, Mr. Hunt and the two CFL players for a picture, and then I'll ask all Members of the House to join as well and get a picture with the Grey Cup, please, to the floor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Hunt, thank you very much.

MR. HUNT: Thank you for having us. We really appreciate all the kind words.

MR. SPEAKER: My pleasure. I will say that the REDBLACKS are now – oh, my name is on there as well. Awesome! The REDBLACKS are now my official CFL team and I'm sure –

MR. HUNT: All right, we've converted one fan (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I'm sure with your connection, will become REDBLACKS fans in the –

MR. HUNT: I hope so.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Steven –

MR. HUNT: Are you a REDBLACKS fan now, Steven?

AN HON. MEMBER: I sure hope so.

MS. MICHAEL: He better be.

MR. SPEAKER: Awesome.

It's my pleasure to invite all Members of the House to the floor.

(Members have photo taken on the floor of the House.)

MR. SPEAKER: Steven told me earlier that his favourite sport was hockey. I'd say it's now going to be football, isn't it? It's going to be a close second. There are not many people, Steven, got to actually touch the Grey Cup.

Order, please!

I ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to close the Chamber doors.

Order, please!

The time for Question Period has now expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For today's Members' statements, we have the Members for the Districts of Torngat Mountains, Harbour Main, Burin – Grand Bank, Terra Nova, Ferryland and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the Hope Walkers of Hopedale, Nunatsiavut, and the people of Natuashish who, through an act of determination and friendship, have built a unique bond between these Inuit and Innu communities.

Some-50 Inuit from Hopedale joined approximately 30 Innu from Natuashish and they all participated in the challenging walk earlier this month across 80 kilometres of Labrador from Hopedale to Natuashish.

This was the second walk held in honour of 18-year-old James Poker, who lost his life on the ice between the two communities in 2015. He was trying to get to Hopedale. In 2016, his family and friends decided to finish the journey.

This year, the people of Natuashish and Hopedale walked the other way. It took the walkers three days and two nights to complete their journey. When they got to Natuashish, they were welcomed with a warm reception from the community.

Those who participated described it as a unique way to deal with the grief of family loss. Every one of these Hope Walkers, as they call themselves, has lost someone to suicide or other tragedy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the tremendous community bond these walkers have forged between the people of Natuashish and Hopedale.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PARSLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted once again to rise in this hon. House to recognize a young athlete from my district with a bright future.

Since a very young age, Shailynn Snow, who is now 15, has always wanted to sport the maple leaf on the ice hockey rink and represent Canada at the Olympics. Following a successful season at home and across the country, Team Canada is now looking at this young lady from Clarke's Beach as a serious contender for a spot in the lineup.

On Tuesday past, Shailynn left for Hamilton Ontario where she will join 49 other players to show off their strength and skills in the hope of gaining a spot on the under 18 squad.

Undoubtedly, just to have an invite to such an exclusive training camp is quite the accomplishment, but, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that Shailynn's hard work and dedication will pay off and she will join the ranks of Newfoundlanders who have gone on to represent our province and our country on the world stage.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in sending best wishes to Shailynn Snow as she works towards achieving her childhood dreams.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week towns and communities across Canada used the backdrop of National Volunteer Week to show their appreciation to the thousands of volunteers who give generously of their time and talent to enrich the lives of their fellow citizens.

I take this opportunity to thank the countless volunteers in my district, and to thank the organizations and communities that hosted appreciation events last week.

I was especially pleased to learn that Vic Lundrigan of Lewin's Cove had been named the recipient of a Step Up award from NAPE, presented each year to members who go above and beyond in community volunteerism.

Vic, who recently retired after more than four decades with the public service, was nominated by his former colleagues, who recognize the great heights to which he goes to make the area served by St. Patrick's Parish a great place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing Vic Lundrigan on this award and in thanking all volunteers for the work they do to address the needs of their communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Started in the 1950s at the former United Church primary school, the public library has been a long-standing organization in Glovertown. In 1985, after moving several times, the library settled into its current location at Glovertown Academy.

Each week, through the dedicated efforts of librarian Rose Sweetapple, and her board of directors, a variety of reading programs is offered to preschool and school age children, as well as hosting special events for adults.

On March 16, the library hosted a live taping of Canada Reads 2017, which aired the following week on CBC television and radio.

During the event, finalist and Toronto-based author, Madeline Ashby read from her novel, *Company Town*, a futuristic story about an oil rig community off the coast of Newfoundland.

The library is said to hold the title of Book Club Capital of Newfoundland and Labrador. With enough members to form five book clubs, like the Terra Nova Chapters, Paper Cuts, Read Between the Wines, The Lit Chicks and The

Bookworms, it is obvious the residents of Glovertown treasure this space.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the library's board of directors for their long-standing effort to promote community engagement, literacy and lifelong learning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize a young constituent from my district, a grade nine junior high school student from Stella Maris Academy in Trepassey. While the school is small in numbers, the results in both academics and athletics have always been high.

HaeNa Luther is the junior high winner for the Heritage Places Poster Contest and the overall winner for the entire province. Her poster was unveiled on February 21, 2017, at Government House. HaeNa's poster was a drawing of the Colonial Building in St. John's. HaeNa's school, Stella Maris Academy will also receive a monetary prize in the amount of \$750. Approximately 1,000 students from 62 schools across the province produced submissions for the contest. The winning submission is featured on the foundation's poster promoting Heritage Day in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would like to congratulate HaeNa on her accomplishment and recognize her for her talent and overall winner of the poster contest.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues of the House to join me in congratulating HaeNa Luther on winning the 2017 Heritage Poster Foundation Contest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize and congratulate the nominees for and the winner of this year's Citizen of the Year Award in the City of Mount Pearl.

Volunteers give so much of their time, without need or want for compensation of any kind. The selfless acts of these individuals were especially evident at the 2016 Citizen of the Year Ceremony which was held last month in the City of Mount Pearl.

I would like to recognize in particular Wayne Andrews, Dannielle Brittain, Betty Dunlop, Craig Dyer, Deidre Levandier, Alice Walsh, and the winner of the 2016 Citizen of the Year Award, Sally Seward, who was nominated by the Mount Pearl Seniors Independence Group.

Sally has been a friend of my wife and I for a long time. She's been volunteering in our community for over 50 years. She's involved with the Girl Guides, the legion, the seniors' drop-in centre, the Frosty Festival and much more.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating all nominees as well as the winner, Sally Seward, of the 2016 Citizen of the Year Award for Mount Pearl. Volunteers truly are the heart of the community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, a deviation from script here today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to acknowledge the National Physical and Health Education Conference which begins this evening at the Sheraton Hotel here in St. John's.

This year's theme, Rock Solid Foundations...Energizing Futures, recognizes

the importance of active living and the lifelong value of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Delegates at the national conference are people involved with the health, physical activity and education needs of children and youth. They include educators, public health professionals, researchers, administrators, recreation leaders, physical education specialists and others who want the opportunity to network with colleagues, increase their knowledge and skills and foster healthy active living for our children and youth in our schools, families and communities.

Our government is committed to supporting increased physical activity in schools through Active Schools, Participation Nation and school-based sport programs offered by School Sport Newfoundland and Labrador.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we are part of the Joint Consortium for School Health which models, supports and encourages partnerships between health and school health. It works across provincial, territorial and federal governments to better coordinate and integrate efforts that champion improved health and learning for children and youth.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in thanking the members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Physical Education Special Interest Council, and Physical and Health Education Canada for hosting such an important and productive event. The dedication of physical education professionals throughout our province has played an essential role in ensuring that our children and youth have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to lead healthy and active lives.

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 thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and I would to also recognize the National Physical and Health Education

Conference that begins this evening in St. John's.

Physical and Health Education Canada has a vision to see that all children and youth live healthy and physically active lives. This is something I feel that we all can support.

We owe it to our youth to highlight the importance of physical activity and recreation in their formative years so that they grow into adults with skills and attitudes needed to lead physical, active and healthy lives.

I commend the work of Physical and Health Education Canada and I send my best wishes to the delegates of this conference as they build relationships, partnerships and plan to advance quality physical education and quality health education programs.

I salute the Newfoundland and Labrador Physical Education Special Interest Council, and Physical and Health Education Canada for such an important event and all those who played a role in making this active and healthy event a success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This conference is a great opportunity to learn firsthand about innovative models for increasing physical activity in our schools. I commend the many teachers and volunteers who have worked hard to implement programs such as Active Schools and Participation Nation in schools around the province, but I would urge the minister to reinstate into the physical education curriculum, programming that was removed from schools, thereby contributing to the physical fitness deficit we see today in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to highlight our government's investment of \$1.79 million in the Community Healthy Living Fund. This program provides funding to municipalities and community-based organizations to support local physical activity, recreation, healthy living and wellness programs throughout the province.

The community Healthy Living Fund supports our government's commitment to helping residents enjoy healthier, more active lifestyles by supporting a wide variety of wellness initiatives and activities.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, last year 285 community-based organizations were supported by this program, including a variety of initiatives in all regions of the province such as a summer day camp program for Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador; the Empower Program for the Gander Boys and Girls Club; skiing and snowshoeing equipment for Special Olympics Corner Brook, and a summer recreation program for the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

Applications for funding may be submitted year-round and funding is based on program priorities and eligibility criteria. Program guidelines and applications are available under the Grants section of our website at: cssd.gov.nl.ca.

Mr. Speaker, I commend all those who are working within our communities to support healthier lifestyle choices. Our government will continue to work in partnership with municipalities and community-based organizations to enhance services and improve outcomes to promote a healthy and prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. This program provides valuable funding to a number of municipalities and community-based organizations which support physical activity, recreation, healthy living and wellness programs throughout the province.

The minister stood in this House and promoted the Community Healthy Living program, but what she didn't say is that the funding for this program has actually been reduced again this year. Last year, the Liberal government reduced the funding for this program from \$2.1 million to \$1.85 million and there's another cut in budget 2017-18. Again, they're reducing this valuable program.

I thank those organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, Special Olympics and Easter Seals who use this valuable funding to provide programming to our communities. I implore the minister to ensure that the fund is not reduced again in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. The Community Healthy Living grants are so important for communities and organizations to be able to fund activities they need to provide to enrich people's lives. Their work is so important for encouraging healthy lifestyles but also for building community from the ground up.

The funds have at least remained stable but I remind government that these projects need to be properly resourced to be effective, and there is a growing need for programs tailored for seniors.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Premier finally disclosed yesterday here in the House of Assembly that the former Liberal clerk of the Executive Council, while acting as a private lawyer, reached a settlement deal with Labrador-Grenfell Health, a claim that's been ongoing since 2013. Mr. Coffey didn't conclude the settlement with the health authority until after he became the clerk.

I ask the Premier: What was the date that the settlement was reached on Labrador-Grenfell Health?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, there was no new information yesterday. I made it quite clear in the media releases that we did on Monday of last week that there were seven files when we started. We got that – or with the work of Mr. Coffey dwindling down and basically shedding his client list, that was down to two, Mr. Speaker. So there were a number of actions that would have taken place.

The conclusion of that file that the Leader of the Opposition is referring to was one that was ongoing for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, the date that was set prior to Mr. Coffey coming to work.

There's nothing scandalous what's going on here, Mr. Speaker. It's just the rhetoric that's going on. Mr. Coffey was doing his job, getting his client list under control. We just weren't able to get all of those files taken care of and Mr. Coffey resigned.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, a very easy question for the Premier: What was the date the settlement was reached?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, the date the settlement was released and all that, these are the responsibility of the clients who took part in the discussions. There was no conflict of interest. The employer's contract would have said that or the employer.

I can tell you, Mr. Coffey, if there was ever a potential of a conflict of interest, he would have declared it. We had lawyers that were opposite to that, they also knew the responsibility, if indeed someone was in a conflict of interest, for them to report it.

The Leader of the Opposition right now, Mr. Speaker, has made many accusations here in this House this week, but let's be very clear what is happening in this House today. This is not about Mr. Coffey. It's not about the clerk. This is about leadership and what he's trying to do is re-launch his own leadership campaign.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Calling people across the province – maybe he should call his Member just opposite to him. That's what this is all about.

We've answered the questions about Mr. Coffey. Mr. Speaker, there is no conflict of interest.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Well, we know how desperate they are now to stoop that low, don't we, Mr. Speaker. We certainly do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said when he was on his feet –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: The Premier just said when he was on his feet that we had lawyers opposite.

What are you referring to, Premier?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, what we were talking about was when the file list that was shared, the Department of Justice looked at the list. They looked at the list; I made that quite clear. The Cabinet Secretariat and Mr. Coffey would have shared that list with them. Mr. Coffey shared that list with me.

There was a contract that was signed; section 10 and 11 made it quite clear. Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear about what was happening with Mr. Coffey in his tenure and transitioning from him employment. We've been very clear about that.

He made significant progress in getting those files taken care of, but we just could not get all those done within the appropriate time frame.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I guess that one slipped out, just like the disclosure yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier had an opportunity with the media on Monday morning to disclose this information. When they were asking for all the details, he never disclosed it. We went through three Question Periods before the Premier disclosed the information.

I ask the Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: I ask the Premier: Why did you withhold this information until yesterday that a settlement was reached with a former Liberal clerk with Labrador-Grenfell?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, there was nothing withheld. There were seven cases, or there were seven clients on a list. We made that very clear. As of the weekend, last weekend, there were two. So obviously there was progress that was made on all the files.

The statement of claim was issued in 2013. I'm sure the Member opposite has taken the time to read it, about a sick leave policy or something with the health authority, Mr. Speaker. This is not a scandal that the former premier is trying to make this. This is really gamesmanship.

I can tell you what was a scandal, though, Mr. Speaker, and if you look at the financial institutions and the reports that are coming out of them, is where they left this province. They called it a ship that's taking on water. The job that we are doing over here is to correct the path, to get this course corrected. They want to divert from that, because they do not have questions about a budget, Muskrat Falls or electricity rates.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's always interesting to notice that when someone repeats over and over again there's no scandal, sometimes there's a scandal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

I remind all hon. Members again that the only individual I wish to hear from is the individual identified to speak.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I ask the Premier: How much did Mr. Coffey profit personally from the Labrador-Grenfell settlement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can guarantee you one thing; it wasn't as much as Frank Coleman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm going to give the Member for Burin – Placentia West a final warning. I'm asking Members, the only individual I wish to hear from is the individual identified to speak.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I understand why they're sensitive today.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Was the Department of Justice involved in any way with this Labrador-Grenfell settlement, and did they have knowledge of the settlement before, during and after the agreement was made?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here and speak to the Department of Justice's involvement with this. At the time Mr. Coffey was hired, he made clear that he had to transition out and there was a list of files provided to a solicitor within the Department of Justice. These files were discussed and there was advice provided on what should be done to avoid any conflict of interest going forward. I think I've made that clear on a number of occasions. I'm not aware of any other details of these cases being made aware, but the fact is all cases were disclosed to the department and advice provided.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: I ask the Minister of Justice when he's on his feet, when did you learn about the Labrador-Grenfell settlement?

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

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

In fact, I just learned about it the same time as everybody else. I learned this settlement – I didn't have any involvement in the matter per se; there was a solicitor within Justice. And certainly I'm happy to answer any more questions about Justice, including the fact that I do remember other lawyers being hired with government funds to sue government when somebody else was premier.

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.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Are there any other settlements made by Mr. Coffey that haven't been disclosed yet? We know of three files he's involved with, but has there been any other settlements made by Mr. Coffey while he was in the clerk's position that impacted government, or any government entity?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are a lot of things that haven't been settled by the previous administration, but this administration here is talking about Mr. Coffey.

As I said earlier, back in September when he came to work with government, seven down to two; no settlements that I'm aware of; no big amounts of money; no conflict of interest; provisions made. But I can tell you one thing, there's been a much better job done with protecting the conflict of interest of individuals than that former premier would have done, even when he was minister, around the Humber Valley Paving contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the Premier if he actually asked Mr. Coffey if there are any other settlements.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the contract itself, under section 10 and 11, says if there was any conflict of interest – and in this case if there was the responsibility is on the individual – just like it's the responsibility on every single person in this House – to declare that conflict.

Mr. Coffey never, ever declared a conflict of interest; didn't do it. When I asked him about the Nalcor case, Mr. Speaker, because that was the other statement of claim that went in, and in that particular case he was not going to be the lawyer of record. What he did was clearly and

merely put in place a mechanism to allow that particular client, before the statute of limitations had expired – allow him to actually seek legal advice on a wrongful dismissal, and he would not be that lawyer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the Premier – he raised Humber Valley Paving. The Auditor General did an independent review of Humber Valley Paving. Will you call an independent review of this matter too?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: The role of the AG in this matter, Mr. Speaker, is no role for the AG, but I can guarantee you the AG did say in the Humber Valley Paving that he was not satisfied – he was not satisfied.

That is the reason why one of the three inquiries that we will be calling will be into the Humber Valley Paving, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, what is happening today is gamesmanship here. It's about the Member opposite trying to relaunch his campaign.

I would tell to the Member opposite, I would tell to the Member a couple of seats down: Wait for your phone call because it's on its way.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, so the Premier is saying he – the Premier is saying he will not allow for an independent review.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Where does the funding come from to settle the Labrador-Grenfell lawsuit?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of the details around the settlement. I would assume if a health care authority had some settlement to some particular legal case that would come from the resources that they have at their disposal. I'm not aware of any information that could add to the question that the Member asked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask the Premier if Cabinet signed off and approved the Labrador-Grenfell settlement.

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand up here again. The Member opposite is asking whether Cabinet would have signed off on a settlement for a health authority. Now, the Member opposite would have been in Cabinet at some point.

AN HON. MEMBER: He was the minister of Health.

MR. A. PARSONS: In fact, he was the minister of Health at some point. I think he should realize that something like that would never have gone to Cabinet in the first place. The other thing is he's assuming that there was some kind of payout, but the fact is he's throwing out information without anything to back it up whatsoever.

Going back to something else that he had to say earlier, Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to fulfilling my mandate letter and having an inquiry done of Humber Valley Paving so we can see what the Members on the other side had to do with that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Premier tried to distance himself from the hiring of his previous election campaign co-chair and Liberal Party vice-president, and instead threw the Minister of Health under the bus, saying it was all the minister's idea.

I ask the Premier: Did you or anyone else in the Premier's office give any advice or direction to the minister or his staff to find a job for your former campaign co-chair and party vice-president?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to rise in the House and answer the question. The facts of the case are it is not uncommon for staff within RHAs and the Department of Health to be seconded for mutual benefit of all parties.

We had a skills gap in the Department of Health which could be filled admirably by someone in Eastern Health who had qualifications to a master's level around clinical trials, oncology and management. Those, as the Members opposite will know from Estimates because we discussed it, are the pressure points on the NLPDP.

We need skills in clinical trials. We need skills in oncology. The person who is seconded temporarily from Eastern Health has that skill set, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the minister wants to talk about facts? The fact is that he's continuing his government's practice of sending some good public servants out the door while they create

six-figure positions – six-figure salaries for some of their Liberal friends.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Premier, you committed to taking the politics out of appointments. The facts are that the former director of Pharmaceutical Services in the Department of Health was let go just weeks ago to make room for yet another Liberal friend, now with a six-figure salary.

Why are you continuing to say one thing and do another?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the hon. Minister of Health and Community Services, I remind the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, the only individuals I wish to hear from are the individuals identified to speak.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

I think it's rather ironic coming from the Member opposite to talk about politicizing operational appointments. Maybe if I drew his attention back to October 29, 2015, seven days before the election writ was dropped, when he personally signed off on 40 appointments – 4-0 appointments –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: – to agencies, boards and commissions responsible to the Department of Health.

In answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, we had a vacancy in the department and a need of skill sets. We have a temporary secondment from Eastern Health with an individual who has those skill sets. It will benefit the department, the RHA, the individual concerned and the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I did appoint a number of volunteers –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. JOYCE: – volunteer appointments. They were well-qualified people, and that went on regularly. I would imagine that government committees are still –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, there are lots of government committees and boards, and many of them are volunteers. All of the positions that the minister is referring to are volunteer positions, qualified people. There was a public call done and quality people were appointed to various roles.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: But what I can assure him is that people like Lynn Sullivan and George Joyce and Chris Pickard and Bern Coffey and now Ms. O'Dea are all Liberal friends now making six-figure salaries.

The Minister of Health said to reporters yesterday that he could not recall if the elimination of the position was part of the Liberal's flatter, leaner, meaner management cuts. That's hard to believe.

Can the minister now confirm that the position of director of Pharmaceutical Services was indeed eliminated back in February?

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

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

There was a reorganization of the department. My understanding is that the position that is currently being temporarily filled has been in existence for possibly a decade. The PCN number has not changed at all.

It is interesting however, that again the Member opposite refers to the fact that it's all right for him to sign 40 individuals in one day who happen to have qualification; yet, I'm not allowed to do that with one individual whose skill set is crucially needed at a time in the Department of Health for the benefit of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks after the elimination of the director of pharmaceuticals position, the minister said the same position with a slightly adjusted title is important and needed to be filled immediately.

I ask the minister: Why did you remove a position just weeks ago if the role played such a critical role within your government and within your department?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that people's names are getting dragged through the House without their ability to defend themselves. I am not, as an employer, as a representative of government, going to comment on HR issues as to why someone who may or may not have been employed by the department, may or may not have left.

The facts of the case are, Mr. Speaker, that position has been vacant for some weeks. It is a skill set that we have identified, somewhat slightly different than the usual accent. The individual in Eastern Health has those skills at a time when we need them. It will be to the benefit of the individual. It will be to the benefit of the RHA when the individual is repatriated, and the

people of this province will benefit at a time when drug costs are a crucial issue for this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: The minister keeps referring to facts. You can't call them facts if you make them up, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: The minister keeps saying this is a HR issue. This is not a HR issue. This is a matter of ethics, this is a matter of trust, this is a matter of judgement and this is a matter of honesty, Mr. Speaker.

There are many other questions to be asked on this matter. Media reported that the former Liberal vice-president is being paid a salary of \$89,000, based on information provided by the minister's department.

Can he actually confirm that in actual fact your new director friend is actually receiving a management wage adjustment, which brings her salary on to sunshine list well over \$100,000 annually?

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, I say to the Member for Labrador West you need not stand today.

The hon. the Minister for Health and Community Services.

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

I was tempted to rise on a point of order about the comment about making things up, but I would actually use this opportunity to point out that the Member opposite is guilty of just that. He made erroneous statements in the press yesterday and again this morning about the 811 service. Those comments will cost people lives, Mr. Speaker.

They were irresponsible, they were factually incorrect and they are lethal. Yet, he is allowed to get away with saying I am making things up. I really think that is dishonest, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker.

I will not discuss terms and conditions of service and employment issues in public. It is not responsible as an employer. We have provided information to the media which is not as quoted again by Member opposite. So he is again choosing to adapt those facts and make his own.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, I'd encourage the minister to talk to pharmacists and call 811 himself. What I described in the media, what I described in this House of Assembly is absolutely 100 per cent accurate.

I ask the minister: When was the decision made to hire the former Liberal campaign coach here to a senior position in the Department of Health, before or after you dismissed the former director; and how much did it cost in salary continuance and severance to fire the former director to make room for his Liberal friend?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, the gentleman opposite is factually incorrect about 811. I have rang – I have had my staff verify this in the light of his comments. The instructions to 811 on the roll out of the Naloxone program were very clear. When they ask for access to a kit, they are asked for a location, a date of birth and a name. They are then directed to the nearest physical distribution point, of which there are 74.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

MR. HAGGIE: Seventy-four publicly accessible sites with their opening hours. There is none of this you've got to go to Pleasantville to get trained. There is no comment in here about training. This gentleman over here is putting up barriers to a vulnerable group of

people who are already vulnerable, and he's doing it for his election campaign.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister: Do you have a signed Atlantic Fisheries Fund agreement, yes or no?

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

MR. CROCKER: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question. I reckon back to a news conference that cost tens of thousands dollars at The Rooms when they forgot to invite their federal cousins.

I can tell the hon. Member opposite what we do have is a commitment to work with our federal government for the fishery in this province, and we are working hard to achieve an agreement on the federal fisheries fund that we will sign in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote some numbers for the Member opposite of what we've done as a government since we took office in 15 months when it comes to the fishery: \$100 million dollars for a federal fisheries fund; \$66 million for lifeboat stations in Bay de Verde and Twillingate and update the one in St. Anthony; \$14.5 million for a cod assessment; \$2.5 million for a capelin assessment; \$10 million in Bay de Verde alone.

I'll continue, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: So there's no signed agreement.

Minister, *Budget 2017* included items from the federal government for \$7 million; \$3 million from the provincial government for a fisheries innovation fund.

So you're telling us, with the state of the fishery today, the \$100 million fund will only be \$7 million this year?

AN HON. MEMBER: If they get an agreement.

MR. K. PARSONS: If you get an agreement.

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely astonishing that a Member that sat on this side of the House can stand up and ask those types of questions. He never once when he was over here mentioned fisheries science, not once – not once did he stand up for fisheries science.

They danced on the stage with Stephen Harper at the Sheraton, Mr. Speaker, in 2011. They never reminded Mr. Harper back then that they had a commitment to deliver. They never delivered.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the previous question. So \$10 million for harbour infrastructure in Bay de Verde; \$34 million for the Ocean Frontier project, \$8 million of which will go to CFER; a regional aquaculture centre announced last week for half a million dollars; 27 new fisheries science positions in the science division at DFO valued at over \$20 million over a 10-year period.

Mr. Speaker, my math tells me – and I know they struggle with math – that in 15 months that's \$247 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much –

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

You know, on your \$100 million –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

The Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour's inflammatory public comments and mudslinging about Memorial University has put the university community in turmoil.

I ask the Premier: Does he endorse his minister's belligerent tactics in dealing with the university?

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

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

What's really, really important is that before the university considers raising additional revenues on the backs of students or requests additional funds from taxpayers, we would like the university to consider whether or not its expenses could be reviewed, and whether or not there are certain expenses that may be trimmed so that those costs can be kept in line. By actually looking at expenses, instead of looking at revenue from students, then I think the students are better served, I think the university is well served and I think the province is better served as well, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last year government accepted a multi-year funding plan presented by Memorial University. In *Budget 2017*, government decided to cut MUN's operating grant by an additional \$3 million annually.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Why was there a much larger than expected cut to the university's budget in *Budget 2017*?

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

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

I would like to say how much I appreciate the hon. Member's question and, as well, the statement of fact that she provided, that there was a \$3 million reduction in the overall operating budget of the university. The university at times has not actually acknowledged that; they've suggested the number has been different.

I think that's important that we have a discussion about the budget. What here is most important is that we reflect on the fact that the budget of Memorial University of Newfoundland is roughly a half a billion dollar annual institution. It has roughly a half a billion dollars in annual expenditures.

Relatively speaking, when we must look at all of our expenditures, all of our departments, whether it be health, education, whether it be all of the agencies, boards and commissions, it would seem to be a fair and reasonable prospect for the university to consider their expenses as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: When will he reinstate the ABE program to the College of the North Atlantic as he himself says should have happened?

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

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

It gives me an opportunity to highlight the incredible work that has been done at the College of the North Atlantic to actually review its own operations and its own expenses. Yes, indeed, there were serious, serious issues that were found in terms of operational performance, financial performance. There were things that were found at the College of the North Atlantic

such as a number of vehicles – the fleet management system was inadequate. There was inadequate enrolment controls at the College of the North Atlantic.

Do you know what I admire so much about the fact of what the College of the North Atlantic has done? Is that they took a deep, serious, hard look at themselves and instead of actually sweeping problems under the rug they found out what the problems were so that they could correct them.

Do you know what? I am concerned about the problems that were found but what I am more and more encouraged about is that they will be solved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, we all know we have a growing opioid crisis made worse by fentanyl in our communities. Addiction workers are telling us there are not enough naloxone kits in the streets. Suboxone is stalled and not being rolled out any time soon and there is a wait list for methadone treatment. Government has to respond immediately.

I ask the Minister of Health and Community Services: Will he do whatever is necessary to get more naloxone kits in the streets where community experts have identified they are needed and ensure there is an ongoing renewed supply while we were in this crisis?

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

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

The access to naloxone is a pressure point at the moment. It seems for reasons that I'm not clear about is that people have not been contacting either 811 or these numbers, in the numbers that I would have hoped. It's certainly my aim to push these kits out as far as possible. We need them in the hands of individuals who are associated with drug using, and those communities.

As far as the actual kits themselves, we're looking at data from Eastern Health to make sure there is a right amount of naloxone in each kit because there is some evidence from other jurisdictions that that might not be adequate. We also have an internal task group with external consultants from the RNC looking at ways we can do better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I will table the report of the Social Services Committee. We finished up Estimates this morning.

The Social Services Committee has considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of the Department of Justice and Public Safety, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment, the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

Mr. Speaker, Committee Members were: myself, the Member for Topsail – Paradise, the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, the Member for Harbour Main, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, the Member for St. George's – Humber, the Member for St. John's Centre, and the Member for Baie Verte – Green Bay.

I'd just like to take a moment to thank the departments, the staff for the tremendous amount of work that goes in to preparing for Estimates and the necessary documents. It was a fluid and necessary process in our democracy, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Table staff as

well for their support. There have been some long days since the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having more to say on the Social Services Committee and the Estimates in those five departments later in debate.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further presenting of 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* Exceptions for February 2017 as presented by the chief operating officer of the Government Purchasing Agency.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. 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 *Budget 2016* implemented a regressive tax on books in the province; and

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we've had an opportunity to talk about a number of regressive taxes and fees that have been put in place, but nothing as foolish as the tax on books.

One of the important things that we've been able to do for the last number of decades is promote our culture here, but be able to promote that because we have such a skill set in writers and publishers. We've been able to send our message all over the world. We've been able to encourage our own residents to get a better understanding of exactly what our culture is about, our history, the significant events, the significant people, what happens. We've even been able to engage people in entertainment because of what we've been able to write, but we've particularly been able to engage young people, kids to be able to get back into reading, the basics of life.

We know people here are facing economic times and we know there are challenges around their first priorities. Their first priority is obviously keeping your family safe, healthy, warm, clothed and fed. These are the key objectives of any family, any individual. To do that, obviously, it's got to be based on your ability to finance all those things. With the challenges that we've had over the last year, particularly the additional taxes and that, anything that goes beyond that becomes secondary of importance.

When you do have a little bit of extra disposable money, you want to do things that are of importance to you and that you think will sometime foster a better quality of life or some type of entertainment process. Books are one of those key things. It does a multitude of things as I noted. It promotes our culture and that.

To put tax on something as important as promoting who we are and what we do, giving young people a chance to be engaged, being able to promote their history, shows that there's very little vision, very little oversight as to what it is

the plan is here. When you add into the fact the minimum amount of money that's going to be generated from it, it becomes an inclusive tax only because it's probably going to cost you more money to collect it at the end of the day than it would have been what you would have taken from it.

If they had said we're going to put in a book tax and every cent of that is going to go in to promote publishers here, to educate young people around being creative writers, to researching some of the other important things that our society needs to collect and needs to historically write so that we can promote around the world, I probably would have nodded and said, you know, not a bad way to diversify, as one of their plans was, another part of our economy.

Instead, just to take tax for the sake of taking tax is a loss in our society. Mr. Speaker, I'll have an opportunity to speak to that again and I encourage the government to take this regressive tax away.

Thank you.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today happy to present this petition on behalf of the residents of Ferryland District.

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

WHEREAS *Budget 2015* announced a new school for the Witless Bay-Mobile school system; and

WHEREAS the planning and design of the school was underway; and

WHEREAS Statistics Canada recognized the region as having significant growth; and

WHEREAS the project was cancelled in *Budget 2016*;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reverse its decision and construct the proposed school for the Witless Bay-Mobile school system announced in 2015.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've certainly brought this up before in the House and continue to try and bring it to government's understanding in terms of the premise, foundation and facts of why a new middle school was announced for the region in 2015 and move forward to begin. Yet, in 2016, we saw a decision made by this government. To date, we haven't been able to validate whether it will be even done or not in regard to putting nine classrooms on the footprint of where Mobile school is today. We hear there are challenges with that, even in regard to the size of the footprint itself and what's trying to be done in regard to that facility.

Even if you look at the role of the English School District, they had supported, recommended to the government of the day in 2015 to build that facility. In 2016, the change in the decision of this government basically to cancel it was not supported and voted or recommended by the English School District. Subsequent to that, the English School District just met a couple of weeks back. At that time, on the agenda they were going to vote on a reconfiguration which would see grade six moved to Mobile Central High, yet they put it off and didn't vote on it. They're going to vote on reconfiguration or delay reconfiguration voting until apparent construction can be done, which we don't even know if it can be done.

The logic here is certainly confusing to everybody. We've met with the minister, didn't make any inroads there. The school community have asked to meet with the Premier. To my knowledge, he hasn't responded.

We certainly call on the government, the Premier, to recognize the invitation to meet to make their views – the people their views to the Premier so we can get some logic and basically a sound decision made for the people of the region

which was made in 2015. For some apparent reason, we don't know, we can all speculate why it was cancelled in 2016, but today there's no rationale for that. We certainly impress upon government to revisit this, do the right thing and build a middle school in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, the budget.

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

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

I am very happy to rise again and speak to the amendment to the budget. I'd like to pick up where I left off a few days ago when I spoke. I was basically talking about, really, how do you measure the success of a budget? What makes a successful budget? One would think a budget that empowers our people, empowers and strengthens our communities. That really is a go-forward document rather than going backwards, something that really makes it possible for everybody to weather the storm we are experiencing right now in terms of the current economic situation but also that grows our province, that improves our economy and that helps us go forward.

I spoke a little bit about more macro issues and now I'd like to talk about some of the rollout effects. Now, again, Mr. Speaker, what I mentioned when I spoke previously was that this budget is simply a rehash of budget '16-'17. The budget we saw in 2016 and 2017 that hit low-

income workers and hard-working, middle-class families, it hit them so hard. One would have thought if that budget were successful, then it would have accomplished something. Again, that would have strengthened and empowered individuals, strengthened and empowered our communities, strengthened and empowered our economy, but, in fact, we are still living with the rollout and the effects of budget 2016-17.

Then we have a budget now in '17-'18 which gives us no relief from the way that people were negatively impacted in 2016-17. As a matter of fact, we are still seeing the negative consequences, the negative impacts of budget 2016-17 on the people today. This budget offers no relief, no solutions. It has not empowered. It has not strengthened individuals. As a matter of fact, I'd like to say it's quite the opposite. So I would like to look at that, Madam Speaker.

In fact, what has happened since that budget in 2016 and now since this budget that's proposed, in that it is not a successful budget by any shape, by any figment of anybody's imagination. It is not successful in achieving the goals, if in fact the goals were to benefit the people of the province, to benefit the economy because it hasn't improved the economy at all. As a matter of fact, we are seeing quite the opposite.

The only increases we see are the increases in the unemployment rate, the increases of the number of people who are either filing for bankruptcy or filing for protection. The other economic indicators once again are not favourable and what we are seeing are drops in household income and, again, more stresses on individuals, more stresses on communities, more stresses on the economy.

I'd like to touch on some of the decisions in *Budget 2016* that made life more difficult for people who were already struggling to get by. One would say: Oh, there she goes again. She's such a bleeding heart. All she talks about is poor people. Well, Madam Speaker, I think that these are also economic considerations because poverty is expensive. Poverty is expensive in terms of what we have to do to alleviate the negative effects of poverty. I'm going to look a little bit on that. I think those are some interesting issues and ideas to take a look at.

The Home Heating Rebate program – I want to look at what has happened to some of the measures that were in place before *Budget 2016* and what happened to them and where we are now in 2017. The Home Heating Rebate program: Gone. That was a program that helped low-income people with their heating bills. It's gone. There's no trace of it. There's no indication in this budget that it is coming back. It certainly did not help low-income earners. It didn't help them at all and it's gone, and we see that the heating costs are rising.

The Parental Benefits Program, which helped young people get started, is gone. That was a program where government would provide \$1,000 per child at birth, then an additional \$100 a month for the first year of that child's life. A lot of low-income, hard-working families needed that help. It is simply gone and there's no indication that it's coming back.

The drug coverage for over-the-counter drugs: Gone. We've heard from a number of doctors how many of their patients, be they seniors who need certain kinds of medications because of other prescription medications that they need, who they can't afford it. Again, we know, it's a fact that we have the highest percentage of seniors in receipt of GIS and OAS. There are no pennies to spare.

If we look at if someone is renting and they're not lucky enough to have a rent supplement from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – because those are very limited as well. If you're on an income of \$1,100 or \$1,200 a month and your rent is \$800 a month and your heat and light is \$200 a month and you're not getting any relief from that because that Home Heating Rebate program is gone – so that's a thousand bucks, and then your phone and your cable is a hundred bucks. That's not a luxury, that's a necessity – it leaves you with no money.

Maybe you're more than eligible for the drug assistance program, the Prescription Drug Program; however, you're no longer eligible for the over-the-counter drugs that you may need as a result of some of your prescription drugs, or it's drugs like calcium. It particularly affects senior women who need certain types of over-the-counter drugs to help either relieve the symptoms of osteoporosis or that actually help

prevent osteoporosis. The same thing with diabetics, people with diabetes who need certain supplies, much of that has been cut.

Is that a successful measure by the 2016 budget? I don't think so, and it hasn't been relieved by 2017. What we see is this cumulative effect of budget measures from 2016-17 that have not been relieved by budget '17-'18.

The Adult Dental Program coverage: Gone. Other than very limited coverage for adults who are in receipt of income support, that program is cancelled. It is gone.

I've stood in this House and told the story of a gentleman in my district who had an infected tooth, who tried to pull out his own tooth with pliers because he cannot afford a dentist. He is not alone. We've been told by the Minister of Health, well then he has to appeal it. He did appeal it and he still has no help.

We are getting call after call and I'm sure that a number of MHAs here in this House are getting call after call. My colleagues here from the Opposition, both of them there are nodding their heads. We're all getting calls, particularly from seniors who cannot afford their dental care. We're hearing from doctors about the problem that our seniors can't afford dental care. What happens? We all know what happens. They end up in emergency. It's not a success.

That budget measure in 2016-17 was not a success, and in 2017 this budget does nothing to alleviate that. There is no success there. There's no benefit. I'm curious as to what government has done to measure the roll-out effects and consequences of these decisions to see in fact: (a) has it strengthened our individuals, (b) has it strengthened our communities, (c) is it better for our entire community and our entire economy.

So far we haven't seen any report that indicates they have assessed the impact of these particular measures and no relief in budget '17. So we have people going to emergency. We have people who end up with larger infections that spread, and it costs us more. In the long run, it costs us way more.

Again, a number of seniors, a number of doctors have talked to us about seniors whose overall

health is affected by the fact that they cannot any longer get dental coverage. They cannot afford it. For some, it creates very serious health situations.

The Labrador food airlift subsidy: gone. Tell me who that benefits. Who does that benefit? Who does that measure benefit? It's gone.

The Labrador building material rebate program: gone. Who has that benefited? Who has that affected negatively? There is no way to look at that particular measure and say that was good for the economy. How could it be good for the economy?

The assistance for diabetic test strips: reduced. Perhaps that made sense for some folks living with diabetes but for many people it does not. There are doctors who are saying, this is not a good measure. Who has that benefited? How has that improved our economy? How has that improved our communities? How has that improved the general health of individuals? I don't think it has, and *Budget 2017* has done nothing to alleviate that.

Grants to youth organizations: reduced. We see through the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, through the educational outcomes advisory committee, the investigation committee, we are seeing the rise and increase in obesity in our children, and mental health issues in our children, anxiety and depression and in drug use. So how has the reduction to youth organizations who work on these issues, who benefit our young people, how has that benefited our communities, our individuals or our economy? It hasn't. All these measures are failures. They're not successes. They are failures by this government in 2016-17 and now in 2017-18.

Eight rural AES offices are closed. How does that benefit our economy? How does that benefit our communities? It doesn't. It doesn't, and we're hearing from women's centers across the country about women who used to use these offices to get advice on career counselling, to get advice on employment counselling, to help do their resumes. They're gone. They're just simply gone. I don't know how that benefits our economy.

Funding for youth and student services and at-risk youth employment: reduced. When what we should be doing right now is pouring money into our youth, pouring money into any kind of educational program, whether it be our mainstream educational programs or our alternative educational programs, it is so important. We know that, because the cost down the road is far greater than what has been saved by these short-sighted, ill-informed cuts.

Bus passes for people facing mental and physical health challenges: eliminated for many. I have a situation of someone who has been waiting for two years to get into the trauma program and cannot afford the bus pass, because it's too far to walk. Their Income Support is so low, their rent is so high, the cost of food has gone up, and that person cannot afford the bus fee that it will take to go back and forth. One return trip is \$5; five return trips in a week is \$25. Four times that is \$100 a month for someone who may only have \$125 a month for food. It's not possible.

How many times have we had to help people whose bus passes were cancelled, how many times have we had to help them appeal their decisions. What happens is they have to go back and forth to their doctors, for their doctors to write letter after letter, appealing and appealing again, so that they can in fact get bus passes so they can attend their mental health support groups, or just even the mental health, the organizations where the doors are open, whether it be the Gathering Place, whether it be CHANNAL. There may not be a formalized program every day but it takes people out of their isolation, and their doctors are saying it's so important.

Again, when you have maybe about \$125 a month to live on because Income Support is so low, \$100 a month for bus fees, it's not possible. A bus pass is \$75. So what happens, people end up isolated, they end up unwell, they end up at the doctor, they end up at the Waterford and they end up with physical ailments. The suffering compared to \$75 a month makes no sense.

I know of one doctor who wrote in an appeal letter that I will see this person eight times a month so that they will be eligible for their bus

pass. That's the rollout effect of such a short-sighted, ill-informed decision.

How has that improved our economy? How has that improved our communities? How has that improved our individuals? As a matter of fact, it's actually the antithesis to good health. It's the antithesis to empowering our communities. It's the antithesis to good economic sense because, again, what happens is that people then have to use other services because their health deteriorates because they are isolated.

I'm hearing from mental health workers about this. I'm hearing from doctors about this. I'm hearing from social workers about this. It makes no sense. Has government actually done an analysis of the consequences of some of these short-sighted decisions?

The HST point-of-sale rebate on books: eliminated; making us the only province in the country to tax books. It's the antithesis again of where we should be going. We should not be taxing books at this point – probably never, but certainly at this point when we know we have the highest illiteracy rates and we have the only province that has a provincial sales tax now on books. Again, it flies in the face of reason.

The home care subsidy under the Provincial Home Support Program: hours reduced – again, I know that many of my colleagues here in the House have received phone call after phone call after phone call from people who were saying that their home care hours have been reduced. Some of them are seniors who may only have needed just a few hours of home care to help them stay in their homes. And sometimes it means a visit from someone, sometimes it means somebody who will mop up their floors, put out the garbage because they're not able to do that on their own, someone to really help them stay in their homes – all it is, is a few hours.

Again, how does this improve our economy? How does it strengthen our communities? How does it help and empower individuals to take away a few hours? They're not frills. They're not oh, wouldn't be nice if we could do this. These are cost-saving measures for us in the long run to make sure that people can stay in their homes, to make sure that they can stay in their homes safely.

So here we have seniors where their over-the-counter drug costs are no longer covered, their dental needs are no longer covered, their home care hours have been cut and their bus passes have been taken away. I challenge anyone in this House to tell me, to tell all of us, to tell the seniors of Newfoundland and Labrador, how those cuts improve our economy, how those cuts improve the budget of the government, how those cuts empower our individuals, empower and strengthen our seniors, empower and strengthen our communities and how it improves the economy.

I challenge anyone in this House and I hope that somebody on the other side of the House who is supporting this budget can stand up and tell me why it was a good thing to take away dental care from seniors, to take away over-the-counter drugs from seniors, to take away home care from seniors and their Home Heating Rebate. I challenge anyone. I actually beg. I beg someone on the other side of the House to please stand up and indicate to us how that helps the seniors of the province, how that helps the economy of the province, how that strengthens our communities.

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): Order, please!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to rise today I think maybe the third time to speak to *Budget 2017*. I listened very attentively to my colleague for St. John's Centre.

She mentioned an issue that I have encountered in my district as well dealing with seniors and the issue of keeping seniors in their own home and what that means just in terms of their overall well-being, but from a health care perspective

and providing the appropriate level of service and care through government and through public policy that allows them to stay in their home.

One of the things she talked about was the two-hour home care component that was allowed up to last year's budget, which was taken out, and I don't believe it was put back in this year's budget as well. I know dealing with individual cases – I dealt with a case in Petty Harbour just some time ago; I went down and met with a senior lady who was doing well in terms of being able to live in her own home. The home had been well taken care of. She availed of some of the programs that we'd brought in over the past number of years: the Home Repair Program and the Residential Energy Efficiency Program.

Her home is certainly in good shape. It was a larger home, a two-storey home; her husband was deceased but her kids, some were in the area and some were not, had moved on. But with everything that she had and with some of the public policy supports over the past number of years, she was able to continue to live in her home.

You might say it's only two hours, but hours of essential help that would come in at a particular time and to help her with really home-making services in her home, and that would get her through the nighttime, or again in the morning to get through her days. So it was certainly disappointing in that regard that that's not there, because it's a huge component of the overall health care for seniors.

If you look at some of the numbers, some of them were just – I think I saw a report just recently, in the past couple of days that looked at the aging population in Canada. I think it's the first time in our history that the senior numbers, 65 and over, are going to exceed those in our country that are 14 and younger. I think that's historic and it's the first time ever that when you look at our demographics and what that's tied to in terms of health care, providing health care for seniors as people get older, there's a huge public policy issue that has been dealt with and is going to continue to be dealt with in the future as we move forward.

That's on a Canadian standard. As we all know, or we should know, when we look at

Newfoundland and Labrador, the demographics here in regard to our aging population and the variations in the next decade when you look at who is going to be 65 years and older, and who is going to be younger, from that perspective our aging of that demographic is even increasing at a larger rate than it is on the national average or the national standard, which poses huge challenges for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and for government, in terms of using those services and providing those services.

One of the fundamental ones, and it's certainly cost efficient, is getting back to the issue of allowing people to stay in their homes – seniors – as opposed to going to a personal care home, then on to a nursing care home. Personal care home Level 1 and 2, and then you get on to a higher cost with nursing homes Level 3 and 4.

I know in our time in government we had started looking at the amount of personal care homes that were in the province. The vacancy rate wasn't at full capacity in regard to capacity in the homes, and there was some give there in regard to the amount of vacancies that were available. So with that it was a 2.5 in terms of the overall care that could be provided in these personal care homes.

If a personal care home was able to accommodate a senior, keep them, if they had been there for Level 1 or Level 2 care, their care had deteriorated somewhat but could still be around 2.5 in terms of level of care, that could be accommodated in that personal care home. That allows to use the resources that are available in a cost-effective way.

I'm certainly familiar with that. Over the past number of years my late mother was in a personal care home, for the past number of years, the past five or six years, and through that – while you're in government you deal with constituents. Obviously, you're dealing with someone in your family, a loved one, you become quite familiar with the challenges, with the programs that are available and how you can best execute those programs to make sure to benefit.

I saw that first-hand in terms of a personal care home, in terms of health when there are

challenges with an older relative. She was in her 90s, so you saw that as you went through and what care she needed and how it could be provided. So that's all very important as we look forward in regard to how we fund health care services, particularly related to our older demographics and the challenges with that.

One of the things we've seen over the past, I guess the past year, and the current administration and the federal government – the federal Liberal government and the provincial Liberal government here went through the process of updating funding through the Health Act and what that would look like. The past agreement was growing at an annual increase of 6 per cent. There was a lot of discussion about that of what that would be, and then the discussion and the agreement of Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal government of what that would be, would be 3 per cent.

So they adopted that 3 per cent, or they offered the 3 per cent. Most premiers in Canada at the time were not happy with that 3 per cent, recognizing that it's not only for seniors; it's for acute care, mental health, various demographics. All that's to help with the challenges we face nationally and provincially.

Now there's been a lot of attention drawn too, which is great, in terms of mental health; a lot of work done by various corporations, governments, various volunteer groups in regard to reducing the stigma of mental health. That it is an illness we need to recognize, not be ashamed to come forward with, certainly to understand it that we all – either individually or within our family or friends – know someone that has had challenges in regard to mental health. Thankfully, any kind of a stigma or any kind of reluctance to come forward to talk about it, to seek help, those walls are coming down, and that's extremely important and it's good to see that.

With that as well, we need to meet that demand that people are willing to come forward. I know in our time, our administration built facilities as well, particularly related to youth in terms of treatment, whether it's addictions or other mental health challenges that can be dealt with.

Through the health transfers that we're renegotiating, unfortunately, from a national perspective, they reduced down to 3 per cent. As I said, provincial leaders, our Premier included, were in Ottawa and weren't going to accept 3 per cent. It wasn't enough, wasn't going to meet the needs of this province in terms of the challenges we have.

As well, when you look at the demographics, I think it's important that when you're talking about health care funding on a national level coming to the province, that you look at what are the demographics? What are the challenges of the individual provinces?

Look at our demographics and where they're going. As I said, per capita we have the oldest demographics in the country. When you look at the scale of where we're getting to in terms of the percentage of the population that's going to be over the age of 65, we're getting there the quickest in the country and continuing in that direction.

It's extremely important when our provincial government goes to Ottawa to look for actual assistance that comes to us. It's been part of this great federation we call Canada that we extract from those programs our share, but, as well, extract our fair share related to the particulars of the province, because some of the things we experience are experienced by other Atlantic Canadian Provinces as opposed to what might be experienced in Ontario or Quebec.

Some of the statistics I read the other day in regard to some of the younger populations, we're seeing them in some of the western provinces where their demographics are quite different, and some of our other areas, northern areas of our country where the younger age demographic is reflective of their population.

If you're going to look at delivering health care services, as well looking at the demographics, looking at the remoteness, the geography, there are challenges. So one-size doesn't fit all in that regard. We need to look at the particulars of a particular part of our country. My point is Newfoundland and Labrador needs to be fully aware and make federal government agencies aware of what the particulars are in our particular circumstance.

Going back to the health care funding and what was agreed to, our Premier said they weren't going to accept 3 per cent, but it was no time after they were back out and lining up to sign on for 3 per cent. So we got our 3 per cent and didn't get anything else in regard to helping us with particular aspects of health care funding here for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Just to go back to the example I started with in regard to my colleague for St. John's Centre when she talked about that two-hour. Well, that may be small but it's important in terms of delivery of service for that aging senior that I met with in Petty Harbour and that so many others of us meet, and others in my district, too, in regard to what that means to them and their standard of living and providing cost-effective delivery of service to seniors. We're all getting there, and at some point we'll experience the system too. It's a big challenge and we need to take it on and make sure we can meet that challenge.

As well in the budget this year, when you go back and look at – I went back the other day and looked at the expenditures and some of the reductions in 2016-2017. I looked at the amount of fees and taxes that were implemented at that time. When you look at this particular year, we've heard in the past that on the other side they had the plan, they had the right plan. People were going to like it.

I'm not sure when it was laid out last year. The original plan laid out, from what we can understand, wasn't met because they were going to have – the first phase of the budget was going to be some revenue generation. Then we were going to see an update and as well going to see an expenditure reduction later in the summer and the fall. Then we were going to look at how they were going to proceed into their second budget.

What actually happened is that we saw a massive amount of fees and taxes that came in, haphazardly really, when you look at the list. There's a list of several pages into what was taxed and what the fees were. Then later on there was going to be a look at expenditures.

I guess initially when the budget came down, like any budget, if there are huge changes that are made, it's reflected in the economy on the

social side and the economic side when people understand and take a look and say: Okay, what's the impact of this going to be on me? Something like a levy that was implemented; I know families that it was \$400. They just filed their income tax and you go to the second or last page of their income tax filing and you see \$400 taken out or you see \$300 taken out. That's net dollars that would have gone back to them in regard to their refund. That's significant, but that's only one component of all of those net dollars that were taken out of communities and families.

I talk to them, as we all do – I'm sure all MHAs do – constituents in their district. I pay close attention to all, but certainly to those families that we'd call middle-class families. Either the first couple that had just gotten married, they're planning on starting their family, or have one or two kids now that are getting to school age, or they have in school involved in activities. Because when you look at the indicators that are in some of the budget documents in regard to the economy, where we're are with those indicators in terms of population, I said before about demographics, where those demographics are going, if there's a group we need to focus on in Newfoundland and Labrador today and for decades to come, it's those young families.

It's those, as I said, those young couples now that are thinking about having a family, starting their family. They need to have belief and they need to have a positive feeling that good things are happening in Newfoundland and Labrador; there's a sound plan in place. We may have some financial challenges, but there's a plan in place to see us through this and through our vast wealth, through our vast natural resources –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: – through our commodity markets, all of those things that there's an opportunity for them to start to have a family here, to raise their family here, to buy a home, to invest, to continue investing in the economy. For those that may have been affected by a downturn in the economy – maybe one of the parents may have lost a job and they need to make some decisions about looking forward. We're in a

position now, we've got a home here, we have our kids here, do we look for an occupation or an opportunity somewhere else outside of the province; or do we try and see our way through the next period of time until we're able to find that employment, find that job, and certainly be part of this and stay here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

And not only in our urban centres, but in our rural communities, because all of that drives economic activity, that drives sustainability, and it drives our ability to continue to drive our economy, and that's what we need to do. As a government, you need to drive that opportunity. You need to let people know that. You need to let them know there's a plan in place, and they feel confident that this is the place to be.

You can talk about economic development and sustainability, but that's all tied together. We have certainly tried in our time in office when you look at – I know my colleague got up a day or two ago in the Budget Speech and talked about the investments we made. The billions of dollars and some of the revenues we've generated, where that went. A lot of that went into education, primary, secondary and university education, post-secondary, to make sure that that youth component of it, that we gave everybody an opportunity. Whether it's Grenfell campus on the West Coast, whether it's Memorial University here, whether it's the Marine Institute, whether it's our CNA campuses, our private colleges, all of that allows our young people or anybody who's changing their career to have access to what they need to get access to contribute to the economy and to give back to the economy when they're employed here and have that expertise.

You look at the type of economy we've grown here. It's certainly diverse in some of the activities we have related to our natural resources, but also related to the IT sector. I know, if I remember correctly, a couple of years ago it was over \$3 billion in terms of the IT sector and what's been grown, how it's been developed and what the return is here in the province.

We have a film industry here that I know we invested heavily in our time in our province and how that has grown. But that was seed money

and there had to be good money invested. Now, some folks talked about the monies we got from royalties and where did it go. Well, I know it was listed the other day and where it went. It's quite clear where it went but if you have an issue with it, you have to stand up and say you shouldn't have spent it here; you should have spent it somewhere else. That's fine; that's the debate we can have. We spent and it's driven activities that we see today in industries like the film industry, in industries like the IT sector and in industries like the aquaculture sector in regard to farming and what that has developed.

If I remember correctly there was almost \$30 million, I think, maybe leveraged another \$200 million in the past decade. We have other large entities that have come from outside that want to grow the volume of activity we have here. I know we have Grieg Seafarms. We created an MOU on that. It's been 17 or 18 months now, we still haven't heard anything, but it's another one to develop that capacity that we had started in the aquaculture industry. That's good because once you get to a certain level in regard to tonnage and production, you get synergies in regard to whether it's feed infrastructure and all of those things.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, I'll say to the hon. Member I do support it because I was part of putting the MOU together, without a doubt. We supported growing the aquaculture industry to what it is today and future growth, without a doubt. There's a huge opportunity and we need to continue to do it.

In regard to supports for the oil and gas sector, we've invested in that in regard to growing the support companies. Because it's one thing to grow the oil and gas sector and you get large companies coming here, but a lot of money put into research and development as well, the Research & Development Corporation, to leverage private sector dollars out of the oil and gas sector to grow those companies that we see now in all parts of the province that support the oil and gas industry. They bring new growth, new money, new expertise for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to grow.

Once you build those companies, as you see from Norwegian companies that come here, once you develop that intellectual knowledge in this particular area that can be exported out. It can be used here but it also can be exported all over the world and I think that's extremely important, and that's what sound investment means in terms of sustainability.

We haven't seen a lot from this particular government when they're 15, 16 months in. Economic development, sustainability, we hear the words but when you match that up with actions, we haven't seen a lot of those. They're almost two years in now. Hopefully, in the near future, we'll hear something about it, but that's what we need. And we need to continue to promote the fact that there is opportunity here, there is a positive environment and we need people to grow, build the communities here because there is opportunity. We need to see more from this government and this budget doesn't deliver very much in that regard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand on my feet and take my 20 minutes, when the clock gets set here, Mr. Speaker. Make sure I get my full 20 minutes before heading home for the weekend.

I did speak yesterday to the PMR, but it's my first time speaking in the budget debate since the budget came down, so I'm going to primarily focus on my district, Mr. Speaker, some of the things that I'm working on, trying to advance on behalf of the people there in the area.

I had a wonderful 17 days. Springtime is probably the most beautiful time –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: – if you want to visit the District of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, and

this spring was exceptionally nice. Every day was sunny blue skies and great snowmobiling. Even though, of my 18 communities, three are unconnected and I have to travel by snowmobile in the winter and boat in the summer to get to them that was a bonus at this time of year.

I certainly enjoyed my trip to Norman Bay by snowmobile and attended the graduation there, just one young boy, which is indicative – we've been hearing a lot in the last couple of days about aging demographics, out-migration and shrinking communities in rural parts. There are indications of that all around, certainly, in my district too.

So we had a lovely evening in Norman Bay and we celebrated the achievements of that young man. Then on Saturday past, I left from Cartwright and we made the 60-mile trip, 106 kilometres I think it was, to Black Tickle and we attended the graduation there of four young people from St. Peter's School. We had a great trip to Black Tickle and back. It was a beautiful graduation; comparable with any graduation you'll see anywhere.

I want to commend the principal there, Madeline, and the teacher, a young lady by the name of Krista Conway from McIvers. They have done a great job there in Black Tickle this year, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward.

Once we're here in the House, when we are here, it's very, very busy, especially if you represent a rural district and you spend your weekends travelling. You lose a lot of time getting out and about to events in your district. So while it's important for us to be here and it's necessary as parliamentarians to take care of the legislative side of our job, certainly for me the most rewarding is when I am out and about in contact with the people that I work for on a regular basis and bringing their issues forward back here, Mr. Speaker.

For those watching, after budget we go through a process called Estimates. That's where the Opposition and Third Party get to come into the Chamber and department by department, they get to ask questions line by line by line in the budget.

I've chaired the Social Services Committee for the last couple of years. That means I'm here for five departments. It's been very, very busy. Sometimes it means a couple of extra days, Mr. Speaker, before you get that email returned or you get that phone call returned. We finished up today and I'm quite happy about that.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the district issues, listening to Members across the way, the Member for St. John's Centre just talked at length about some of the issues, concerns and programs that were cut. Members in the Opposition talked about the fees and the tax increases. I think most people now are beginning to understand why that had to happen. Just maybe four months in after forming government, when you realize that unless you make cuts there or you find some new measures to generate revenue, you do not even have the funds for basic programs and services, that's where we were.

As I listen – and I do listen intently every day as they stand and talk about what happened to this and what happened to that and how come we don't have this and why did you tax that – I'm not hearing solutions. I'm not hearing solutions of what they would have done differently, Mr. Speaker. I used the analogy again yesterday of a ship. We got on a ship that was going down and everybody basically was bailing like crazy because we were on a collision course for bankruptcy.

I don't know what happened, Mr. Speaker. I thought about it after. I think the previous administration were (inaudible) forecast of having a wonderful time, and people came along and passed in requests and money was being passed out and it was not necessarily being prioritized or based on need, which is what you see with good governance.

In my district, Mr. Speaker, we have the Trans-Labrador Highway, the biggest project probably ever to be undertaken in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are on track for 2020 to have everything paved – that will be a happy day – from Red Bay all the way to Labrador City, 1,200 kilometres of pavement.

We're not there yet, Mr. Speaker. We've not made the progress that we should have in the last

number of years. So in the spring and fall with the gravel road that stretches from Red Bay to Goose Bay, it's absolutely atrocious. Unless you have been there and you have driven it, you cannot appreciate what people are trenching through past the top of their tires in mud.

Mr. Speaker, every spring and fall the story of the Trans-Labrador Highway makes its rounds in social media. People are frustrated; they're fed up. You get the comments of this is 2017 and why are we still driving on a road this bad. I want to say to the people that despite the fiscal climate, because of the great relationship that we also have with Ottawa in terms of being able to leverage funds, in June 2016 we flew in to Mary's Harbour and we made the single biggest announcement that's been on the Trans-Labrador Highway to date. Sixty-three million dollars I think it came in. It was actually \$55.7 million. Work started on that last year.

People were frustrated. They didn't see pavement on the ground. Mr. Speaker, Johnson's, the contractor, is now coming in to start up. They're probably there right now on the ground. They're bringing in a large crusher. They're bringing in a couple of spreaders. If I have constituents that are watching, they're going to start the paving – we're going to probably see that start in June. They're going to start Red Bay going north and they're going to start Lodge Bay going north.

I had a lot of calls to my office, Mr. Speaker, saying, okay, there were two 80-kilometre paving contracts that went out, but one contractor got it so will we now only see them working on one end. No, they're going to come in and they're going to be working on two. I'm hoping myself that by late fall, I'm going to be driving on a lot of pavement from Charlottetown when I'm heading to Blanc Sablon, Quebec, to the airport.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I also want to let the people know that we have work that will be commencing in the Labrador Straits, Route 510. My colleagues and many people here in the House talk about the \$25 billion in oil over the last 12 years. Well, I want to tell you, if money was being allocated based on need, Route 510 in the Labrador Straits would never have been neglected for the last 12 years – never.

If we are talking about the volume of traffic that goes over a road, we have the Strait of Belle Isle. Mr. Speaker, in the Gulf, we have two super ferries that move about 300,000 people a year. In the Strait of Belle Isle, we have the *Apollo* that's been moving around 150,000 people a year – 150,000 people. The road I'm talking about, Route 510, is the main artery that comes right down through Labrador. It's absolutely in a deplorable condition.

Even though we were in very tough shape the first year, the minister did allocate some money for levelling in the really crisis parts. We did get some more provincial money this year in the budget that we will hopefully see that work over the next month. We're going to see some levelling through Forteau. We're going to see some pulverizing and paving Forteau-English Point, some levelling coming up out of Crow Head, and through the community of West St. Modeste.

And, Mr. Speaker, our government has already gone on record and committed that we will pulverize and pave the entire Labrador Straits starting with – there's a \$16 million business case study going to Ottawa and that will be \$8 million provincial and \$8 million federal. I understand that is being prepared to go late May, early June to Ottawa to look for funds and beyond that, which will cover the 44 kilometres of pavement from the border to Pinware. The following year in 2019-2020, we're going to see announcements made for the 23 kilometres or so of pavement from Pinware to Red Bay, which is not in quite as bad a shape but still very necessary to be done, and hasn't been repaved in a long, long time.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite pleased with that. To form government and to have so little to work with but the government recognizes that this link from the Quebec border on to the Quebec border in Labrador West is going to link us to mainland Canada. It's not just linking Newfoundland and Labrador; it's linking us to Canada. That work will continue on.

Back to the Trans-Labrador Highway, there are several more business cases that have gone to Ottawa. We're optimistic that we will be hearing some funding announcements on that soon. The next phase that is prioritized to be completed is

the Charlottetown Junction to Cartwright Junction. I can tell you that my office gets an awful lot of calls, especially spring and fall, because there's nothing – in 2001, I believe, that road was put in so you can imagine now 16 years without any stone, without any additional work being done, there's nothing there to grade. Unless you live in that region or unless you have to travel back and forth to Goose Bay and to Lab City, you can't appreciate what I'm talking about.

Most of you guys and my colleagues will leave here today, they will get on a paved road and they will go back to their district. We're not there yet. I understand people when they're so frustrated and they're waiting for it to happen, but we're doing everything we can to roll out the money, roll out the projects and hopefully, in a couple of years, we'll be looking back and it will all be done, Mr. Speaker.

So widening, upgrading, hard surfacing Charlottetown Junction to Cartwright Junction is the next phase. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at Phase III to widen and upgrade from Cartwright Junction to 160 kilometres east of Happy Valley. This work will get underway as soon as the agreements are finalized and the funding has been approved.

Broadband; I don't know what I get most of the calls on – if it's on the road or if it's on broadband – I really don't. We've got a lot of people that are driving on the road and that's terrible, but broadband is a huge, huge issue. It's huge for health as we're trying to find ways to save money in health. Once we get the broadband you'll be able to go in to a clinic, sit down in front of a screen and you'll have the supports there to meet with a psychiatrist in a more urban area.

Schools; Mr. Speaker, a couple of years ago I worked with the Department of Education. I was in Opposition at the time. We put in satellite dishes for all of the schools because things were extremely problematic with the students trying to learn by distance.

It's been a long time coming, the proposal is \$12.6 million. That has now gone to Ottawa under the new Connect to Innovate program. ACOA is a partner in that, Nunacor is a partner,

Bell and the province, and of course Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really hoping that's going to get approved because it has totally crippled the region. The Internet is so slow. Some of the businesses in the region actually have put boosters on the Interac machine. So if you pop in the store to pay for your gas, you will be waiting and waiting and waiting for the Interac to process.

Things that people on the Avalon take for granted, these are the larger files for me that I have been pushing. When people send me messages and say: Do you know how frustrating it is, do you know how long it took me to do my banking online? We have two financial institutions in my district, so most of us do online banking. These are all the reasons – and small businesses and hotels that are trying to take bookings online, these are all the reasons why we need the Internet.

The proposal that has been submitted will see a fibre line. We've already done the design piece, the engineering and design. This proposal once approved, will see a fibre line built from Red Bay north down to Charlottetown branch. I for one, too, Mr. Speaker, am certainly looking forward to the day when that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the All-Party Committee for Mental Health and Addictions. That was an experience. When people come in, different groups and individuals present to you, it's an experience that you won't soon forget. I'm very pleased with the report, the work of the staff in the Department of Health and Community Services. They did phenomenal work on that report towards recovery, the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

I'm more so pleased that the minister in that department has committed that those 54 recommendations, he will take it upon himself to implement. Mr. Speaker, we already saw moves of that happening when \$5 million was allocated in the 2017 budget to start the implementation of some of those recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, no, it's not all doom and gloom. Despite the tough fiscal climate that we find

ourselves operating in, good things are happening. Good things are happening every single day.

With the aging demographics, home care is a big issue. I think all of us, all of the elected people; we deal with home care issues every single day. Mr. Speaker, we've been able to work, the province has been able to work a deal under the Health Accord with the feds, and we've been able to secure some money over the next five years that will be focused into health care and into supporting mental health and addictions.

Mr. Speaker, with home care there are some wonderful things happening where people are being assessed to see what supports they need to stay in their home as long as they possibly can. We know with the aging demographics in our province – and we are the oldest province in the country – the longer people can stay in their own home, the happier they are. We also know that the longer we can support people to stay in their own home, the cheaper it is on the taxpayer and on our health care system.

When it comes to health care, Mr. Speaker – and I've often said it and I'm not as knowledgeable as my colleague, the minister, in that – spending almost 40 cents on every dollar we have been spending of the provincial budget. We have been spending the most per capita. We've been spending the most and we've been getting the least output, which means we have to start doing something differently.

Any time I speak, Mr. Speaker – now I'm in the grad season, so I'm speaking at lots of grads. I have three coming up this weekend. I thought about a quote yesterday after I sat down listening to someone in the House. It might have been by *Alice in Wonderland*. She said: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there." Now, isn't that the truth: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there."

I feel that way about the previous administration over the last 10 or 12 years. Yes, there was some money spent on good causes. In my own community, we had a school that was full of mould, children were sick, teachers were sick. Through a lot of hard-fought effort to get the attention, we did get a new school. We certainly

appreciate that money, Mr. Speaker, but you have to be focused. You have to have a plan, which is what we have in *The Way Forward*. We have a plan. We know where we want to go over the next five years and we have a team here that's working very, very diligently to take us there, Mr. Speaker.

Sometimes you listen to the Opposition and the Third Party and they talk about all the programs that have been cut. Well, Mr. Speaker, we still have a lot of wonderful programs that are out there available for people to apply on. The Healthy Living grant is one that there's been a big uptake in my district for. It could be community gardens, recreation programs, playground equipment, and a whole gamut of areas. I have no doubt, now that the link is up again – and I want to say to the people watching, the link is up again – money is available. We will have lots more people applying again, Mr. Speaker.

As we move into summer season, I've already been fortunate to have a number of my colleagues from Cabinet come into the district, meet with groups and meet with municipalities. I'm looking forward, again, Mr. Speaker, this summer to hosting some of my colleagues. The Minister of Health may be coming with me in June. The Minister of Transportation has already been up there a number of times, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, the Minister of Education.

When they come visit my district it is always a memorable experience, not just because of the time it takes and sometimes the methods you have to use to get there and the roads you have to travel on, but one thing that stays with them, Mr. Speaker, is the warmth of the people. The warmth of the people in that area, many of them who have so little and they would yet give so much in return.

I'm always happy when I can bring my colleagues up and give them that first-hand experience. I'm looking forward to taking the minister up to see the wonderful work that's happening at the Health Centre there in Forteau. That's the only place in my district where we have a doctor.

I'm just thinking of an email that recently was shared with me, and I have to share it in the House because a lot of times we have staff in all the departments and the agencies, boards and commissions that work hard every day and maybe don't always get the thanks they need. Doug Letto, known to many here, sent a note back to us. Doug's dad is now in the long-term care in my district in Forteau. He sent a note back and he said it was a first-class staff there doing a first-class job, a 22½-year-old facility, kept very clean. I thought that was very nice that he took the time when he visited the place to write a note back and say: Thanks to the staff, pass along my gratitude for the wonderful work they are doing in that area.

Also, Mr. Speaker, down in Mary's Harbour we have the Battle Harbour manor which is one of only two homes in the province that is a non-profit home. The other one operates in my colleague, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Industry's district, and lots of challenges with that home. It is the only non-profit home in Newfoundland and Labrador that's operating with diesel-generated power. They have extremely high hydro bills. We're working with them to help them through that. The board there has done some phenomenal work.

Mr. Speaker, it's amazing how fast I run out of time when I'm up. I had so much more to say. I look forward to the next time and to continue working hard on behalf of the people of Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Thank you for acknowledging me this afternoon and giving me a chance to rise and speak to the budget. I think we're on the non-confidence motion right now. There are a number of motions that come through on the budget. It's my second time this week actually getting up to use my time.

The Member for L'Anse au Clair just sat down. Mr. Speaker, I think we all agree that the Member for L'Anse au Clair has a way of calming the House. She always speaks very eloquently and speaks very well, she does a great job.

AN HON. MEMBER: She'd be a great minister.

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, she'd be a great minister. She calms the House. She does calm the House down.

She just spoke a few minutes ago to some of the great programs that government provides to people in Newfoundland and Labrador, and she's right. There are many, many great programs that are delivered to the people of the province that people need, benefit from, receive assistance from and so on from many different departments.

The Healthy Living grant is one that she referenced today. I'm glad she spoke of it because we're not sure what grants, what programs and so on are receiving that funding as of yet. I know we'll hear about it I'm sure as the year goes on, but we're not sure yet. We're working to continue to find out and we'll be asking more questions on it as time permits and the week goes on.

We've been distracted by some other matters over the last couple of weeks because this is usually the time after the budget comes down. We had two Question Periods and the House broke then for the Easter break and came back after a couple of weeks break. Then we had, during Easter, the conflict of interest of the clerk of the Executive Council. The matter broke in the media. It wasn't something we raised here in the House or publicly. The media broke the story on April 21 on allnewfoundlandandlabrador.com. Then there were follow-up stories by *The Telegram*. The story demanded and required necessary attention, and still requires attention.

I'm going to probably swing back to that, too, a little bit later in my commentary. Mr. Speaker, it's a very important matter. It's a matter that's created a response from people that's very different for me. It's not like the response to the

budget last year or the response to the budget this year. It's very different and it's very concerning. I'm going to get back to that shortly.

There are a number of items I was hoping and wanted to talk about in today's budget or in today's time and it's going to be challenging for me to get to all of them. As I said, it was a lively day in the House of Assembly here earlier. We had some wonderful guests. Young Steven Sullivan, the Janeway Champion Child, was here. My colleague for Cape St. Francis knows the family very well. Young Steven is a constituent of mine. It was nice for all Members of the House to come together today to acknowledge Steven.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: What a great young man he is.

MR. K. PARSONS: What a great young man, yeah.

MR. P. DAVIS: He sure is, yeah. He's a great young man. He's two years now battling a cancer. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we can all take lessons from Steven Sullivan, I can tell you that. A young boy with a smile on his face and a love of life and had his family with him here today. I can tell you he's inspiring if nothing else.

Also today when he was here, and while the Speaker spoke and my colleague spoke so eloquently as well about Steven, I couldn't help but think that it's really a lesson in mankind in so many ways and about people, how we treat each other, how we should treat each other and how we should think about others. He's so young but yet so happy, so bright and so cheerful. He really is.

I wasn't meaning to go on to talk about Steven today but I can't help it, actually, because he's so motivating. We wish him nothing but the very best. Thank you to you, and to Members of the House for his welcome. He came at a really good time because he came the same time the Grey Cup came to the House of Assembly and he had a chance to meet a couple of members of the team.

The owner of the team was here and some of his family. Of course, the owner of the team is a Newfoundlander and Labradorian, born and raised until he was in late teens and then moved away. It was so good of him to remember his roots and to remember Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and to bring the cup back here. The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, I believe, was part of that as well. Both are from Corner Brook. I'm sure they knew each other back in those days. Congratulations and good for him as well to organize that.

The highlight for me, it was great to get my hands on the Grey Cup. We don't get that opportunity every day to meet players, the owners and family and so on. Also, for Steven to get a chance to get his hands on the Grey Cup was quite a great opportunity for him as well. So congratulations to all of them.

Then of course, we went to Question Period. The tone changed very quickly here in Question Period. We saw a new response today, Mr. Speaker, from government on the matters that have been going on over the last few days and matters that we've been asking questions about.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to ask questions. That's what we were elected to do. When you're elected and you arrive on the Opposition side of the House you ask questions. Some of the Members, especially Members on the front bench over there, sat in the Opposition and asked tough questions and pursued things. That's what you do in Opposition. As government, you should be able to stand and answer to those questions.

We found it difficult today to get some of the answers to the specific questions that we were asking. That's not unusual and governments of the past have done that. We've done that when we were on the government side of the House as well, but on important matters like this it's a little bit concerning as well when you have a very serious issue.

This issue, as I said, broke first on the 21st of April. It really didn't become well known until James McLeod of *The Telegram* broke the story then last week. Then over the weekend, the Premier had several meetings with Mr. Coffey, clerk of the Executive Council or the former

clerk now of the Executive Council. On Sunday night, before business on Monday, Mr. Coffey resigned. On Monday morning, then the Premier held a press conference.

I attended it. Most of us, actually, on this side of the House attended it. It was a press conference. It's interesting that nobody from the government side of the House was there. Sorry, correction, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety was there with the Premier, but no other MHAs were there. I know they were in the building because I passed some on the way to or from the press conference.

AN HON. MEMBER: Some were in Estimates.

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, some were in Estimates. Fair enough, I say to the minister opposite. Yeah, true enough too, some were in Estimates, but I don't remember a time that there wasn't a supporting section there. When the minister does announcements, quite often he'll have MHAs attend from the government side of the House. So it was a little bit odd. I wasn't sure it was coming because when we got there, none of them were there.

Anyway, I did listen to what the Premier said, and the media asked probing questions. It's a serious matter about conflict of interest and suggestions of conflict of interest.

Conflict of interest doesn't necessarily mean a person has deliberately done something wrong. People can find themselves in a conflict of interest. When the conflict of interest exists or develops or is determined to exist, then there are things that should take place to deal with that conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is simply a situation that has the potential – it doesn't have to be real, it could be the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person because of the possibility of a clash between the person's self-interest and a professional interest or a public interest. That's what a conflict of interest is.

Someone said you can't serve two masters. A conflict of interest is, well, I have a responsibility or a role here as part of my employment or because of a connection with a group or an organization or government as the

clerk, but also have a personal interest here in this matter, and that creates a conflict of interest.

While the legislation, which the Premier referred to the legislation this week and so on – the concepts are not different. The *Conflict of Interest Act 1995*, I'm sure by reading it – I've read it several times – it doesn't anticipate a situation where the clerk of the Executive Council could be in a conflict of interest. It doesn't. In some of this legislation I'm going to talk about this afternoon, there's talk about deputy ministers and officials and so on, but the *Conflict of Interest Act* doesn't –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

I really don't think it comprehends, expects or sees the possibility that that could take place. Democracy Watch this week made a statement in saying they've never seen it before when a clerk is a political appointment – never seen it before. They've never seen a wind-up period for a public servant.

The Premier talks about oh, there is a transition period. Well, there's a transition period of ministers because on one day they're not a minister. They're attempting to get elected. The next day they're elected. There has to be a transition period because there has to be time for you to clear your books and clear your interests, your conflicts of interest and so on. There's a Commissioner of Legislative Standards which all Members of the House file personal documentations with, all of our personal matters and issues and so on.

For some people, especially people who have complex businesses and business interests and so on and families have business interests, it can take a bit of time to do it. The Premier talked about that. I fully get that and I fully respect that, but that's not the case here.

This is not about a Cabinet minister being appointed or who appointed a Cabinet minister or anything else, because Cabinet ministers are political appointments. It's not about political staff. It's not about a political staff person. It's

about the senior public servant of the province being retained.

Mr. Speaker, in times in the past, the public servant could and would have been expected to be cleared of all conflicts of interest before engaging in the appointment. The Premier had a choice to do that. The Premier could have said to Mr. Coffey – we have a very capable, experienced clerk, and I understand why the Premier would want to change out the clerk. I get that. That happens too in government that new premiers come in and after a period of time decide, I want to change people. I want to put someone different there or someone who might align differently with how they operate or function. They just want to change it out because the old person, the person who was there before, you grow relations with who's in power and all that kind of stuff. I get all of that. They want to move them out.

But he could have said to the incoming clerk, Mr. Coffey: I'd like for you to come with me. Will you come work with me? Before you come work with me, I need you to clear up these conflicts of interest. It didn't happen. The Premier could have required conflict of interest statements to be made, clearly documented and recorded with the clerk, with the Premier. The Premier said himself the clerk is essentially the Premier's deputy minister. All ministers in departments have deputy ministers. The Premier is the head of the Cabinet, the president of the Executive Council and the clerk is the top staff person in the Premier's office, the same as a minister is a top elected official in the department.

The top official in the department is the deputy minister. Under the deputy minister there are assistant deputy ministers and there are directors and managers. Then there are some non-unionized employees but mostly many, many unionized employees. They all filter up to that deputy minister.

Those positions should be non-partisan but the clerk in particular, being the highest level – because all those deputy ministers filter up to the clerk, non-partisan. You should not be given a job as a public servant ever because of your political supports or associations. A person applying for a unionized job shouldn't get the

job because they support one party or the other, they should have a process to go through. And there is in the public service.

The Public Service Commission, an independent branch of government, makes those non-partisan choices finding the best people for the job. There's a lot of discussion about best people for the job and so on. The clerk is that highest employee, not a Cabinet minister, not a political staff person, not an elected official. All parties here have funding to hire political staff who are not considered to be public servants.

The political staff we have, our constituency assistants and so on, they are not considered to be public servants. My constituency assistant is an employee of the House of Assembly, an employee of mine through the House of Assembly, not a public servant. They're considered to be different but the public servant is that highest position.

The concept of a conflict of interest, barring the legislation being 25 years old back in 1995, there's still that concept that readily available – a believed and understood concept of conflict of interest and there is the *Conflict of Interest* legislation. There's also the *Public Employees Act*.

When I was researching through legislation and having looked at legislation and the *Public Employees Act*, I was going to glance over it first because I said maybe it doesn't apply. The definition of a public employee – this is, let me see, 2004 I think were the last amendments on this one. As I read through this definition of what a public employee is, let's just think for a minute, does the clerk fit this description?

A public employee “means a person who is appointed by or with the approval of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council” That means Cabinet. So he appointed by or approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Mr. Speaker, I should point out as well the Premier can act on behalf of Cabinet. So is the person appointed by Cabinet, the Premier or approved by Cabinet? Yes, that's the case here.

The person is appointed to a post for which specific provisions be made in the Estimates of Expenditure approved by the Legislature – yes,

there are specific estimates in the expenditures for this particular person, made in the Estimates and approved by the Legislature, that's the case – to hold office during pleasure. Hold office during pleasure means that you serve at the pleasure of the Premier. The deputy ministers and the clerk and political staff, all serve with pleasure.

We saw that this year when the government decided to terminate some assistant deputy ministers and deputy ministers. When you say to them, you serve with pleasure, thank you very much, your services are no longer required and your job ends. When you serve with pleasure, you have the right to do that and you accept the job under that. It's known as a pleasure appointment. So that's the clerk as well; that fits.

And is employed on a full-time basis – I don't think we have to talk too much about it. The clerk's position is probably the busiest job, full-time job anywhere in government, works more hours than anybody in government, seven day a week and all that kind of stuff. That's been my experience in the past, so certainly a full-time job.

And exclusively as an employee of the Crown upon an annual salary paid wholly and directly out of public funds. The clerk is expected to work exclusively for the Crown and it's paid for out of public funds. So I said, well, that's interesting because a public employee, I think, would include the clerk.

Under section 5 – and I asked a question related to this today, Mr. Speaker – the payment in addition to annual salary. So the clerk gets an annual salary. It's in the \$180,000 range. The salary documents I saw said \$187,000 but there are other documents that said \$183,000. So we'll take the lower, \$182,000 or \$183,000, well \$180,000 anyway. "No payment in additional to annual salary shall be made out of public funds to a public employee except" There is an exception.

So it says, no payment in addition to the salary shall be made out of public funds to a public employee except when authorized by an act – and I have not yet found an act that authorized an extra payment to the clerk of the Executive Council other than the salary – or specifically

approved by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, which is Cabinet. So no payment in addition to annual salary shall be made to the clerk out of public funds to a public employee except a payment authorized by an act or specially approved by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

That's why I asked the Premier today if the Lieutenant Governor in Council, if Cabinet, had approved the case settled by the clerk because the clerk gets paid as a private lawyer. I'm not a lawyer, but my understanding from talking to lawyers, most often how lawyers operate is they will hold funds in trust, they set up a trust account for their client, and the lawyer or law firm is paid and then disburses the funds from the settlement.

Also, there's no extra payment for overtime performed on the instructions of the head of a department with prior approval in writing. You can get paid for that if you get prior approval. Payment made under this section shall not include any pensionable salaries.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to point out then, the point here is that a public employee – what it is and that they can't receive any other salary unless approved by Cabinet. That's why we asked the question today. I know some Members opposite kind of rolled their eyes when I asked a question earlier today, but that's the reason why we asked that question because we know Mr. Coffey has settled an account. It's safe to conclude he would have received compensation while doing so, and then that creates a problem.

The conflict of interest is clear, Mr. Speaker. We saw a difference in government today. Government went on full attack today on the Opposition. We heard more today, I think, than we've had in recent weeks about the previous administration. I heard some cracks about, oh, we got this and we got that and so on. We know they're in a bad place this week, that it's been a tough week for them.

When I first got elected in 2010 and sat on that side of the House until 2015, we had lots of difficult weeks, too, and challenging weeks. I can understand and appreciate that they're under a lot of pressure, not so much here in the House. They're under pressure publicly over this

particular matter. All over Newfoundland and Labrador, all over the province they're under pressure on this and people are asking questions about it.

People have become – I think they've changed from where they were in the past because we've seen: oh, my goodness, what are they doing now? We've seen those kinds of commentary. We've seen people mad and upset, but I think more people now, they're kind of like, here we go again, oh no. People were kind of, oh, where is this going to end?

It's not just this matter. There's been a steady pattern of what's taken place: the lead up to the election, the promises and commitments that were made, the campaign promises, very direct. I've said here in the House before and I'll say it again, Mr. Speaker – a friend of mine who's a long-time Liberal said to me one day: Now, Paul, to win the election you know what you have to do. You have to promise people everything. Everything you can think of, promise it to them. If you happen to get elected, you have a good problem on your hands, because it's going to be a problem to fulfill all those promises. I didn't want to do that. I wasn't prepared to do that, but we know that the Liberals made lengthy, lengthy promises. Even going into the last week or two of the election, they were still making promises.

As my colleague just said back here behind me, I heard him say it, I was about to say it myself. They didn't need to do it. People were left scratching their heads, saying: They were going to win the election. It was only a matter of how many seats and so on, that kind of thing, but they were going to win the election. People in the province: Why did they make these promises in the last few weeks of the election when they were going to win and they couldn't keep their promises?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, and they knew they couldn't keep it.

The Premier opposite said, oh, I wouldn't give him an update. I wouldn't give him a fiscal update.

MS. C. BENNETT: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: What was that?

MS. C. BENNETT: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: And what?

MS. C. BENNETT: And Public Accounts.

MR. P. DAVIS: No, the Premier said I wouldn't give an update; wouldn't give him the figures.

Mr. Speaker, that was November, that was October or November 2015. They were making promises for two years before that. Two years before that the Premier was making promises – long before public accounts, long before the election campaign, long before the summer; two years before they were making promises.

The Minister of Finance is here, because the Minister of Finance responded to our budget in 2015. In the budget of 2015 we said: We're headed for trouble. Oil prices were dropping; was continuing to drop. There were production issues. There were maintenance issues in 2015.

In 2015 we brought through a budget that we said was tough on people. The Minister of Finance sat in Opposition and was heavily critical of our budget; heavily critical. She actually said herself: the budget does nothing for families, nothing to help the unemployed, nothing to help seniors.

Mr. Speaker, what we did in our budget in 2015 is pale in comparison to what we saw in 2016 – not even close. They developed a new program for seniors but they also took away from seniors. They can say look at the program we gave, but they never talk about what they took away. They never, ever talked about what they took away.

Long before I became elected, the PC administration spent time trying to reduce the number of people who relied on social programs, who lived in poverty. We went from worst to best. It was a challenge to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister on May 4, 2015, talked about what we had planned as an HST increase. She said: Increasing taxes “will only stunt our economy and make it more

difficult for people to build a life here, to raise their kids here, and it will leave the people of the Province paying for the Tories mismanagement.”

Mr. Speaker, not only did they raise the HST when they promised they wouldn't, but they put on 300 fee increases and 50 new fees and taxes – 300 new ones. Then she even said: Liberals would grow the economy. If necessary, we would borrow over increasing taxes, we would not risk the revenue side of the ledger at a time when our economy is contracting. There is a whole number of other quotes. My intention wasn't to go through all of them today.

Long before campaign time and summertime and so on, I remember having a note on a speech the premier had done. I think it was the fall of 2013, winter 2014 when he said: We have a plan; you're going to like it. That's what he said. We still haven't seen that plan. They're going to say *The Way Forward*, that's our plan. That's a brand new plan, the framework of a plan they rolled out a couple of months ago. It certainly wasn't a plan dated 2013 or 2014.

Then there were a whole number of missteps. We heard today, oh, the previous administration – the previous administration. We heard kind of threatening comments coming across the floor. I understand trying to shut us down but there were a number of steps that took people. When I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, people of the province aren't angry, they don't seem to be angry anymore, they're just deflated. It's like they're, oh, here we go again, when they heard about this conflict of interest, this Bern Coffey matter.

The first one was the flag. The Premier said there's no policy on the flag. He put up a very controversial religious flag. He put it up. No, there's no policy, the previous government never had any policy. Yeah, he did, and he was told there was one. No. He wouldn't say – no, there's no policy, only to find out later through ATIPP, got to do access to information, got to wait for that process to go through and so on. Oh look, there is a policy and the Premier knew it. That was the start of that.

Then very soon after that, on the heels of that, we had the termination of Ed Martin. The AG has reviewed it, Mr. Martin was fired. He

received compensation he should receive for being fired. The Premier to this day says: No, he wasn't fired, he quit. He wonders why we ask about Mr. Coffey, did he resign or would he be fired and so on. Well, we know what happened with Mr. Martin. No, he quit. I didn't fire him, he quit, is what the Premier continues today.

We had a budget in the spring of 2016 which the Finance Minister said there are going to be three decision points. There will be the revenue generation in the spring of 2016 which was all the taxes, 350 new taxes and fees. The Minister of Finance said this is revenue generation in the spring and there would be a cost cutting in the fall. It would be the second decision point, and the third would be in the spring of 2017.

In the fall, that cost-cutting budget never came. The Premier said we all misunderstood. No, no, we misunderstood. No, that wasn't right. That wasn't what the Minister of Finance said. No. It was clear what she said. Unfortunately, he took that approach because he really put her in a position. He could have said: We have looked at the impacts of the province on the decisions we've made and we don't believe right now that cost cutting, the way we had planned and decided and wanted to do, is the right thing to do. So we're re-evaluating our options. We're going to continue to make decisions to the best of our ability.

That's what they could have said, but instead he said: No, you got it wrong, people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There was going to be no second-decision point. The Minister of Finance never said that. There's going to be a fiscal update, that's all there was.

Then we saw reductions in the management structure. It's the same kind of process – actually, if you go back in history and you look at what Premier Clyde Wells did back in the early '90s, late '80s – in '89 I think Clyde Wells got elected, '89 and early '90s. What Premier Wells did at the time was a similar kind of process, where it started and did through different tiers of directors and so on. Then they were reducing those directors.

Now we know that Members opposite campaigned on taking the politics out of appointments. They stand by Bill 1. Mr.

Speaker, we know as well that political appointments are not anything new in our province. I'll be the first one to stand here and say, yes, political appointments have happened since the beginning of time in politics in our province.

Today, as questions, my colleague from Mount Pearl North talked about volunteer appointments, agencies, boards and commissions. People who go on boards and agencies and provide advice and direction and support those agencies and act on behalf of government and so on, but public service has never been – to those blatant political appointments like that, certainly not in very recent years. As a matter of fact, the previous administration took communications people and moved communications from political appointments, prior to when the PCs took over in 2003, and moved them to public service jobs.

I would have thought the communications people maybe – I'm not sure why you did it but it was done, because they represented the department and public services and policy and development and delivery. So I understood that and got that, but there was the promise then that came, we are not going to do that. Bill 1: take the politics out of appointments.

Then we saw these appointments. There was a long list of them that we know of, because they weren't all announced. They weren't all made public. The most recent one was talked about here in the House today, but they weren't all made public. There were a number of people.

Mr. Speaker, to be on the record and very, very clear for all Members of the House and anybody listening at home, I have never criticized the capabilities, qualifications or said anything negative about any of these people, other than the fact of their political affiliation that may have led them to that job or opened the door for them to get these responsibilities.

We learned today, I read in the media an updated story there early this afternoon how the most recent appointment was made by a position that was terminated. A person was terminated through the flatter, leaner management structure. The government did that last year. They said these are cost-saving measures, but they never

talked about the cost of appointing and filling these new positions.

Then in the winter they did two processes; one is they went to people and said – I almost pointed at the staff person here in the House then, Mr. Speaker. I almost pointed at the Page and said you're terminated, but I won't do that. I'll point over there. You're done, you know, pointed at a staff person and said: You're terminated, your job is done, thank you very much and we'll show you the door. That's how those things happened.

They also set up a second structure whereby they had a number of people brought into a room and said: Your job is being eliminated, your job is being eliminated, your job is being eliminated and we're creating one new job and you three compete for it. Over the next several weeks you three, who have worked together for the last 15 years or 18 years or five years, whatever the case might be, are now going to compete against each other and one of you are going to be selected for that job. That was a very terrible process that happened most recently.

Then people were expecting in the spring budget further reductions and they never came. I understand them changing their focus and the decision on how they're going to do these things, but the public servants that I've talked to have said: I thought my job was gone. I was afraid I was going to lose my job.

If they laid off – I don't know, there are a few hundred people got laid off in the process now, but instead of somewhere along the way saying to the rest of the public service, look, we're – they finally did it in the budget, no more mass layoffs but they haven't said there are going to be smaller ones. I believe that's what will probably happen. We'll see job reductions as departments are aligned and so on and/or functions are merged and administration is reduced and we'll see reductions then.

No one said to people until a year after the initial budget in 2016 when they were all told we're doing revenue generation in the spring and we're doing cost reduction in the fall. The whole public service went huh. Forty thousand people or whatever number it is in the public service went, oh no, my job could be in trouble. I have

to start paying more taxes now and my taxes are going to increase over the next year because some taxation just went on now in 2017. In the fall of this year, I may be out of work.

Let's cancel our vacation, family. We can't take our vacation this year because I might be out of work this fall. So let's not take our vacation. Let's not go to a restaurant. We were going to take our son or daughter to a restaurant for their birthday party, well, let's do it at home instead.

Let's not buy that new car we wanted, or let's not replace our back patio, our back deck or whatever in our garden, or I'm not going to buy a new lawn mower or I'm not going to fix my roof. We're not going to redo our kitchen because we're afraid. I might be out of work in a few months' time and we don't know where we're going to be. We know when the economy is moving in that direction it's much harder to find work than it was a short time previous.

I think that was a mistake, Madam Speaker. I think that was a major mistake, because that had a rippling effect of a negative impact on the economy and people stopped spending.

Take the local hardware store – and I've talked about this here before. If you take the local hardware store as an example, and now all of a sudden you have a percentage of your population in your community who work for government or their spouse works for government or their family works for government and they're afraid they're going to lose their job, what they start to do then is they are not going to go to the hardware store or not going to buy the groceries they used to buy as much. They're going to cut back and buy a little less, drink a little less milk and all those kinds of things.

That has a negative impact on businesses who say: Well, I don't need six employees in my hardware store, I only need four; or, I don't need so many people in my grocery store. I don't need two employees in my corner store on Saturday. People are spending less, I can do with one.

That's happened all over. I was at a fast-food restaurant this week for an event, and I won't name it. I was there and I said, well, it's not

really busy here. No, it's not. It was partially weather related but also I think it's a spinoff of the economy.

People start to become concerned and become – well, when the Premier says there's no flag policy, and then we find out there is. Why did he say that? Why did you do that? When you say things and you do – there are numerous examples. I really don't want to go through all of them again. Where there's one thing said and something else becomes known to be, then people become problematic.

Madam Speaker, they don't only become cynical or have a poor view of just to government Members, all Members of the House. It reflects on all of them. It starts to reflect on every single one of us in this House.

MS. PERRY: Politicians get a bad name.

MR. P. DAVIS: It does, yeah. Politicians do, they get a bad name.

Look, I'm not perfect. I'd be the first one to say I've made my mistakes. I've stood here in the House and said things that I shouldn't have said. I've stood here in the House and apologized. I have phoned Members of the House after I left the House and said: Look, I'm sorry about what happened today. It's not me and I don't want to do it; or I've stopped them in the hall and spoke to them and said: I'm really sorry about this. It shouldn't have happened. I've done all of that. We all pay a price when those kinds of things happen, but there are great opportunities here in our province.

I remember back in the early 2000s, I was a town councillor; 2001 was the first year I got elected and I've been elected to a position since that time. One of the things that really interested me in the few years that came after that was this belief, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, do you know what?

MR. HUTCHINGS: We're pretty good.

MR. P. DAVIS: We're pretty good, yeah.

Do you know what? We're pretty cool. And the former premier started to create this image of the newest, coolest province and we're pretty cool

people and we have lots of good stuff going on here. Come on down and see what's going on here in Newfoundland and Labrador because we have a lot to offer you.

Our tourism business, which did well all the time but now has taken off – and I'm glad the minister of business talked about their goals of doubling tourism from 2009 numbers because that's a continuation of an initiative that we started. I'm not taking credit for the work they're doing now but it was an initiative that I'm glad they're following through on because there's huge value in growing that tourism industry. I'm glad the minister, I'm glad the Premier supported it and I'm glad they're going to continue it because I think it provides tremendous opportunity for us in the province.

We have to change our feeling back and the way people, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, feel. We have to change back to believing in ourselves and the future and opportunities, natural resources. We have a great province, we're cool and we have great landscapes.

Our B & Bs – I've stayed in more B & Bs in the last four or five years than I ever stayed in my life. Before the last four or five years, I can't remember ever staying at a B & B. I stayed in one at one time, and whenever my wife and I travel now we'll always try and stay in a B & B first, unless we have to stay at an event at a hotel or something like that. There are beautiful, beautiful B & Bs and fantastic experiences all over this province which are just wonderful. They're charms for Newfoundland and Labrador – absolute charms.

We can build on business with those. Everything from a boat tour to having a lobster dip in the nighttime at a B & B are fabulous opportunities that people just love, especially people coming from places where they don't look at the ocean every day, and they don't feel the fog and the cold sea air that we sometimes get a little bit upset about. It's a charm that people come here for and we have to start talking again about how great we are; how great is Newfoundland and Labrador, how great are the people that live here, how great are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that are looking after each other.

We've got to find that hope again in a belief. So many people today are saying that's it, I'm done. I went to a coffee shop probably in the last – it was last week anyway. There were two couples there that I know. They were sitting at the table together and they were kind of like this. I said: How is it going, folks? I don't know; we don't know what's going to come. We don't know what's going to happen here. We don't know what's going to come of it all.

I said: Things are going turn around. The oil prices are up. The government has four times the production last year than the year before, than what we had in 2015. Prices are coming up a little bit; that's going to turn things around. They'll be able to spend money and invest in programs. We have heard lots of announcements on roads, work being done in municipalities. Those kinds of investments that create jobs and opportunities, we've heard some of that.

We still don't know what opportunities are going to exist from this budget, because last year the Minister of Finance provided a full list of programs and changes in program funding and a full list of taxation changes and so on. We know there weren't any changes there but we know there are going to be some changes in programs because we saw, when we looked at numbers from last year to this year, we've seen some numbers, we just don't know what the impacts are going to be yet.

Hopefully, the government – they did provide more information, I should say, Madam Speaker, over the Easter break on the zero-based budgeting process. We appreciate that. The minister provided a briefing for us and we attended that as well, but we're still looking for information on programs and impacts on programs, because programs are about people. They're about communities. They're about families. People want to know more about those programs, especially people who rely on them.

When I went to this restaurant last week and they were kind of sitting there, four people kind of sitting there like that – one couple has their house up for sale and as soon as their house is sold they're leaving the province. The two of them are working here. They currently have jobs and are working here. I said: Why are you going to go? Because there's no future for us, the

future is bleak, all the negative views and loss of hope and belief and so on. They said we're selling our house and we're leaving. The two of them are currently employed in the province.

The other couple, man and wife, and she said about her husband – I'm not going to mention who they are. They may be watching or whatever, but I would never disclose who they are. She said for the first time, when we talked about it, my husband said: Yeah, we should give this a serious thought about leaving. Because this is not the first time we've talked about leaving or leaving has come up – because people in Newfoundland and Labrador talk about leaving. Are we going to move or not? She said, for the first time ever, her husband said let's give this some thought.

That's really unfortunate. I encourage people: Don't go. Don't give up on Newfoundland and Labrador because it still is a wonderful place with wonderful people. Things will turn around. I'm sure between now and the next election, the government will be rolling out new programs, investments and expenditures and provide opportunities. Of course, we see that when elections come anyway.

We know that there are industries that have grown here in the last number of years that have been significant for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Just think about the film industry. Back in my previous career when I was with the RNC, I remember Allan Hawco and Rob Blackie coming in to the office one day and saying: We want to make a TV show.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): Order, please!

I ask Members to keep the volume down in the Chamber so the Speaker can hear the individual that's been recognized to speak.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

They wanted to make a TV show. Yeah, okay. Good, what do you want to do? They said it's going to involve the police, it's going to involve a private detective and we're going to solve cases every week. We're competing at CBC to create this TV show. Okay, very good, so what do you want from the RNC? Well, we want you to be the cops in the TV show.

I remember them saying to us – it was funny – we have this guy Clattenburg who's a director. I met him after. Clattenburg? Clattenburg, yeah, he's a director. He said: He does a lot of great work and he's going to be the director. A full pro and he's going to be the director. We said: Do we know any shows he's been in? Yeah, he's the director of the *Trailer Park Boys*. I thought we don't want to be the cops in the *Trailer Park Boys*. We don't want to be the police like in the *Trailer Park Boys*.

What we did was they did a pilot and in the pilot – I actually have a copy of it, I actually have a DVD of the pilot. In the pilot, the RNC was changed to NLPD. The pilot was fabulous. It was supposed to be a 30-minute show and when they did the pilot they realized it didn't work. It had to become a one-hour program, the 43- or 45-minute bracket because they couldn't get it all in that scope for 30 minutes. *Republic of Doyle* was born and very quickly CBC picked it up and we're off to the races.

I had the opportunity to attend their set from time to time, especially early. They used to talk to us and call me up and say: How do we do this? How would this really happen in policing? They would ask that. There was a lawyer of the RNC and her and I sometimes would meet with them, we'd go through scripts and we'd talk to them, we'd visit the set and so on.

Actually, what we did, Krystin Pellerin, who was the lead police officer in the series – we all know Krystin Pellerin, a fabulous actor from Mount Pearl, a wonderful young lady who's done some great work internationally in her skill and her trade. We actually put her in the police training program for a couple of weeks. She actually attended the police training program for a couple of weeks so she could get the feel of what it means to be a police cadet or a police officer and so on. She did that over a couple of weeks and it was worthwhile.

It turned out to be great, but, Madam Speaker, this great story I'm telling you about, what was wonderful for Newfoundland and Labrador because it probably did more for tourism than any single investment, other than *Republic of Doyle*, and we made significant investments in *Republic of Doyle*, but one of the keys about it for the film industry was before *Republic of Doyle*, there really wasn't much of a film industry here. There was a great arts community.

My son works in the arts and earns a living from the arts, but there wasn't the strong film industry here at that point in time. I remember talking to Allan Hawco about it. He said they're bring in camera people and producers and editors and that sort of thing, but he said, next year and the year after, we're going to have our own people because they're going to get qualified and trained and work with people who are coming in. As the seasons – I think it was eight seasons in total – went by in *Republic of Doyle*, we developed our own skill set for the film industry right here in Newfoundland and Labrador because of that investment in that program and it created a new opportunity.

While there were movies and shows that had been shot over the years in Newfoundland and Labrador, look at how many programs have been created and grown right here in Newfoundland and Labrador because of those investments. Those investments, like *Republic of Doyle*, make people feel good.

When you sat down in the evening, once a week to turn on your TV and watch *Republic of Doyle*, you had a feeling of pride. You had a feeling of look, that's here. That's home. That was made here. Those are people I know. Look, there's so and so in the background. There's so and so getting arrested. There was a staffer in the Premier's office who got arrested a few times on *Republic of Doyle* as a character. He's also a local comedian. It was an opportunity for him to grow his own craft as well.

It gave everyone who turned on and watched it – we watched it no matter where we were, that is was: Wow, look at that. Look how great that is. Look how beautiful Newfoundland and Labrador is. People came in droves because they wanted to see it and experience the same thing. Actually, there were people who came here in

buses who wanted to go – they came here and coordinated their visit on the *Republic of Doyle* set. They wanted to go to the *Republic of Doyle* set and visit there and see them shooting *Republic of Doyle*. They wanted to see the car. They wanted to meet the actors and the staff on *Republic of Doyle*.

Back to my point, two things, one is we all felt good as a province about it and a lot of people watched it faithfully and supported it faithfully, but it also developed an industry and a craft and a new opportunity for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It gave us hope, pride and belief in ourselves. That's the type of discussions we should be having.

I joked earlier today when the Grey Cup was here. The Premier, the House Leader for the Third Party and myself, we had a photo op out here with the Grey Cup. The Premier held up one end and the leader of the Third Party reached up and managed to reach it and get it. I reached on the other side and I told the Premier – I made a comment. I said: So this is what working together is all about. This is how we work together.

There are opportunities that we can work together. While people see the House of Assembly – and yesterday was a difficult day here in the House. Question Period today we know was challenging in the House as well. There are lots of times when Members on this side that I'll go to ministers and say: I need to talk to you about something in my district or I have an issue for a constituent that I'd like to speak to you about. I'm pleased to say that most of the time we can have those relationships and those requests.

My colleague for Cape St. Francis, who I admire greatly – and I've learned a lot from him about politics because he has a lot more time in politics than I do. He's built some great relationships as well with Members opposite. Most of us have. One minister was over here a few minutes ago talking to another one of my colleagues and we do those things.

People think that they're always in there at each other. Well, yeah, that happens. That happens during Question Period. People watch Question Period more than they're watching now, I can

assure you. I've been up for 50 minutes, I'm sure a lot of them have gone to sleep or they have it turned off, or are watching reruns of *Republic of Doyle*.

Some people call it theatre and things do get hot and tempered, but it's always important to remember that we have a responsibility to do and we have to have our first commitments always to the people that we serve. No matter if we're in an Opposition Party, Third Party, an Independent Member or government side, we still have our constituents to work for.

We talked about this earlier today, because if you're not an MHA, you don't get to be here in the House of Assembly. If you're not an MHA, you don't get to be a minister, most often. If you want to serve the people here in the House of Assembly, then that's what you first have to remember.

When I was a minister or even the time when I was premier or as Leader of the Opposition, I always signed my name Paul Davis, MHA. I remember when I first became a minister, one of the staff people one day said to me: So we should sign your name now Paul Davis, minister, MHA of Topsail. It was Topsail district at the time. I said: No, I'm not doing that because I'm an MHA first and I should never forget. You should never forget how I got here and who brought me here.

I have an old friend of mine in the RNC. Every now and then he calls me and talks to me. I'll see him tomorrow; I have an event scheduled for tomorrow that I hope to see him at. He calls me from time to time and he'll say: How are you doing? We'll talk about all kinds of stuff; really nice fellow. Before he ends the conversation, he'll always say to me: Paul – his name is Paul too, Madam Speaker. Now, there's a whole bunch of people who just figured out who I'm talking about. He'll say: Paul, never forget where you came from.

Now, he's not talking about being a police officer or anything like that. He's just saying never forget where you were, how you worked and where you came from to get where you are today. Never forget the past and never forget the work that you did in the past. Never forget what you're about and why people elected you in the

first place. That's his message to me every single time.

So, Madam Speaker, my message today, I think, on this part of the Budget Speech, I've talked in my time here in the Budget Speech today, I intended to talk about some of the conflict of interest and why that's important. It's important that people know the circumstances because when people question: Well, what's that about? Why is that happening?

I remember the first few days, people called me up and said: Look, what's this about? I said: Look, the clerk of the Executive Council has been appointed, Mr. Coffey, and it's found out that he has a law practice. Oh, is he allowed to do that? That can't be right. Yeah, he has a law practice. But he's not practising law? I said: Well, yeah. But isn't he the clerk? Yes, he's the clerk but he's practising law. And then find out that he had a couple of files that involved government. People were shocked. This can't happen. They want to know why and how and so on.

It's not an indictment on Mr. Coffey's ability or his career or what he does as a lawyer or his history or his past or anything else. It's not that. It's not about that. Because, as I read earlier, a conflict of interest is a position someone is put in which has the potential to undermine the person's impartiality because a conflict of interest between a personal matter and a professional interest or public interest. That's what it is.

There is a potential conflict. There is a potential to undermine the impartiality. Could my role over here influence the decision I make over here or vice versa? Could my role here influence a decision or action I take over here? The rule and accepted practice, especially in those very high-level positions, is you remove from yourself from those positions.

That's what it's about. That's what the interest is about. I know that there's been a lot of discussion about it and I understand the pressure that exists right now publicly on it. It's the government's responsibility to answer to that and speak to that, and I'm sure there are going to be more questions about it.

We always have to try to – and we really should try, because we cross the line when things start to get personal and all those kinds of things. Sometimes that happens. We really have to try – I don't think it benefits politicians. I don't think it benefits the integrity of the House. I don't think it benefits how people in the province reflect on MHAs and people they've elected. I don't think it benefits any of that when we start to get snarky, challenging, personal and threatening and so on.

I encourage everybody to stay away from it, and I encourage people to encourage me not to get like that, not to get personal and so on. If we come in the House and we quote someone in the House, that's one thing. To say, well, you did this or you did that, we've seen all that over the years. That's the kind of stuff we don't like.

We're at a time in our history where we're debating a budget. What we've seen in that budget, Madam Speaker, is essentially the same budget as last year, as a year ago, with the exception of a reduction in the gas tax which is a bill before the House yet to be debated. It's a partial reduction in the gas tax that was increased last year, that I know upset a lot of people, that created revenue for the province, but upset a lot of people when it happened. It's a partial reduction of that.

There are people, including us, who have asked for a reduction in the levy. We heard from people this year as they did their income tax and saw the levy. The levy line or the levy had to be paid. I know the Minister of Finance has said it's in legislation and because it's in legislation and has dates associated with the legislation, we can't change that now.

I'd say I don't think that's right, to the minister and to all hon. Members. I don't believe it's right and I disagree. Just like we're doing with the gas tax, we have a bill before the House to change the gas tax. Bills can come before the House to change policy or change laws, change regulations that are in the House. That's what Houses do, the same as the federal government could open the discussion on equalization and say let's go to the House and change the law. There's a process to go through that. I'm sure the Premier and government would welcome it opposite.

The \$1.8 billion deficit, the Member for Bonavista spoke yesterday about \$2.8 billion. I was going to mention the Member for Bonavista because he got up yesterday and said something else that I thought was really odd. I don't know if the Premier caught it or not, but it was really odd. My colleague behind me for Conception Bay South, who he and I share responsibilities of Conception Bay South with the Member for Harbour Main, there's a lady who has publicly talked about she needs surgeries and processes for her teeth. It's causing her health issues and serious issues.

The Member for Bonavista got up yesterday morning – it was yesterday morning, Premier – and said: Oh, don't worry, tell her to call me, he said, because I can get that fixed. No problem, I can get that fixed. The response I had from people was: What does that mean? Because he's over on the government side of the House or he's a Liberal and the Liberals are in government and so on, that he can get it but you guys can't? What does that mean?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. P. DAVIS: He said I can get the teeth.

MR. K. PARSONS: No, he said only Liberals can have teeth.

MR. P. DAVIS: Is that what he said? Only Liberals can have teeth. I never heard him say that.

I did make some calls since then to get an update from the lady. There's going to be a meeting tomorrow to review the circumstances to see if funding will come and the assistance will come. So I look forward to hearing next week on the outcome of that as well.

The other document this year – I only have a couple minutes left, Madam Speaker – was the *Economy* document. When we did our budget in 2015, the Premier and the Finance Minister and so on, we said you shouldn't add taxes. You shouldn't reduce the public service.

Even back in 2013, Members who sat in the government of the day said, you should not cut staff people, you should not reduce the cost to government because it crushes the economy.

You shouldn't put up taxes, those kinds of things.

It was interesting, and I suggest people have a look. If you want to have a look at the document that clearly lays out some interesting facts, the *Economy* document on page 7. It's available on the government website, gov.nl.ca, and you'll see the budget right on the front of it. Some of the expectations that are here are indicators for 2017 expenditures.

I always like it when the government provides these factual pieces of information. I'm glad they've included it in this year's budget because it gives us an indication: employment going down, unemployment going up, household income is expected to decline, retail sales are going to go down, consumer pricing is going to increase and our population is going to decline just on some. Expectation is oil is going to increase, and I hope production stays strong for this year. I hope prices stay strong because if it does, it's going to provide better options.

Government criticized us regularly for relying on oil. While we see them now today – I believe now they understand that oil is so important to Newfoundland and Labrador. They obviously got much commentary about oil prices and values and so on in this year's budget. I think now they've learned as well, respect for what oil provides for Newfoundland and Labrador and I'm glad of that.

I encourage government to continue to work hard for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I'm sure they will. Think about, put people first. Always put people first, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first. We want to keep people in Newfoundland and Labrador. We want to keep business alive in our province. We want to see opportunities for the future, for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and that means working together, building an economy and a province that we all love, want to live here and have opportunities in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

I'm very happy to have my first opportunity to speak to *Budget 2017* and speak to this motion. I'll probably get another chance as we move to the main motion and to the other debates. It's my first opportunity and obviously very happy any time I can stand up and speak to the budget. I have a number of things I want to say about the budget because I think there are many, many positive things within *Budget 2017* that people should be interested in and hopefully would support.

I've heard various Members on the other side – you know what, in all fairness, some Members on the other side have mentioned positive things that they support. I've heard some Members only speak in negative terms, and that disappointed me. I'm going to speak about the part I probably know the best, which is actually the justice side.

In Justice this year, just in our department, we've enacted a number of policies and plans that we want to bring forward with this budget that I think are beneficial to the people of this province. It's unfortunate to hear Members on the other side say that they do not support those plans.

For instance, we're working on plans as it relates to the drug treatment court in this province. It's an alternative court. It's one that's going to benefit this province. It's widely recognized and I'm hopefully going to have more news on it soon, but the Members on the other side are going to vote against that.

One of the issues that have been brought up in this House is the Jordan ruling and talking about the strain that it's put on the criminal justice system. One of the things that *Budget 2017* has done is we have announced three new Crown prosecutor positions. The Members opposite ask about Jordan and now they're actually going to vote against prosecutors to help fight the Jordan situation that we're in, so they talk about one thing.

I say to the Member on the other side for the NDP, the caucus Whip, the next thing I was going to talk about is one of the things that

Budget 2017 is actually talking – one of the things I'm very proud of and actually so proud that last week we announced it down at Rocket Bakery.

I had my good friend and colleague, the federal Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Jody Wilson-Raybould came down. Together, we presented, put out there we were going to have a Sexual Assault Response Pilot Program, a program that will provide free legal advice to those individuals that may be the victims of sexual assault. It's something that has been done elsewhere; it's new to this province. I think it's absolutely fantastic. I think it's going to help those victims that have suffered.

The money for that program is in this budget, and that budget is going to be voted against. In fact, the Member opposite, the Member for St. John's Centre, who was at the announcement, is going to vote against it, is not going to support it. Took all the time yesterday to say everything – and that's fine if you want to say everything negative.

Do you know what? I can remember when I was in Opposition because I would give credit where it was due; I would in fact recognize strong initiatives and positive initiatives. I can remember one in particular that the previous administration brought in. I was an advocate for cystic fibrosis screening for newborns. I can remember the minister of Finance at the time stood up and said we are going to put that funding in place and I clapped. I supported that and I let them know that, and I spoke about that. But I don't see any recognition, any positivity or any support for these new and important initiatives I think will help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm going to get another chance to talk to the budget, which I've already done my Estimates and sat here for three hours and answered every single question that was put to me – every single question. In fact, I think it was a good session; it was a good give and take. The Leader of the Official Opposition was there. The Member for St. John's Centre was there. I can't remember, I don't think the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands was there. Actually he attended last year. Sorry, I got that wrong.

I enjoy the Estimates session and I'll have an opportunity to speak to the budget again, but I want to quote the Leader of the PC Party and something he just said. He put a few minutes into the budget but then he went off the track just a little bit, so I might have to do the same thing.

What he said was: Never forget the past – never forget the past. You know what, that's right. That is good advice. We should not forget the past because it was in the past. I can remember, they talk about – what was the comment they made – that promises being made two years before. When we were in Opposition we made promises two years before. That was going on because they were stood up over here saying we're flush with cash – flush with cash. I would have compared them to drunken sailors but drunken sailors spend their own money. They spent the people's money and wasted it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: But, again, I'm only quoting the Leader of the PC Party. Sometimes I get confused because there's a little bit of a competition going on over there sometimes. Sometimes I get confused.

I hear voices from the outside providing advice and I get confused. Sometimes that's the leader, sometimes that's the leader, I don't know. But it's funny because this is a great segue into the previous leadership that they had. I'm going to talk about that and how it relates to the public service. Never forget the past. I'm only using the words: Never forget the past.

The Member stands up and chastises us, criticizes us, but we have to underline to the people that may be watching – if there's anybody, that's fine, maybe I just have to remind them the hypocrisy that's coming at them. That Leader of the PCs – I won't talk about the Frank Coleman one.

Yeah, maybe I will. Maybe I will, because I mean it's amazing how that week unfolded. I'm the president of Humber Valley Paving, now I'm not and now I'm acclaimed to be the leader. It's amazing how that works. You know what, that leader, the person next to him, the person next to him and the person next to him, every single one

of them was a part of that – every single one. So you want to throw stones at glass houses? I tell you what – now, hey, you were in the backrooms though, Bud. Just so we make sure that's clear, that was the Member for CBS.

I want to come back to that because he talks about the public service and the partisanship. Well, it's funny because they had a leadership. That's the one where John Noseworthy said there was no clear majority. Do you remember that one? That was great TV.

The fellow that became the leader – and he became the leader with the help of the Member for Mount Pearl North's help. Remember, it was amazing how that happened. You weren't even off the third ballot and you had the yellow t-shirt out ready to go. The funny thing was that there was somebody that finished second named John Ottenheimer and he lost. It was pretty close, a couple of votes; must-see TV.

John Ottenheimer lost. I have no problem with John Ottenheimer. He's a gentleman. In fact, I loved his commercials. The most interesting man in Newfoundland and Labrador with the sausages and all that stuff, it was great stuff. It was way better commercials than the Leader of the PCs had.

They were really upset. He was really upset. He was upset because the guy, the Member for Mount Pearl North, sort of put the knife in the back and went and voted him in to make him premier, so he said we have to figure something out. I think it was just a few months later he became the boss of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who was there before him?

MR. A. PARSONS: Oh, we'll get there. I still have 11 minutes left yet. We'll get there.

He became the boss of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. The last time I remembered that – correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I invite the other Members to do so, I think that's a public position. It's funny because there was no screening done. Well, the screening was done; it was done in the

backrooms of the PC convention. That's where it was done.

The Leader of the PCs who stands up and criticizes, he's the one that did it. He made that decision. Hypocritical is not even a strong enough word for what comes out of him.

The funny thing is the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has a very interesting history of leadership. I'm not going to talk about Tom Lawrence because, you know what, good guy; did a good job. The fellow before that – and, again, I hear the chirping over there, Mr. Speaker. I think they may be listening and that's good, they should. They're listening to their own history. Oh, they're chirping. It's funny they're –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: Oh yeah.

Like I said, I'm only advising you what your leader said: Never forget the past. The former leader of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation was a gentleman named Len Simms. Len Simms had a really good pattern; he had a really good gig. Just so we're clear, he was head of that when – I think they were still a public service then. It was amazing how he miraculously resigned every election, ran a PC campaign and then got rehired. That happened multiple times.

Just so we know, he wasn't the only one; I could talk about Mr. Ross Reid. I like Ross Reid; he's a nice guy. But it's amazing how he could resign from being a top-level deputy minister to the premier, deputy minister for volunteers, deputy minister for not for profit, deputy minister responsible for population growth.

Deputy ministers last I heard, a public position, but they could quit and run a campaign and get rehired, and then quit and then run a campaign and get rehired. Mr. Speaker, that's a good gig but, you know, that's amazing. Just so we're all on the same page the Leader of the PCs was a part of that. The Leader of the PCs stands up holier than thou; the fact is he was face and eyes into it.

Maybe I should continue on. Now, I'm not going to get into the people that were appointed to the head of the Nalcor board. I don't want to go there. I could talk about people that left certain offices and then ended up with jobs in Nalcor. I could talk about people that were friends of the party who ended up in statutory offices. Let me see, the Privacy Commissioner, the Chief Electoral Officer: they were offices of the House. It's absolutely amazing. I just have to say, there are a lot of names there. In fact, there was a person that preceded me in this job as the minister of Justice. That was another appointment as well – another appointment.

I digress, Mr. Speaker. I get confused because I'm trying not to forget the past. They're over there shaking their head in disgust, in righteous indignation. At the same time they do that, they say: That crowd over there, that's really terrible. They were here for years. The blatant hypocrisy that comes out of them is staggering – staggering.

I digress, and I hear some more chirping over there. I invite them to stand up and tell me if I'm wrong. I will sit down and give up the rest of my time if I'm wrong, but I'm pretty confident I won't because I'm 100 per cent correct. The Leader of the PCs knows what I'm talking about. He's not going to say anything; he was a part of that.

Maybe I could talk about – and all of them over there, they asked a question today about an appointment. They talked about, my God, I can't believe this conflict of interest, but they couldn't see it when they dealt with millions and millions and millions of dollars of taxpayer money as it related to Humber Valley Paving.

We had to get the Auditor General in to look at the mess that they created. That was an amazing turn of events. I tell you what; I'm really impressed with how effective they were. The ability that they had to turn around decisions in hours without telling anybody was impressive, especially when it related to millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, especially as it related to somebody that they anointed, I think it was the almost premier. It's absolutely amazing. If they want to talk the talk, we're going to have to walk the walk and they're going to have to never forget the past.

I want to go back a little bit because we could talk about other things they did. I think the Leader of the PCs during that one-hour – whatever it was.

AN HON. MEMBER: Monologue.

MR. A. PARSONS: Monologue is a kind word.

One of the things he was talking about was the blatant – and talking to departments. This is a crowd when we were in Opposition; every single phone call we made to a government department had to go through a minister's executive assistant. By its very nature, every single call I made for a constituent was politicized by them – every single call.

You might have somebody trying to get a health answer, get a finance answer, education, you name it. You couldn't call somebody in the department to talk about it. You couldn't talk to the front-line people, the ones that knew the work. We had to talk to the minister's executive assistant, their political appointment.

That's fine, but don't sit here and talk about politicization when you politicized – and if you think about it, you could look at it as a breach in many ways. Every single call I made for a constituent that had nothing to do with politics, they made it political. It's absolutely amazing.

We could keep going here. I don't want to keep going too long, I know we have Estimates here tonight. I was going to say something and I got a little – it was funny, because earlier in the week we had the Minister of Municipal Affairs getting attacked by another one of their political hacks, the one that gets paid \$95,000 a year to be a Twitter troll. I'm not going to get into that. He did a good job of calling that out, but I have to put it out there because I've heard there's some stuff being said. I hope when I get defeated I can get paid \$95,000 a year of taxpayer money to be a Twitter troll. I hope that's how it happens.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to get another opportunity to speak to this budget, one that we've gotten positive reaction to, one that there are positive investments in in numerous departments. There are certainly a lot of positive investments as it relates to Justice.

I look forward to promoting the Sexual Assault Response Pilot Program, new Crown attorneys, investments in courts. We're doing studies on how to replace HMP. We're hiring new Crown – we have money in Legal Aid. We're doing a lot of good things. They don't seem to recognize it, but I'm going to keep putting it out there.

Do you what the main thing is? No matter what they say, the constituents and the people of this province realize it. They know that we're trying to right the ship from what the drunken sailors had to do. We're getting it back on track.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Seeing no further speakers, is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour of the amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers, Mr. Lane.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Ball, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr.

Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Mitchelmore, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Ms. Parsley, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Finn.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes 9; the nays 18.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I declare the motion defeated.

This House now stands adjourned until Monday, next week, at 1:30 in the afternoon.

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