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Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Admit strangers, please.

Order, please!

I'd like to welcome all the Members back to the House of Assembly on this great Thursday afternoon. We have several special guests that I'd love to introduce to all of you.

First of all, joining us in the Speaker's gallery, I have Dr. Lloydetta Quaicoe, and her great team from Sharing our Cultures. We have representatives here from Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Newfoundland and Labrador – we've heard of that place – Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Sudan and France. They will be the subject of a Ministerial Statement today and they were earlier this week the subject of a Member's statement.

It's a great pleasure to have you all with us today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: For those joining us at home and maybe not so sure why that standing ovation, in addition to the great work of sharing our cultures, Dr. Quaicoe is also a recent recipient of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We also will have a Member's statement today recognizing Mr. Richard Cashin, who is also a recent recipient of the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the public gallery today, I would also like to welcome Mr. Reginald White and, his wife, Phyllis White. They are joining us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Today, for Members' statements, we will hear from the Members for Harbour Main, Ferryland, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. PARSLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a fierce competitor who demonstrates athletic strength and grace. Shailynn Snow has proven her strategy as a world champion athlete with sights set on an Olympic medal.

Hailing from Clarke's Beach, with her home rink of Bay Roberts Bay Arena, it is no surprise to see how far this 17 year old has come. With her grandfather's hand as a toddler, she took to the ice for the first time.

Shailynn was scouted following a two-week hockey camp in Calgary and received an invite to play on Team Canada. On January 13 she was part of the team that won the gold medal in Japan.

Shailynn now calls Ridley College her home and prep-school has poised her for St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York with a full athletic scholarship. She is hoping to pursue physiotherapy. Kudos goes to those who have nurtured this talent to rise, including her Bantam AAA coach Bo Bennett, extreme hockey coaches Randy Pearcey and Andrew McKim, and mother and grandfather.

While it may not be easy to see her go, it's great to watch her achieve her goals for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic

Association on the vital role they play in the annual regional winter carnival.

I was fortunate to attend some of the events that were part of the carnival, including the seniors' outreach dinner at Mobile Central High School. This was the 11th year for the event, which connects our youth of the region with seniors.

The students provided exceptional entertainment with vocals, accordion, guitars and keyboards. In addition, the local cadet corps did an exceptional job in serving dinner to over 250 guests.

This event is organized with the help of the staff at Mobile Central High School, the Bay Bulls Athletic Association, the Town of Witless Bay, the Town of Bay Bulls and many volunteer community groups and organizations throughout the area. This annual dinner is one of many that the carnival offers to the residents and has become a great community event for the region.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating all those involved, and the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association on another successful winter carnival and the tremendous work they do as a volunteer organization in the region.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The commitment and dedication demonstrated by volunteer fire fighters throughout the district of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Conception Bay North is indeed outstanding.

Today, I would like to recognize the Bay Roberts Volunteer Fire Department, in particular volunteers who have served for several decades: firefighter Newman Parsons for 50 years, who is still an active member; Eric Norman who is also an active volunteer and has served for 45 years; Trevor Bowering is currently serving with 30

years; Mr. Chesley Mercer recently retired after four decades of service; Clarence Mercer retired with 30 years; and, Geoff Roach retired in 2018 with 30 years of service.

The department was formed in 1942 and currently has 40 members, responding to about 100 calls annually throughout the municipality, as well as the communities of Bareneed and Port de Grave.

When they're not fighting fire and protecting our communities, these dedicated first responders fundraise for the Janeway Telethon and Trinity Conception Placentia Health Foundation. They also support local charities, such as The Helping Hand food bank, school breakfast programs, the Salvation Army, as well as the Royal Canadian Legion in Bay Roberts.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of these volunteers, and I ask that all colleagues join me in congratulating them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am delighted to congratulate Richard Cashin for being invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, recognizing his significant contributions to this province as a politician, a lawyer and labour leader.

Richard attended St. Francis Xavier University and Dalhousie Law School in Nova Scotia. He was elected as the Member of Parliament for St. John's West in 1962 and re-elected in '63 and '65.

Richard Cashin became the founding president of the Newfoundland Fishermen, Food and Allied Workers Union in 1971 and served in that role until his retirement. He also represented Newfoundland and Labrador as the Atlantic Commissioner of the Task Force on National

Unity, and served as well on the board of directors for Saltfish Corporation, Petro-Canada and the Export Development Board. In 1989, Mr. Cashin was appointed an officer of the Order of Canada.

I ask the hon. Members of this House to join with me in congratulating Richard Cashin on now receiving the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Mr. Reg. White, who recently received the Senate 150th Medal recognizing his dedicated work on behalf of Habit for Humanity NL.

The Senate 150th medals were awarded to those who, through generosity and volunteerism, have made their communities a better place to live. Reg is widely known throughout our community for his contributions and achievements as a community builder and leader. Reg's lifetime of volunteerism and community service is a testament to his true character.

To name just a few of Reg's other accomplishments, he is also a recipient of the Seniors of Distinction Award, has been named Mount Pearl Citizen of the Year and was inducted into the Mount Pearl Sports Hall of Fame. I commend Reg for his decades of volunteerism and help to our community. His contribution to the community he lives in can never be overstated.

On another note, I would like to mention that in his youth Reg was a Page in this hon. House. His service actually spanned from the Colonial Building to this very Legislature.

I ask all hon. Members present to join me in giving thanks to Reg White for his ongoing contribution to our community and province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, March 8 is International Women's Day, a day on which we recognize the insights, expertise, skills, values and talents of women and girls in our province. Women have traditionally contributed to the growth and development of our communities, economy and province. The same remains true today.

Our government is strongly committed to advancing the status of women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador. By enhancing the mandate of the Office for the Status of Women, we are keenly focused on creating a new, collaborative approach to violence prevention, improving the economic and social well-being of women and girls through our women's leadership initiatives and strengthening gender-based analysis across all work of government. These commitments will have a long-lasting, positive impact.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the dedication of women's equality-seeking and anti-violence organizations who work diligently to advance true equality for women and girls in our province. We look forward to continuing our work together to reach our common goal – the full and valued participation of women and girls in all aspects of life.

Members of this hon. House, let us all work respectfully together to advance true equality for all women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador. Let us all recommit to doing that not just on International Women's Day, Mr. Speaker, but every day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. We, too, are pleased to recognize International Women's Day, which will be officially celebrated tomorrow across the province, throughout the country and around the world.

International Women's Day is a time to recognize women's accomplishments and also to acknowledge the challenges that women and girls continue to face. I'm optimistic that, together, we can overcome these challenges.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the many hard-working individuals and groups for their tireless and steadfast work to support and advance equality for women and girls. Newfoundland and Labrador has an abundance of strong, intelligent women and I truly hope that we see more such women come forward in politics to lead the way for a better future.

We have many strong international women here in the House today, and hats off to each and every one of you – ovations to all the strong women making a difference for the better in the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and people around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister. On March 8, we acknowledge women and girls around the globe who have worked with vision, determination and, at times, with great courage to make this world a better place.

Many have dedicated their whole lives to this mission. Tomorrow we celebrate, we sing, we dance and we share our gratitude, then we get ready again to keep on working together because there is still so much to do. From Arundhati Roy, "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

Bravo, sisters!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House to congratulate Sharing Our Cultures on 20 years of celebrating the rich diversity of cultures that call Newfoundland and Labrador home.

Founded in 1999 by my friend, Dr. Lloydetta Quaicoe, Sharing our Cultures promotes inter-cultural understanding and reminds Newfoundlanders and Labradorians of every background that we all belong.

Today, we are displaying a gorgeous legacy hooked rug showing a map of the world featuring 90 countries or cultures of students who have participated in this program over the past 20 years.

Dr. Quaicoe's dedication to building connections between Indigenous, non-Indigenous and newcomer youth has helped a number of generations understand the importance of respecting and celebrating our differences.

Our government is proud to support Sharing Our Cultures and provide additional funding to enable its expansion to Labrador City, Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Corner Brook and Grand Falls-Windsor.

It is also my honour to congratulate Dr. Quaicoe on another significant milestone. Earlier this year, Dr. Quaicoe was invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This prestigious honour recognizes her profound contribution to making our province an even more beautiful, safe, welcoming and inclusive home for all people.

I ask all my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Lloydetta Quaicoe and

Sharing Our Cultures for the fantastic work that they do.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister opposite for an advance copy of his statement. It gives me great pleasure to rise here today and join the minister and, indeed, all hon. Members in congratulating Dr. Lloydetta Quaicoe and Sharing Our Cultures.

Mr. Speaker, originally from Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa, Lloydetta Quaicoe moved here to Newfoundland and Labrador in 1982 and has never looked back. I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Quaicoe a number of years ago through the Association for New Canadians and there was little doubt then of the value that she would bring to this province.

Since the inception of Sharing Our Cultures, over 35,000 school children and youth have participated in the yearly program and events. Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member across mentioned, Dr. Quaicoe was recently honoured with the investiture into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. Dr. Quaicoe has distinguished herself for decades in academia and dedicated herself to the support of a number of social causes. Her committee work has helped inform public policy initiatives on culture, law, population growth and immigration integration.

There is not enough time to truly speak to the accomplishments of Dr. Lloydetta Quaicoe. Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to congratulate her and Sharing Our Cultures.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm so delighted to join the minister in congratulating Sharing Our Cultures on reaching this 20-year milestone; and Dr. Quaicoe for being invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly because of that work.

By all accounts, this is a very successful program in our schools and I'm delighted to see this work being expanded to more parts of the province. The more we can have multiculturalism shared and understood in our province, the better for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to speak on Newfoundland and Labrador's participation at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada – PDAC – conference in Toronto this week. I had the great privilege of attending and highlighting the province's resource potential.

It was an exciting time at PDAC with more than 25,600 participants, representing 135 countries.

Mr. Speaker, I met with more than a dozen exploration and mining companies, as well as international leaders, interested in learning more about opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador's mining industry.

I also joined the federal minister of Natural Resources and my provincial and territorial colleagues to launch the Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan – a plan to ensure that our country is the leading, globally competitive mining nation.

The Canadian plan aligns well with our plan – *Mining the Future 2030: A Plan for Growth in the Newfoundland and Labrador Mining Industry* – released last November. *Mining the Future 2030* will grow the Newfoundland and Labrador mining industry, and in the process, create jobs throughout the province in

collaboration with Indigenous governments, industry and community stakeholders.

Mining is a major contributor to the Newfoundland and Labrador economy. In 2019, the mining sector is forecasted to employ a total of 6,300 people in the province – an 11 per cent increase from 2018. Also, the gross value of mineral shipments in Newfoundland and Labrador is forecasted at \$4 billion for 2019. That is a 47 per cent increase since 2016 alone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, a world of possibilities is at our doorstep because our geology positions Newfoundland and Labrador to be a global supplier of minerals. Through our mining sector, we will continue to raise our profile globally and continue to create new opportunities for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. As the minister mentioned, the mining industry is a major contributor to our province's economy. It has been the backbone of communities such as Lab West and other parts in Central Newfoundland for decades, and it's certainly my hope and our vision that it will continue to provide economic growth for years to come.

The forecasted 11 per cent increase in the mining industry for this year is certainly positive news. It's a testament to those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians whose hard work in this industry has led to discoveries and again to production.

I'd also like to recognize geoscientists, earth scientists, technologists and innovators who are not only seeking mineral deposits and discoveries, but who are also developing new

and innovative technologies for the industry in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to mention the Voisey's Bay underground mine. The last update which has been provided was: First production is expected no later than April 2021. I certainly encourage the minister in the near future to provide an update on the construction timeline and the opportunity that lies ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. It's good to know that there's been an increase in the gross value of mineral shipments in the province and also to know that mineral shipments are up this year.

I would have liked to have some more detail from the minister with regard to how she sees the creation of new jobs happening in the future, and I do hope that the forecast for this year is better than our weather forecast is sometimes, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, we do have *Mining the Future 2030* which is, again, another Liberal government plan without teeth. I do look forward to learning more.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I suspect the Minister of Natural Resources may have missed a beat in not claiming credit for all the growth in the mining sector from *The Way Forward*.

This morning, scientists are speaking out, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: – in disappointment at the information which was shared and not shared about the SeaRose oil spill. Biologist Ian Jones said that it was shocking that information about the size of the spill wasn't released in the incident report.

I ask the Minister of Natural Resources: Were you aware of the size of the area covered by the oil spill?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The oil spill is certainly upsetting for all of us in Newfoundland and Labrador and, again, it emphasizes the importance that we must place on safety and environmental protection. Of course, as I've said many times in this House, safety and environmental protection is paramount.

Mr. Speaker, within hours, I think, of the oil spill occurring the amount of oil spilled, 250,000 litres, was known to all. Sea states are continuously moving, obviously. Mr. Speaker, so the size of the spill and what it would look like from a flyover from vessels – because as the people of the province know, there are multiple flights and multiple vessels out there – they change regularly.

So yes, Mr. Speaker, we did know of 250,000 litres. I know Husky involved many stakeholders in advising the actual size.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: The minister just described the volume of the oil spill in terms of litres. We are told today that this was the largest oil spill in the province's history and measured 21 by 8 kilometres, almost the size of Fogo Island.

Can the minister explain how she was out of the loop on that and when did she learn the information she gave the House was incorrect?

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the information I gave this House of Assembly and the information I gave the people of the province was totally correct: 250,000 litres.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: At one point during the many days that this occurred – as I've already explained to this House, sea states change, Mr. Speaker. The size of the sheen on the water changes day by day, hour by hour. At one point, as the PC Member opposite did say, it was at that size. I was aware of that size at one point, Mr. Speaker. There were many observers.

I will say this: C-NLOPB engages with the Canadian Coast Guard, with the Environment and Climate Change office to make sure that the regulatory oversight is there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I quote the minister on the first day of questions about this incident – quote – I can report that today's flyover showed no sheen. That was the information given to this hon. House, and I ask the minister when she became aware otherwise.

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

MS. COADY: I'm confused by the question, Mr. Speaker. I stand by what I told in this House. It was the information that was related to me by the flyover and by those that were on the sea at the time.

Mr. Speaker, within a number of days of the spill happening – remember it happened on a Friday. By the time we were here in the House, I believe the first question from the Member opposite was on a Tuesday – happened on a Friday; first question was on a Tuesday, Mr. Speaker. I can say that there was constant monitoring and there continues to be a lot of information coming forward on this oil spill.

As I say, it is still constantly being monitored and discussions are happening with the C-NLOPB and the polluter, and the investigation is currently underway.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, at some point, there was a sheen almost the size of Fogo Island and I'm simply asking when the minister became aware of that.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I cannot tell the Member opposite what hour of the day I became aware of the actual size of the sheen. I can tell you that I was aware on the Friday of the magnitude of it, 250,000 litres. I can tell you that I was aware that immediately there was a 'dispersment' of vessels, and then immediately after that the flights started to occur. It was monitored constantly, and within a number of days the sheen was no longer seen.

Mr. Speaker, I can say this: the C-NLOPB, who is the responsible authority for ensuring they are in contact with Husky on this oil spill, was in

constant contact with the Canadian Coast Guard, with Environment and Climate Change, and they were working hard to ensure and to minimize the impacts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I submit to the minister that the information that's more meaningful to the public than volumes and litres would be the size of the area covered by the spill.

Would she request that the format of incident reports be updated to include the area size of these spills in the event they happen again?

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

MS. COADY: As I said, Mr. Speaker, the size – the state of the sea states really does dictate what happens with these oil spills. It's more accurate to give it in litres. But I certainly will do this, I know that all aspects of this oil spill are under investigation, including communications, and I will endeavour to ensure that the Member opposite's voice is placed before those investigating this to say that they would like it in terms of reporting as to what the visual viewpoint is from an hour-to-hour basis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: The latest public update on the SeaRose FPSO was provided by Husky on January 31. At this time, they had received C-NLOPB approval to plug the flow line and recover the failed connector; however, they were waiting on a window of good weather.

I ask the minister: Can she provide a status update on the plan?

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite did say, they are waiting for calm weather. They need a four-day weather window before they can recoup the flow line. Unfortunately, they have not had that four-day weather window. They are still waiting for that weather window to occur. They are looking out at 10-day increments, as I understand, Mr. Speaker. They do need that four-day window. They do have on standby, of course, everyone that is required to ensure the safe retrieval of that flow line, and we are continuing to monitor the situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the minister for that information.

Could she also tell us whether other wells in the central drill centre have yet been brought on line?

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

MS. COADY: And there are six drill centres, Mr. Speaker.

Currently, there is one operational, roughly about 6,000 barrels per day, but only one of the six is currently operating and that has been operating for some time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you to the minister for that information.

A November storm and subsequent oil spill pushed all offshore production vessels to shut down production for a period of time, but the SeaRose is still having trouble.

I would ask the Minister of Finance: Does he have an update on the impact of this reduction in production on this year's provincial budget?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, and I will say that the revenue is deferred, not lost. Although, we would like to see it in this year's budget because it does have an impact, that we will receive the revenue in the future.

The total impact to date, the latest numbers that I've seen is \$70 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I would thank the Minister of Finance for that admirably clear answer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, this morning I attended a rally by former inmates about the conditions at Her Majesty's Penitentiary.

I would ask the Minister of Justice: What substantive progress can he report to this House on discussions with his federal friends on replacement of what is known as the Pen?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand up and answer the Member's question. This is a topic that we've had a number of conversations with our federal counterparts over the last three years. In fact, I spoke to Minister Ralph Goodale on this in November when he attended St. John's for the

federal-provincial-territorial meetings. I know it's also a topic that the Premier has discussed with the prime minister, and we'll continue to work on that.

What I will say is there's one thing that is certainly clear, is that there is a need for replacement of Her Majesty's Penitentiary. It's woefully outdated, and that's something that is certainly a priority for this government.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: I'm glad the minister mentioned priorities, because in July of this year our federal minister, O'Regan, said: "We work with the province on their priorities and the priorities right now have been things such as roads [and] education."

Is the replacement of HMP on the minister's priority list? Where is it on that list, and has he informed the minister of this, the federal minister?

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

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

Certainly, I wasn't privy to the conversation with that federal minister. I have spoken with the minister of Justice, federally. We've spoken with the minister of Public Safety, federally, and I know that the Premier has spoken to the prime minister.

The fact is we have a lot of priorities when it comes to work that needs to be done in this province. We talk about roads, we talk about education, but there are also priorities within Justice. What I would say is infrastructure wise the replacement of HMP is probably the top Justice-related piece of infrastructure that needs to be replaced in this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I had the benefit of a tour of a penitentiary facility, which was recently constructed near New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, and it's actually run by a chief superintendent from Newfoundland and Labrador. The cost of the facility was \$47 million.

After four years of talking about replacing HMP, could the hon. minister advise of the latest cost estimate to do so?

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

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

Again, this is a topic that has been going on a lot longer than four year. I think, in fact, the former federal MP back in the '80s had a sign constructed out around Harbour Grace saying that was going to be the site of the new penitentiary. This is a conversation had by multiple governments and multiple members.

I am aware of the prison that the Member referenced. It was over in Pictou. It was build for \$42 million. What I can say is it has half the capacity that will be needed. It does not have enough room for programing and it had leaks within the first 30 days.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, \$11 million was invested into Halifax airport authority causing the West Jet presence in St. John's to be lost to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

I ask the minister: Are you aware if any of this \$11 million came from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We work very closely with the Airport Authority here in St. John's on a project-to-project basis, to attract flights. We have invested in the Dublin flight with West Jet and we also did in the flight that exists going direct to London.

Since 2014, we've invested more dollars in partnership with the airport in Destination St. John's than the former administration did when they cancelled their air access strategy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: That's great information, Mr. Speaker. So all of that effort has meant we've lost the West Jet flight from St. John's with access to Europe. So that's great news. I say your efforts haven't worked.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'll ask the minister directly: The \$11 million that went into Halifax airport, do you know if any of that money came from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency? Straightforward question.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, when it came to the WestJet flight itself – because we had invested in that flight with Destination St. John's and the Airport Authority to have that flight – it was a company decision that they made that they saw when they invested in

Dreamliners, larger pieces of aircraft, that they would no longer be able to funnel the amount of traffic in the St. John's airport to get to continuation, because the Halifax airport has 10 direct WestJet flights that will be feeding into that particular airport.

What I can report is that we're continuing to work with the Airport Authority to ensure that there are additional opportunities to have a flight restored in Dublin. We've been having very productive conversations, and we will partner with the federal government where opportunities exist, just like Halifax.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, we're not asking about the restoration of the flight; we're talking about why we lost the flight and what the minister did or didn't do to secure it.

We understand that leading up to Halifax being awarded the WestJet Dublin flight and becoming the Eastern Canadian hub to Europe, Nova Scotia government officials, including Nova Scotia premier, made many trips to the WestJet head office in Calgary to advocate for Halifax to be the Atlantic Canadian hub for Europe.

I ask the minister: How many meetings did you have with senior WestJet executives and what advocacy efforts did you perform over the last three years?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Air access is certainly very critical. I had actually went out to the hospitality conference and had addressed this issue with the delegates there. We've been working in partnership to look at how we can expand our opportunities and committed to working with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. We've actually highlighted that we would be putting financial

assistance into that industry association to highlight how we can maintain and expand flights.

We saw where Air Canada has expanded their lounge; the airport has grown in capacity. We've seen where WestJet has added flights direct to Calgary. We've seen where Air Canada has added direct flights to Montreal.

We're seeing these opportunities. I had met with WestJet executives, Air Canada executives and we continue to have a strong partnership – things that these Members opposite did not do.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: I remind the Member it was this administration that supported and was able to get that flight from St. John's to Halifax (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, direct flight from the province to Dublin helps grow our economy. A direct flight facilitates trade, commerce and business partnerships. The minister has failed to advocate for our province to be the Atlantic Canadian gateway to Europe and is also the Minister of Business.

I ask the minister: What impact will the loss of this flight have on business opportunities and economic growth, and what is your plan for a gateway to Europe, which we've now lost?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're always working with our partners when it comes to looking at all the investment opportunities here in this province. Flights are certainly one thing. When it came to the Dublin

flight itself, you have to look at the business case. The company made the decision that the business case did not exist because they were investing in larger aircraft – their Dreamliners. You have to be able to flow passenger traffic to create the capacity. We were willing to invest and help them in terms of marketing.

But we have tremendous opportunities, Mr. Speaker, in our province. That's why we're working to expand oil and gas, the mining sector, the aquaculture industry and we're working with partners. We've seen significant Norwegian investment here in this province. Unfortunately, we don't have the amount of Irish business partnerships. That PC administration had invested in the Irish partnerships and it failed.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll indicate to the minister, as far as I know, those Dreamliners, they land in Halifax, but they can also land in St. John's, so that's the point. We've missed it.

Your department has a seat on the St. John's airport authority. We are told no representatives have attended meetings in almost three years.

Why is that, Minister?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Airport Authority has representation from various board members and we work with and talk to the airport on a regular basis about all the opportunities that exist. We have been investing – and as I've said, the previous administration had an Air Access strategy that they cancelled. The PC Party cancelled the Air Access Strategy in 2013.

Since that time and our administration had taken over, we have invested more in air access and support. It's a very globally competitive environment and, as we grow our economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we will continue to see additional flights and opportunities. I look forward to some very good news as we expand flights and services here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: The minister talks about some investment they've done, but obviously investment hasn't worked. We've lost our gateway to Europe, with Brexit and other things going on that's so important as we look forward – and the economic agreements with the EU.

So I ask the minister again, very simply: Why have officials from your department who are part of the St. John's airport authority been vacant from those meetings over the last three years?

No wonder the Airport Authority was blindsided; they knew nothing about it because the Government of Newfoundland wasn't engaged at all with WestJet about what was happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, so much misinformation from the other side. And when it comes to what we've been doing, we've had very close relationship working with airlines, working with the airport to promote Newfoundland and Labrador as a destination. We had over 530,000 people, non-residents, come to our province last year. When it comes to tourism, we're breaking record numbers when it comes to spending and investment here. We've seen new businesses open on a daily basis. These are opportunities.

As the oil and gas industry expands and the Minister of Natural Resources continues to

highlight the mineral resources and oil and gas, we will see further opportunities to bring back a flight to New York. It has to be competitive.

The PC Party, through Muskrat Falls and all of their spending, created an absolute mess of this province and no wonder there was (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, your time is over.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation tried to produce his own tourism video on social media. The video was met with criticism from viewers who called it unnecessary and uncomfortable.

I ask the minister: Why did he feel it necessary to post the video and then delete it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to go back to a question the Member opposite asked about ACOA funding into the Halifax airport. There was no Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – funding in that \$11 million that was put forward.

And in response to the tourism introduction that was put forward by myself as minister, we had launched an ad here in this province – Target Marketing had done –and it had been the most successfully launched ad and most viewed on YouTube with 680,000 views in just one month.

It's important, when you look at all of the opportunities, to get our message out there in terms of promotion of Newfoundland and Labrador. And our ad right now, A Tangled Tale, is certainly doing just that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: I certainly commend the ad agency for the work they're doing. Our province is known for an award-winning tourism brand. These advertisements were started under the previous administration and have resulted in the growth of the tourism sector.

Does the minister believe it was appropriate to tie his awkward video in with the award-winning tourism brand?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no question that the award-winning campaign that we have is certainly something that we continue to do and we continue to build on that.

But what the Member opposite didn't listen or didn't hear in my response is that when the ad, A Tangled Tale, was launched just one month ago, it is the most successfully viewed and watched ad on our YouTube and social media channels –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – 680,000 views in just one month. The ad that we did, colours, just three years ago, has only achieved 450,000 views, and anything that was done by the previous administration fails in comparison.

So, when you look at how to promote and how to get your message out there, that ad is reaching new markets and will benefit for years to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, he's not sharing the count on his video.

Does the minister now admit that posting his own social media video was a mistake, which could have hurt the tourism brand of this province?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I was in Gander at the Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador conference will all the stakeholders of the hospitality industry. The Member opposite and all Members of PC Party were not present. They were nowhere to be seen.

I don't know where their commitment is to the tourism industry, but our government and our party is certainly committed, and we are supporting the industry for tourism here in this province. They certainly see the value of our tourism ads and the work that's being done by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

I have to say, we're in for a banner year. It's exciting, and I'm looking forward to all the opportunities going forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The mandate letter for the Minister of TCII states that he should be "Focusing tourism marketing on the province's natural and cultural heritage."

I ask the minister: Will you admit your own awkward video took away from featuring the province's natural culture and heritage?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, I mean it speaks volumes –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: – when the Members opposite, when the Opposition takes personal remarks at how an individual speaks or how they conduct themselves.

As minister, I am the spokesperson for the department. We had launched our tourism ad, and the ad itself has been the most successful launch that we've had in the province's history.

When we talk to touring companies, when we talk to hoteliers, their numbers are showing that we will have a very strong season. We've actually seen where flights are being added during the summer. Deer Lake airport had its busiest season last year in August during tourism traffic.

What we are doing in *The Way Forward* around tourism is working, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to see those numbers grow. There are 2,800 businesses from 2,600 last year.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time is over.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: A quick question, please, from the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, the awkward terminology was not mine. It is that of marketing experts across the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: I ask the minister: Was the production of his own video, which he removed, a good use of public funds in your opinion?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation for a quick response, please.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, her words or not, she has no issue with using them in the House of Assembly, so she much agree with them.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that cost zero dollars to produce – zero dollars. And look at the achievement, Mr. Speaker, 680,000 views in a month. Nothing else has achieved so much success.

It's about getting the message out there about our tourism ad, and that's what people are viewing. That's what they're falling in love with, and we will see success this summer for the 20,000 people who are employed in the tourism industry.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Tomorrow is International Women's Day, and women are done waiting.

I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: Will he broaden child care subsidies to make it affordable for all families, not just some, so that women who need and want to work can afford to do so?

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Member opposite for a very good question today. I know that we as a government on this side have put a lot of emphasis on early childhood development. As a matter of fact, we signed a bilateral agreement with the federal government for \$22 million for operating grants, which actually worked in providing an additional thousand more

affordable spaces for our residents in the province, and we continue to work on that.

We've also looked at areas that we're making significant change with regard to – we've had capex investments into resources so we can have a play-based environment for our young people. So we continue to do that. And I know there'll be another question coming, so I'll –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

Well, I'm going to have to look forward to the budget, I suppose, to see if he really is going to broaden the subsidies.

Women, as I said, are done waiting.

I ask the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour: Will he convince his government to raise the annual increase to the minimum wage significantly in order to close the gender wage gap and catch up to the rest of the country?

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

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. We, as a government, opened a transparent process. We consulted with stakeholders in the area. We wanted to create an ability to plan for both the employers and employees, which is what we did. We've committed to harmonizing, with our Atlantic colleagues, the minimum wage level, the date for minimum wage at April 1. We've committed to an increase in minimum wage of 25 cents this year, starting April 1, to \$11.40 minimum wage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tomorrow is International Women's Day and women are done waiting.

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: Where is the promised pay equity legislation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for her question. Women and girls in Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to have economic and social equality.

Pay equity is a very complex issue. A Committee has been established, chaired by my deputy minister, and of course there's a lot of research to be done around pay equity, and they will have ample opportunity to compile the information.

This is not about how quickly we can do it. It's about doing the right thing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, that research has been done and pay equity is in effect in a number of places in the country. Mr. Speaker, women are done waiting.

I ask the Minister of Justice and Public Safety: Where's the Labrador Domestic Violence Court that was promised four years ago?

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

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

It's always a pleasure when we can stand up and talk about the great strides we've made in Justice in just the last three-and-a-half years.

The fact is we are working on expansions to the Family Violence Intervention Court in this province, including in Labrador. We're also working on a number of initiatives across this province.

Just this week, we talked about the success of the sexual violence legal support service program. It's something that's novel in this country and which has helped 50 people get free legal advice during times of great trauma in their life, and I'm looking forward to making more announcements next week on the things we are doing in the Justice system.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, that doesn't speak to the Labrador Domestic Violence Court.

Mr. Speaker, women are done waiting.

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women: Will she commit to funding the NorPen Aboriginal Women's Circle's request for a women's centre on the Northern Peninsula which is so desperately needed?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for her question.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member would know, this is a budget question.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, women are done waiting.

I ask the minister: Will she commit to funding a provincial women's conference where women's centres from around the province set the agenda to get real meaningful work done on women's issues?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for a quick response.

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

I'll give a quick answer to that. Just three weeks ago we had a meeting of women from all across this province, advocates. The Member opposite was there, and we talked about ending violence against women and girls. We talked about the things we are doing.

One of the announcements we made that day is that we will be bringing a Claire's Law into this province that will help make sure that interpersonal violence situations get known to the people that it involves.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Pension Plan For Employees Of The Government Of The Province And Others, Bill 56.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to read into the record for the purpose of this hon. House that yesterday the Member for CBS got up and he made 100 per cent false statements on everything that he said in this House. He talked about us bringing a smaller ferry to the Strait of Belle Isle.

Mr. Speaker, 300-passenger capacity up from 240. We are taking 120 vehicles, up from 80 to 90 in the previous. He said that the vessel has been 14 days without travel. The longest that vessel has gone without travelling this year is six days, and we put on flights.

I want to say to the Opposition, you cannot get up and just start spewing numbers out. It's not only important to have your facts and figures straight; you have a responsibility to the people of this province to have your facts straight. And that's why we have seniors that can't sleep when they think about Muskrat Falls, because they sanctioned the project and they didn't know what they were at.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: I will look to the Minister of Health and Community Services for a response to a petition from yesterday, please.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

We ran out of time yesterday with the 3 o'clock deadline for private Members' resolutions. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was delivering a petition on behalf of some of the constituents around seniors and those people with cognitive impairment, suggesting that their care was in some way neglectful or less than standard.

I think the first statement I'd like to make is that I really appreciate, both on a personal and a professional level, the efforts and hard work of long-term health care providers in this province who actually make these facilities into a home.

In terms of cognitive impairment, we have actually invested \$6 million-plus in Botwood for a brand new wing for cognitively impaired people with dementia, along with facilities such as Pleasant View Towers. And again, I'd like to have that record corrected, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I rise on the petition for the hospital in Corner Brook.

WHEREAS the successful proponents for the new hospital in Corner Brook are scheduled to be announced this spring with construction anticipated to begin in the fall and, as this is estimated to be a four-year construction period, and as there are experienced local tradespeople and labours in the area;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to encourage companies that are awarded the contracts for the new hospital to hire local tradespeople and labourers, at no extra cost to the taxpayers, so that they can work in their own area, support the local economy and be able to return home to their families every evening.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand and present these petitions as long as they keep coming in. Today, we have people from McIver's, Gillams, Meadows, Summerside, all throughout the Humber - Bay of Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very encouraged by the minister's comments lately that he's been dealing with Trades NL and the Newfoundland and Labrador Construction Association to work with the locals. As I mentioned several times before, when you bring people in, they have to be brought up to the standards of Newfoundland and Labrador, with the additional work they have to do, to make sure they're properly trained for these sites for the Newfoundland standards.

Last year, as I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, iron workers were willing to put in \$100,000 of their kitty, just to keep the people home, to make sure that it would be no extra cost to the taxpayers of the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is very important to the local economy in Corner Brook, very important to the workers in Corner Brook and the surrounding area: Baie Verte, Burin Peninsula – out as far as Baie Verte they said they could have enough workers.

I'm encouraged by the minister and I ask any other minister – and I know the Member for Corner Brook definitely agrees with the petition and see what we can do as a government, all people here, to try to help out and to ensure that local workers are put there.

Mr. Speaker, I have to add that all the Construction Association workers and unions are willing to work with government to ensure that there's no extra cost to the taxpayers of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I thank the minister for his work into this in the past, because I know there were meetings in Corner Brook, and I know he'll be working with all of us to try to ensure that this is done.

Mr. Speaker, I am giving notice here to the minister that I'm here to help out, whatever I can do also to ensure that local workers are hired, to keep people at home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works for a response, please.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the petition. I can assure the hon. Member that we all support Newfoundland and Labrador workers in the construction industry or any other industry. I met earlier this week with Trades NL to discuss this very topic and ways, going forward, that we can actually work to ensure that the people on these job sites are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Also, we were in Corner Brook last fall and we hosted a business session between local Newfoundland and Labrador companies with the two proponents that are selected to do the bidding on the hospital. I can tell you, one thing we do have for certain in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have some great construction companies, Mr. Speaker, and they're staffed with great workers.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the offer from the Member opposite to work with us, to work with everybody here in this House to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the primary beneficiaries of this construction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, all Canadian provinces and territories, except Newfoundland and Labrador, have crime victim compensation/financial assistance programs for victims of violent or interpersonal crimes.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are victims and survivors of violent crimes such as homicide, sexual assault, domestic violence,

assault, child sexual abuse and neglect should be eligible for financial compensation to cover the cost of expenses resulting from the crime.

Some of the costs that should be considered include: medical expenses, mental health/counselling expenses, pain and suffering, support for a child born as a result of a sexual assault, lost wages for incapacitated or disabled victims, lost support for dependants of victims, and property loss or damage.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement a crime victim compensation/financial assistance program for victims of violent or interpersonal crimes.

It kind of really shocked me to find out that someone could be assaulted, be it sexual or physical, and lying on the sidewalk and when an ambulance comes to pick them up to transport them to a medical facility, they'll get a bill in the mail.

Mr. Speaker, we can no longer continue to victimize the victim.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There have been numerous concerns raised by family members of seniors in long-term care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those suffering with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions, whereby loved ones have experienced injuries, have not been bathed regularly, not received proper nutrition and/or have been left lying in their own waste for extended periods of time. We believe this is directly related to government's failure to ensure adequate staffing at all those facilities.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to instate legislation which includes the mandatory

establishment of an adequate ratio of one staff to three residents in long-term care and all other applicable regional health facilities housing persons with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions in order to ensure appropriate safety, protection from injuries, proper hygiene care and all other required care. This law would include the creation of a specific job position in these facilities for monitoring and intervention as required to ensure the safety of patients.

Mr. Speaker, I am presenting this again today on behalf of the Advocates for Senior Citizens' Rights. The minister just spoke to it a few minutes ago. He talked about the investment that was made in Botwood and somewhere else – I think he said a new wing in Botwood, and there was some expansion somewhere else.

Mr. Speaker, nobody is – and he also talked about that staff are doing a good job and so on. I'm certainly not suggesting that staff are not doing a good job and doing the best with what they have. I'm also not questioning bricks and mortar. I'm not questioning the availability of nutritious meals, which is what he said yesterday or the day before, talking about they have nutritious meals and so on. No one is saying that.

What is being asked for here, and what the issue is, is there are concerns amongst a lot of people who have loved ones in long-term care that there is not enough staff. Never mind the bricks and mortar; there's not enough staff to take care of the people the way they should be taken care of.

There may be nutritious food, but it's useless to have nutritious food laid at the bedside and three or four hours later a family member comes in and the nutritious food is there at the bedside because there is nobody there to feed that person. That's the issue. It's not about food. It's not about the bricks and mortar. It's not about whether staff care and doing the best they can. It's about ensuring the appropriate staff there to take care of these people. That's what's being asked for. They're asking that it be cemented in legislation as opposed to policy or regulation, which can change either by the health authorities or can change by the minister as opposed to saying there has to be a minimum standard for these people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services for a response, please.

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

I'm delighted to stand here and speak once again about the sterling work done by staff in long-term care facilities across this province.

I think I would point out that most long-term care facilities have family satisfaction surveys on a regular interval. The latest results I've seen – and I speak for my own area again at the moment – would suggest that 92 per cent of families are satisfied with the level of care that their loved ones receive. That is not, of course, with compliancy. I think it is simply a number to try and put some context to the comments from my colleagues over the way.

Again, if he were to spend any significant time in long-term care facilities, he would also note the amount of care and attention that goes in to coordinating the activities of the catering staff and the nursing and care staff, so that meals are available to people who need assistance, at a time when they are hot and there are staff to feed them, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

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

Here are the reasons for this petition: our licenced child care system is a patchwork of private-for-profit centres, 70 per cent of all centres, non-profit community-based centres and family daycare; plus, a small number of education and workplace-based centres. It is nowhere near meeting the child care needs in our province. Affordable licenced child care is often in short supply in rural parts of the

province. Even in St. John's there are long wait-lists for quality child care programs.

Child care programs have both social and financial benefits for society. Studies show that high-quality child care and early childhood education programs result in better cognitive language and numeracy skills. They help economically disadvantaged children transition to school on the same level as other children. For every one dollar spent on early childhood education, the benefits range from \$1.50 to \$2.78. Many studies show this, including TD Economics.

Investing in child care creates jobs. One million dollars invested in child care would create 40 jobs, more than in any other sector, and that comes from the Child Care Human Resources Sector Council. A gender-based analysis of the provincial budget would have indicated the need for a public child care program as a key way to close the wage gap between women and men in this province.

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly as follows:

We call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate steps to put in place a plan for a gradual transition to a universal, regulated and publicly funded and fully accessible child care and after-school care program.

This petition is signed, I think, totally by people from St. John's. As their petition points out, this is not just an issue in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it may even be a greater issue in the cities of the province than even in rural.

On the day before International Women's Day, I think it's important to look at one of the bullets in this petition, about a gender-based analysis of the provincial budget.

When the minister answered questions from me today with regard to child care, there was no real understanding of the fact that subsidies that we have in place are only benefiting a small number of people, but we still have thousands who are not benefiting from these subsidies. What we need is a real plan for using child care. Number

one, to help the need of child care; number two, to help our economy.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a response, please.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do agree with one of the statements she made, that early childhood improves cognitive thinking and abilities. So at least there's one – one point is correct.

Mr. Speaker, our government has made significant advancement in early childhood over the last three years. As a matter of fact, we have made available an additional 1,000 affordable spaces. In addition to that, we have invested \$22 million in a bilateral agreement between the federal and provincial government. In addition to that – and she talked about a million dollars – we put in \$2 million.

I just want to bring attention to a couple of items as well, Mr. Speaker. Since 2017, we have increased the net income threshold from \$27,000 to \$32,000 to \$35,000. This will provide – get this – this will provide an additional 560 spaces that will be fully subsidized –

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Sir.

MR. HAWKINS: – and we're continuing to work on that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Your time is over.

Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

MS. ROGERS: 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 humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada, and the minimum wage workers earn poverty incomes; and

WHEREAS proposals to index the minimum wage to inflation will not address poverty if the wage is too low to start with; and

WHEREAS women and youth, and service sector employees, are particularly hurt by the low minimum wage; and

WHEREAS the minimum wage only rose only 5 per cent between 2010 and 2016, while many food items rose more than 20 per cent; and

WHEREAS other Canadian jurisdictions are implementing or considering a \$15 minimum wage as a step toward a living wage;

Whereupon the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021 with an annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

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

Mr. Speaker, it's particularly poignant to be presenting this petition today on the eve of International Women's Day. We know that the majority of minimum wage workers, in fact, are women. We also know that the majority of people who are living in poverty are single moms, sole support mothers with children. We know that poverty affects the welfare of children, but it also affects the choices that a woman can make in her life.

We know from the research and from the work that all of us do in our own constituencies, how many women are unable to escape situations of violence because of poverty; how many women stay in those kinds of positions because they feel they have no alternative, because they don't the resources they need in order to fend for their children, in order to live in safe and affordable housing?

Mr. Speaker, it's incredible that this government doesn't do the right steps to ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are working hard to help build our economy, who are working full-time, yet living just at the poverty levels or just above the poverty levels.

Mr. Speaker, we see that this is being enacted in provinces all across the country and in other parts of the world. There's no longer a justifiable reason for government not to do the right thing. At the rate that they're going, without increasing the basic foundational rate so that when their increases are making a difference, we won't reach \$15 for years and years and years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day, Sir.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, third reading of Bill 50.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 50, An Act To Amend The Public Bodies Reporting Act, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Public Bodies Reporting Act. (Bill 50)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Public Bodies Reporting Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 50)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, prior to doing a first reading, if I would direct my colleagues to look at Motion 2, I've just been notified that this legislation, which is An Act Respecting The Continuation Of The Oil And Gas Corporation Of Newfoundland and Labrador, Bill 42, that there is a typo and an error. It's not "continuation;" it's supposed to be "establish." So the bill should actually say, An Act To Establish An Oil And Gas Corporation For The Province, Bill 42.

I wonder if I would have leave, from my colleagues, to amend the title of that bill to respect the same, prior to first reading?

MR. SPEAKER: Do I see leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, I appreciate the co-operation of my colleagues over there, including the independent Members.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Establish An Oil And Gas Corporation For The Province, Bill 42 and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Establish An Oil And Gas Corporation For The Province, Bill 42, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Natural Resources to introduce a bill, "An Act To Establish An Oil And Gas Corporation For The Province, carried." (Bill 42)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Establish An Oil And Gas Corporation For The Province. (Bill 42)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time?

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 42 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform the House that I received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

MR. SPEAKER: I would ask all to rise, please.

I am in receipt of a letter from Government House dated the 3rd of March, 2019 and it states:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a

request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the province for the year ending 31 March 2020, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: _____

Judy M. Foote
Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 55, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The

Financial Year Ending March 31, 2020 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

Resolution

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

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2020 the sum of \$2,864,878,600.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Chair, I didn't hear any nays, I figured we had Interim Supply then.

Mr. Chair, it's a pleasure to rise in the House today and speak to Interim Supply. This is an annual bill that we must pass in the House to allow for the financial administration of ongoing government operations during interim period while budget 2019 is being introduced, debated and approved by the Legislature.

When we introduce the budget, we will be seeking approval for funding to spend the entire fiscal year, Mr. Chair, but it normally takes time to allow for the debate and approval of that, so during the interim period we need to provide funding so that government departments can do their ongoing work of the core public service and continue without disruption. This is the purpose of what we're debating today, which is known as Interim Supply.

Mr. Chair, we're seeking approval in Interim Supply for a sum of approximately \$2.86 billion. While Interim Supply is based on 2018-19 budget figures, in some cases allowances are made for anticipated increases in the coming year. Increases in some areas are a normal part of government business. The primary reason for the increase is that the Department of Natural Resources will require an increase of \$43 million over last year for Nalcor's equity

payment. But, it should be noted, this is just a timing issue; and, in fact, Nalcor's equity payment is less in 2019-20 than it was in 2018-19.

Mr. Chair, Interim Supply will provide departments and public bodies with the necessary cash flow to manage expenditures for the period April 1 to June 30, 2019, or essentially the first quarter of the fiscal year. This includes ongoing housekeeping expenditures, including funding for upcoming pay periods, ongoing project and funding requirements applicable to the 2019-20 fiscal year.

This Interim Supply bill makes provision for a transfer of funds from the Department of Finance to other departments for expenditures for compensation, benefits and associated adjustments; transfers from the Consolidated Fund Services accounts to other departments for special retirement and other payments, should they be necessary; transfers to and from various heads of expenditure to facilitate expenditures to financial assistance, as may be approved from time to time by Treasury Board; a contingency clause to overcome any unforeseen expenses.

Interim Supply, Mr. Chair, is an important bill that is intended to provide for the continuation of ongoing government programs, services and projects. The bill needs to be passed to continue routine and ongoing operations while budget 2019 is going through the Legislature for debate and approval.

As we approach budget 2019, the province continues to face fiscal challenges; however, these challenges are not insurmountable. We, together, as the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, are making positive strides in the right direction. Our government continues to take a balanced approach to fiscal management. Our focus as a government is on the delivery of programs and services that are important to the public in smarter and more efficient ways.

We are seeing very real improvements in economic indicators that people are feeling in their everyday lives. The unemployment rate has declined from 2017, and is expected to decline further in 2019. Retail sales declined somewhat in 2018; however, we project growth in 2019,

and that growth will continue from 2019 to 2022. Household income is expected to trend upwards in line with wage gains and the economy. Capital investment is rebounding. This year we see West White Rose and Voisey's Bay underground mines ramping up development.

In addition, we have been able to keep our spending steady by maintaining spending on health care which has been critical in our approach. After health care budgets swelled by almost 70 per cent in the mid-2000s to 2015, we've been able to hold spending steady for the last three years while creating capacity and bringing services throughout the community.

We've achieved \$2.9 million in annual savings by reducing leased space throughout government. We expect further reductions in leased space this year and in 2020, as leases come up for renewal. Through measures such as reducing the size of the public service through attrition, zero-based budgeting and implementing a risk-based approach to estimating revenues, our government continues to look at creative ways to correct the course without significant fiscal pain.

So, Mr. Chair, I know this is a procedural motion, but it is nonetheless important in order to continue with the business of government. The funds allocated under this bill go towards the work of our departments who are moving forward with our balanced approach.

Just a few of their successes, Mr. Chair, includes the investment in new and improved health care infrastructure to ensure we're meeting the province's health care needs. These include two new 60-bed, long-term care homes, one in Gander and one in Grand Falls-Windsor; a new 145-bed, long-term care home in Corner Brook, as well as a new 164-bed hospital in Corner Brook; the opening of 28 long-term care beds, and a new ambulatory care space in Carbonear.

Implementation of the education action plan which was developed as part of the *Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes* saw the creation of teaching and learning assistants, a total of 200 over three years; the creation of 21.5 reading specialists, which will increase to 104 over the next three years; the

creation of additional teacher librarians, which will see an additional 39 over the next three years; and, an increase in the allocation of learning resource teachers.

We have also provided support for the establishment of a 500-person inbound contact centre in St. John's. Over the next five years it is expected that S&P Data will generate up to \$131 million in economic activity.

Our approach to economic development has also led to boosting new employment opportunities in such industries as oil and gas, mining, aerospace and defense. We've seen an agreement with Husky Energy to develop the West White Rose Project. That resulted in employment of approximately 1,700 jobs to date, largely in Argentia and Marystown.

In November of 2018, we saw \$1.39 billion in bids for exploration licences received, as the most recent call for bids in Eastern Newfoundland region and the Jeanne d'Arc Basin. It's the largest, single year number for bids in the province.

Vale's expansion of the Voisey's Bay underground mine will create 1,600-person years of direct and indirect employment during the five-year construction period, peaking at 4,800 in 2020. Once operational, the underground mine and Long Harbour processing plant will contribute to 1,700 jobs.

The provincial government's partnership with Grieg is positioned in Newfoundland and Labrador as a leader in Canada's aquaculture industry. We've provided a repayable loan to leverage another \$220 million and will create 830 jobs for the construction process, as well as 380 in related sectors.

We've established a Canadian agricultural partnership with the federal government. It's a \$3 billion, five-year investment to help Canada's agricultural sector. This partnership will provide \$37 million in strategic investments for agricultural and programming in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have introduced policy changes to support the province's fast growing craft brewage industry, including increasing discounts to

markups that craft brewage facilities remit to government on the production of beer, spirits, cider and non-grape wine. These are, no doubt, helping to create jobs and successful businesses and strengthening communities. These are just a few of the numerous ways that our government has helped diversify the economy and create employment.

Up as far as yesterday, Mr. Chair, I have been saying that we've had six consecutive months of year-over-year employment increases in this province. I can proudly say that as of today, we've had seven consecutive months of year-over-year employment increases. So things are turning around. All of our economic indicators are showing that our economy is rebounding, strengthening and growing.

There can be no doubt that helping to create new jobs and successful businesses is essential to strengthening communities throughout our province, Mr. Chair. So, too, is investing in infrastructure projects that support the delivery of public services and maximizing potential to encourage greater economic activity.

I'm sure that there are other examples within our government – there are several, in fact, that I know of. I'm sure that my colleagues on this side of the House, Mr. Chair, will take the opportunity to speak to this bill and highlight some of the other initiatives that we've had success with over the past three years.

With that in mind, Mr. Chair, I look forward to comments and remarks by all Members of the House as we debate Interim Supply.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It gives me pleasure to rise to speak today, speaking as part of this process that we're going through right now. Mr. Chair, I have a story that's kind of been on my mind now for the past couple of days. It's an issue that we're all familiar with, and that's the plight of our seniors in our health care system.

I have a constituent whose mother is in a long-term care home and she was transported to the Health Sciences Centre. This story is not unique; I'm sure we've all heard them. Basically, the constituent's mother was assessed and diagnosed with an issue.

My constituent said to the nurse or the doctor who was present: Okay, her normal doctor would do this. And the doctor in the emergency room said: Well, we wouldn't normally do that to an 84-year-old woman. My constituent said: Why? This will save her life. And she goes: We wouldn't normally do that to an 84-year-old woman. After my constituent pressed why she wouldn't do that – because she has to explain to Eastern Health why she would invest money in the treatment of an 84-year-old woman.

Now, how can we sit here and look up and not hang our heads in shame when we've come to valuing a senior's life over money that treatment would cost?

I've got a constituent in my district who has made several appeals to Eastern Health and to the Ministry. She's going to go blind because she cannot afford a further injection that will save her sight. This is a perfectly functioning woman who lives independently in her own rented apartment, taking care of herself, is now going to become blind and a complete and utter dependant of the state, of the province.

So, for the sake of a couple of thousand dollars to enable her to stay independent and looking after herself, she's now going to become a ward of the state and cost us thousands and thousands of dollars a week, let alone the humanitarian side of it.

Mr. Chair, another issue that I'd like to bring forth – which I have on several occasions – being the discontinuation of the seniors and low-income dental program. Over the past three years, our seniors, who everybody knows are largely on fixed incomes, have been subjected to an increased cost of living, largely due to the administration's efforts to increase revenue through taxation, an increase of fees and other costs mandatory for life: driver's licence, insurance, increase in HST. All of those costs are taking more money out of our seniors' pockets. And now, many of those seniors who

had a little bit of a nest egg, a little bit of a rainy-day fund saved up, that rainy-day fund is gone.

I'm hearing every day from seniors who are in homes – yes, they get the rental subsidy, but that rental subsidy is not enough to cover their full rent and their housing for the month. So now they have no money. They have no money to top up that rental subsidy. Now they're in the position of having to leave what they would consider their home and move into a publicly funded unit or – demoralizingly enough – having to become homeless.

There's something fundamentally wrong when we, as government and as legislators, cannot see our way to find the funds to keep our seniors independent and not only keeping them independent, but keep them as being a further cost to the system.

By discontinuing the Dental Program, seniors who cannot afford to go to the dentist, it's not like you or I who can say we'll go get a loan and we'll pay that off over the course of our lifetime. Why don't you ask a senior if they could go get a loan to pay for their teeth? Ninety-five per cent would say they wouldn't even be considered.

So these seniors are letting their dental problems go on and on, they're manifesting into something so much larger and they're showing up in our emergency departments and costing us more money again. It horrible for me to even say costing money, seniors' health – why are those two things connected? Why should that even be a concern? Seniors are human just like the rest of us. Why are we treating them less than human because of the stage of life that they're in?

I just listened to the Finance Minister talk about the unemployment rate. The unemployment rate, yes, has gone down but so has our population. We've had 9,000 people leave our province, the majority of them being able-bodied workers. And, why have they left? They've left looking for work. That's 9,000 people that represent an investment of everybody else in this province.

We've housed them. We've looked after their medical care. We've largely educated them, even if it's only to grade 12. And if they've gone on to secondary education through one of the trades colleges or Memorial, we've continued to

fund them. They're big investments. They're lost investments. Those 9,000 people that have left our province are people that will generate a tax base for us. But guess what? We've invested in a business, being those people, and now that business is going to turn rewards for other jurisdictions throughout North America and the world. I wish them all the best, and I hope that we can change things around, that they see a future back here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've gone from what was the most attractive place, taxation-wise and program-wise, to live in in Atlantic Canada, to one of the least favoured. In confirmation of that fact is those 9,000 people. Our population is predicted to continue to decline, continue to decline while our population gets demographically older. That means more cost on the system, less revenue for our provincial coffers.

When it comes to an environment for business, governments, time and time again – and this government is no exception to the rule – they think it is their job to create jobs, and it is not. Government does a very poor job of creating jobs. Government's job is to create an environment for business to prosper.

We often hear of the advancements in mining, the advancements in oil, the establishment of different businesses throughout our province, but most particularly when it comes to non-renewable resources. The success of a non-renewable resource has little or nothing to do with the current government; it has everything to do with commodity prices, which are driven by world demand.

We have to look at how we can increase the amount of businesses that are set up in our province. We have to maximize the value of both non-renewable and renewable resources. We're looking at a timber allocation on the Northern Peninsula right now. While I'm sure I'll be corrected on some of my understanding, and I look forward to that, we're taking valuable sawlogs, which could replace material that's coming in from elsewhere, being produced elsewhere, and we're going to turn them into pellets. And while I stand to be corrected on this, pellets is an even lower value product than paper.

Why can't we turn that saw log capacity into employment? Why can't we turn them into materials for construction? Why can't we turn those saw logs into sawmills operating throughout Newfoundland and Labrador? And, most particularly, on the Northern Peninsula where that resource exists and where there are sawmills sitting idle?

I'm actually aware of a provincially-invested asset that's sitting there idle. No matter who set that asset there, that's the people's money that put that there; that's the people's asset, and it's a shame that sits there idle. Instead, we're looking at going and building a similar functioning plant just across the peninsula; yet, we have almost \$20 million of public funds sitting idle, withering away.

Regardless of who set the project up, regardless of when this government fades into Opposition and a new government comes in place, we have to – as a potential government, we have to look at capitalizing on the investments they have made, while limited they may be.

I often hear – I don't want to say political theatre – political theatre: we've done this, we've done that. Well, guess what? No, it's not. It's the people on the ground. It's the people in businesses that are willing to stick their necks out, willing to put everything on the line for the creation of an enterprise that will employ people, that will use resources, that will maximize the return for our resources for the people of the province.

It's not government's job to create jobs. It is government's job to create an environment for business to flourish, and business will create jobs. In order to do that, we have to make it a more attractive place for people to come and live so that they won't just come and pull out our raw product. They are pulling out our raw product to employ people in other jurisdictions in North America, and that's where true economy is. When you can take a raw product and create it and pass it through hands around the community before it's sold, that's where economy is and that's where sustainability is.

By increasing the amount of resources we take out of our province, we're only taking away potential from our future. I often hear as well,

how much money has been spent on different projects and initiatives. As far as I know, and as far as confirmed today, we are still in a deficit position. So every dollar we spend extra today is a dollar – when you go home and look at your children or your grandchildren, they will hopefully be able to pay back. They will be responsible for paying that back.

If we continue to overspend, we are going to soon see that interest will overtake the top three expenses of our provincial budget, and that is something that's not sustainable. Yes, government has been given challenges, governments are all given challenges, but guess what? If you can't deal with the challenge, step aside and let someone else do it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) Muskrat Falls (inaudible).

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LESTER: Well, considering Muskrat Falls has been in government's hands for the past 3½ years, I think we should all look at that.

AN HON. MEMBER: Come on, b'y.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LESTER: Muskrat Falls is what it is, and instead of using it as a political game piece we have to start using it as a potential asset of the province. We have to change the conversation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LESTER: The money that's owing on that is going to be a lot easier to pay back if we all work in the one direction.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member to direct his comments towards the Chair, please.

Thank you.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We're listening: where's your plan; where's your plan? But I have yet to see a plan from the opposite side. We're still hearing projections of this, projections of that. But guess what? The people of this province need to see things happening. They're tired of political theatre, and that's not just this administration. That's happened, I guess, since time immemorial, and it has cost the people of this province to the tune of \$15 billion in provincial debt. It's time we put the political theatre apart from the practical solutions that are right in front of us.

We need to spend our money wisely. Look, whether we like it or not, we have to reduce the amount of spending. The only difference that has happened in the past 2½ or three years is the price of oil has gone up, and we've increased the tax burden on our people. That's what's driven up revenue; that's what's driven down our deficit.

It has not increased economic activity. We need to look at that. We need to increase economic activity. Stop putting the burden on people's pockets, because that nest egg, that rainy-day fund that people had in their pockets, that's no longer there. That's gone. That's why we're seeing an increased demand in our social housing. We're seeing an increased demand on our correctional systems. People are desperate.

Bankruptcy is through the roof. Marriage break up is also through the roof. There is another very, very startling statistic, and I will not mention it here on this floor, but everybody I'm sure has heard it. We now have the highest rate of self-harm in Canada, and that can be directly related to the economic pressures on individuals and families.

Mr. Chair, on a go-forward basis, I'd like to remind everybody, money we spend today is money we cannot afford; therefore, we have to be super vigilant in making sure it's money well spent. Look after our seniors, they're humans. They're humans just like the rest of our demographics. So why don't we revisit the policies of our health care system to make sure the ones who are most often to sit silent are not the ones who are most often neglected?

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a privilege this – my first time in the spring sitting of the House. My grandmother had an expression that time and tide waits for no man. When we walked in, I just could not believe – it was like yesterday it was December and we were walking out and here we are back in to the House again.

Mr. Chair, it's always a little bit challenging when you're a minister and you get 20 minutes to speak, as to whether you're going to talk about the wonderful work, the positive things that are happening in your department or whether you want to talk about your district issues.

So, Mr. Chair, we have a great staff in Children, Seniors and Social Development, and in Housing; 10 lines of business in CSSD. They work hard. I'm not going to talk about that today, but I will have ample opportunity down the road to talk about it. I want to talk about some of the really wonderful things that have been happening in my district since we formed government, in particular, in 2015.

Mr. Chair, you come with a few collective thoughts on things you want to talk about, and then you hear a Member opposite get up and you listen for 20 minutes, like we just did, and I would be remiss if I didn't respond to that. There are not a lot of things that leave me speechless, but I am left speechless day after day after day in this hon. House when Members opposite get up and they talk about the raised taxes, the increased revenue. They talk about the difficulties that seniors are going through; why don't we care about seniors.

Mr. Chair, the seniors they talk about, they're not only our constituents they're our family. The one thing they do not talk about is the bill of goods that was sold to this province for \$6.6 billion, and here we are now grappling with a project dealing with rate mitigation issues over \$12 billion. That's the reality. That is why there are seniors struggling. That is why there are

seniors worried about, how are we going to pay our bill. That is why there are people concerned about the extra taxes and things like that.

Mr. Chair, we have had a very difficult road since we formed government. Coming in, high expectations from our constituents that elected us, and we thought we had a \$1 billion deficit. The truth of the matter is, Mr. Chair, it turned out to be \$2.7 billion. Nobody forgets budget '16, it was difficult, but I'll tell you what's happening now when we go out in our districts. People are saying: B'y, you guys didn't have lot to work with, but it's showing; you're turning things around. Confidence is up; confidence is growing.

Mr. Chair, the things that they talk about, the struggles, no, it's not acceptable but, at the end of the day, you only have so much money to work with. The former administration, they were in power for 12 years, the PC government, they had surpluses year after year, they had \$25 billion in oil and their policy was to do less with more. I am very thankful that under this Premier and this government we have found a way – it was not easy – to do more with less.

So, Mr. Chair, I represent a district where we had many, many issues. We were weighed in the balance and found wanting with lots of big-ticket items. I wondered: How are we going to deliver on some of these?

I'll speak about the roads. Sometimes people don't understand that many of the things I was fighting for – and I remember when I was in Opposition – are things that the rest of the province have had for a long, long time. I remember – I can say his name now – Clyde Jackman, when I would stand in petitions day after day and say I had to stick to the high points this weekend when I drove home in my district, especially if it was spring or fall, trenching through to the top of my tires in mud. Yes, we needed pavement.

Well, Mr. Chair, I wondered about that pavement when we formed government because we didn't have a lot of money to work with, but I'm delighted to say that this government has found a way to work 50-cent dollars with Ottawa and we have been able to accomplish a lot in Labrador.

I think it was August 19 in the summer of '17, I happened to be there when the first load of asphalt, the first bucket was coming out, being dropped on the road north of Red Bay. Since that time, Mr. Chair – and I have to say it never gets old for me. I'll be driving it again this weekend if the weather co-operates, which it hasn't a lot this winter, but these are things out of our control. It never gets old when I turn my vehicle to go north of Red Bay and we are now up, under this government, for the residents of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, 122.5 kilometres of new pavement on that road.

Yes, it's in my district, but I remind the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that it is the Trans-Labrador Highway. So, this pavement that we're getting – which my constituents are benefiting from, thanks to this government – is also for the provincial population, Mr. Chair.

Also, Route 510 in the Labrador Straits, that road was paved; it was almost 40 years ago. The road was absolutely terrible, Mr. Chair. Sometimes, in petitions, I would call out it the Dalmatian highway, because there was far more potholes than there was pavement. Basically, what had happened on Route 510 – and I know there are roadwork needs all across the province, but what had happened on Route 510, the road was left without any upgrades for so long it was basically being reconstructed with cold patch. So you can imagine what we were dealing with there, Mr. Chair.

Last year, 22 kilometres of new pavement went in the Labrador Straits – very proud of that. Thanks to another commitment of our government to get tenders out early, the tender is out and awarded we will see another 22 kilometres of new pavement in the Labrador Straits, Mr. Chair. We are on track. One of the things that our Premier did shortly after we formed government and recognizing the fiscal realities in this province is that – I'm not sure if the clock is right, Mr. Chair; I was looking at the time I had left –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. DEMPSTER: It is right? Okay, time goes fast when you're up. I thought I had more time.

One of the things that our Premier did was he flew to Ottawa and he met with the prime minister and new criteria was put in place for the Trans-Labrador Highway so that we could have federal-provincial agreements and all of the cost would not be borne by the province.

Yes, Mr. Chair, we've been talking about the ferry for the last couple of days. I'll tell you, when I was in Opposition, and Members here that were around at that time know how frustrated we were when new ferries like the *Hazel McIsaac*, the *Grace Sparkes* were announced – not saying those communities didn't need a ferry, but once again Strait of Belle Isle, the people of Labrador, we were left at the bottom of the barrel. They went out eventually with an RFP, they cancelled the RFP, then they struck a committee, then they wrote a *What We Heard* document. Mr. Chair, what they heard was what we already knew, so it delayed, it delayed, it pushed out.

One of the things in the *What We Heard* document – I was looking at it earlier today – was that they needed a vessel with around a 300-passenger capacity. We have that, Mr. Chair. This government delivered on another big-ticket item for the people of Labrador with increased commercial traffic, which was a big issue. We've gone from six to eight in commercial tractor-trailers. We have increased our passenger capacity not only from 240 up to 300, but I understand that potentially we could go to 400 passengers and increase vehicles.

Mr. Chair, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair is a beautiful district. It is a gem in this province's crown. We have three national historic sites. We have Point Amour, the tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada, the second tallest in the country. We have Red Bay, a World Heritage Site, and we have Battle Harbour.

These are some of the reasons – in addition to the people that live and work and call Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair home and Labrador home – we have people who want to come in bigger numbers than ever before. We're seeing growth in tourism, Mr. Chair, in our sites. We need to increase our accommodation capacity. That's why we need to invest in our roads. That's why we needed a newer, bigger ship. We've had

capacity issues with our vessel the last several summers.

Mr. Chair, broadband – hotels could not go on and check their email to see who was booking to come there. The rest of this House – I would get up day after day – knew nothing about that. As a result of years of hard work, last January myself and the MP – this project is coming to fruition now, communities are coming online. The single largest investment in Atlantic Canada for broadband.

Recently, we were able to go up with the Premier in November and in partnership with groups like NunatuKavut, who are doing fantastic work in the area, the Labrador Fishermen's Union Shrimp Company, we all partnered – six communities in my district, Mr. Chair, are going to have cellular.

Mr. Chair, my focus going forward, now that we've dealt with some of the tremendous infrastructure needs, is going to be on the well-being of the people, around mental health and others –

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Chair, I have so many good things to talk about, but I see by the clock I'm out of time and I will have another opportunity.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just stand for a second to speak on Interim Supply, and I can see a few Members from the Opposition are upset that I'm up standing and speaking. I don't know why. I have the right to speak in this House as anybody else. If the Member from – I forget where he's from –

AN HON. MEMBER: You wouldn't know that; I don't want you to know that.

MR. JOYCE: You don't want me to know that. Well, I just let you know I have every right here to stand in this House, and I find very disconcerting that a Member from the Opposition haven't got the intestinal fortitude to stand up and say I shouldn't be speaking instead of just down yapping.

Mr. Chair, I just want to talk about the Humber - Bay of Island a bit and talk about the Interim Supply and talk about the Bay of Islands itself. We know the budget is coming out and everybody in this province knows the fiscal reality of the province. It was a concern in 2015, a concern in 2016 and I understand that, but I just want to raise a few concerns in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands and, of course, the biggest one is the hospital.

We're very confident that hospital is going to be announced this year. Hopefully, construction started late this fall, and construction in 2023 will be the completion, and that will be a radiation unit and also the PET scanner or the newest technology available.

Mr. Chair, I know when we were in Opposition we raised this on many occasions about this hospital, and one person who never got enough recognition in this here, and I can't say the names of people, the person in the Premier's staff that helped out a lot, but she knows who she is. The other person who is behind the scenes, and I got to say because we're getting closer to it, is the Member for Corner Brook.

The Member for Corner Brook, Mr. Chair, was with the federal government at the time, he was an MP at the time. We worked well together to ensure all the facts got out there. So I just have to recognize that, because this is going to be a great – one of the greatest achievements, if not the greatest achievement I've been involved in since first elected in 1989 – one of the greatest things I'm going to be proud of is in 2023 the first patient from the West Coast won't have to travel to St. John's for radiation treatment. I can assure you of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: That's going to be a proud day.

Mr. Chair, I can assure you everybody who helped out, from the staff in Corner Brook to the Opposition – I already gave credit to Tom Marshall for taking the initiative to calling people. So this is not just one person or two people, this was a collective – I know in the Opposition, and that person in the Premier's office helped out, and I know the Premier at the time when he was in Opposition, allowed me the freedom to continue to ask questions and raise it.

There's another person by the name of Dr. David Saltman – he used to be a radiologist here in St. John's. He moved out to Victoria, BC. I tracked Dr. David Saltman down in Victoria, BC and got some information off him, and that started the ball rolling. Dr. Scott in Corner Brook was also very instrumental to us. So that's one of the big things that I'm looking forward to in the budget, and later the fall is the hospital.

Mr. Chair, as I go throughout the district and I look out in Lark Harbour, there are a lot of people in Lark Harbour who still haven't got water and sewer in Lark Harbour. Now, part of the problem is that years ago when they had funding they had a plebiscite and they didn't accept the funding they had, and that's fine, but now there's funding rolling. So that's going to be one of the priorities for myself for Lark Harbour.

I know the people opposite are over there now – I see the Minister of Transportation and Works putting his thumbs up to me and saying good job. Because he was out there last when we had the floods, and that was brought to his attention. I thank the Minister of Transportation and Works for bringing that up and putting his thumbs up saying good job to it.

Mr. Chair, the other thing –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. JOYCE: One of the Members just said, who paid for the chicken? Well, I could tell you one thing, Mr. Chair, if you had the work that those volunteers did from all the vote councils, the fire departments and all the individuals who jumped in to help, I'll bring out the chicken any day to anybody who helped out that much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. JOYCE: I can assure you that, Mr. Chair.

If you want to see how two communities came together – they are separate communities, but when there's a disaster – if you had to see how those two mayors, the council, the clerks, the town clerks, the fire departments, people hauled out their boats and put the boats out in the water to get across the brook, Mr. Chair. That's what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are all about, and I'm proud of how – when myself and the Minister of Transportation and Works went out and met with them and just showed them the courtesy of going out and sitting down and thanked them all, Mr. Chair, that was a good day.

In Lark Harbour there is water and sewer. When you come up in Humber Arm South they had a few problems last year from the flood. There was one there, and there's a lift station that was affected last year by the flood. So I'll be looking to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for that funding.

So, Mr. Chair, then when you get up to Mount Moriah, there are some roads that need to be done. Hopefully, in this budget there'll be money through a capital works program, or through the new Green Fund, or through the Infrastructure Canada fund that we can help out.

In Corner Brook, I know there is one priority. Myself and the Member for Corner Brook – if I can mention that – the two of us have been working on for the last year, and one of the priorities that both of us have been working on, is the baseball field in Corner Brook, to redo the baseball field. So that's something we're going to be pushing. I know the Member for Corner Brook has been a big advocate of that, and I'm confident we'll be working at a lot of that. This is the kind of thing we need to work together on to ensure the betterment of all of our residents.

Mr. Chair, when I go out to Cox's Cove, they have a few issues also that we're going to be working on for the roads. There's a water and sewer program in McIvers. They are looking for money for sewer. Also, some money for roadwork in the town, and I'll be speaking to the town to see what their priority is.

Then we come up to Gillams, the same thing. Gillams has such a small population and is spread out. They have a sewer problem. It's not the only issue in Newfoundland and Labrador, but Gillams does have a sewer problem and we'll see what we can do there to help out Gillams.

Then when it comes up to Meadows, Mr. Chair, Meadows will be asking in their request for proposals for capital works of 100-and-something to finish the stadium they had last year. I know the minister was out and looked at it and visited. I don't know if you visited, but I know you got all the shots of all the – to the Minister of Municipal Affairs – of the arena. We'll be looking forward to finishing that off, because that's great for the whole North Shore.

I know when NTV were out there with the cameras, you could see the ice and you could see – in the summertime then, they use that for ball hockey, they use it for – this is not just a winter sport. With this roof on, Mr. Chair, then they can use this a lot more. It'd be a lot less maintenance to it for cleaning the ice and a longer period of time. If you seen the amount of people – there are even teens from Corner Brook; teens from Corner Brook come over and practice on that ice surface because there is not enough time in Corner Brook. So it's a big thing for recreation.

Also, I know the Meadows town council is looking forward to the money they received last year to build a warehouse for their equipment for the town. Irishtown, also they have some sewer problems. They have some water problems.

So that's all the issues I'll be raising in the House of Assembly. I know up in Hughes Brook, they will be looking for some money for roads. So I'll be sitting down with the minister and going through all these concerns.

I know the Minister of Transportation and Works is very aware of the floods we had last year, as he visited the floods. There's some work that's going to be done from the contract that was let last year to carry over; I know Frenchman's Cove hill. The John's Beach brook has been – the flow has been changed. So that's a big, big project that is already tendered out. There are some areas that have been washed out

throughout that we're hoping to get fixed during the year, some smaller that have been washed out on the side of the roads.

Mr. Chair, it would be remiss of me if I didn't thank all the councils, all the staff at Transportation and Works, the executive also who had to put up with me for all that storm, and for a little while after. Because sometimes I'm noted to be a bit of a hound dog when we need something done to help people out.

I just got to thank the minister, the executive of Transportation and Works, all the local staff out in Western Newfoundland that came to the rescue of a lot of people and helped them through the catastrophe we had, this flood. I want to thank all the town councils that chipped in, all the residents that chipped in, and all the individuals that brought food and helped out. There were a few times that there was one or two people that were in severe danger and people came into their houses and got them out.

So, I just want to thank the fire departments, the first responders, and all the people that helped out, all the residents in the Bay of Islands, the Corner Brook and the Humber region. I know it was down in another district, but for our district I just want to recognize the work that Transportation and Works did, the council and staff. Thank you on behalf of all the residents that you helped out, and I look forward to dealing with Transportation and Works to finish –

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

It certainly is an honour to stand in my place today. It's our first time back here in the winter and the spring session – so many good things to talk about. A lot of Members, of course, alluded to the economic times that we're in and that

we're surfacing through or swimming through, if you would, but we're getting there.

I can speak for the great things that are happening in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave – I know I've got a lot of great support from my colleague in here, of course, and from the departments, Transportation and Works, Education and whatnot, the Premier – and that's an update now on Coley's Point Primary school.

We talked about this for some time and I am happy to say, Mr. Chair, that we have now awarded the official contract to replace Coley's Point Primary school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: Absolutely, \$16.2 million has been awarded to JMJ Holdings, and it's been a long time coming. As we know, this building is over 60 years old. We know that there was money on the books with the previous administration with a promise to replace Coley's Point Primary, but it did not happen – it did not happen.

As we know, Mr. Chair, when we see big items happening, big projects moving forward, it takes a lot of political will. It takes a lot of hard work from the people, of course, who highlight the concerns to the representative and, of course, it takes a lot of work from that particular MHA, for that political will to get things happening. This is a perfect example of what we can expect and what will happen when people work together.

So having said that, I want to certainly throw a bouquet out to the people, the residents of the region in my district in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Coley's Point, Bareneed, Port de Grave, Shearstown, Butlerville, also the municipality of Bay Roberts, of course, they've been very vocal on this topic.

We've had numerous meetings. I've had them come in and visit with the ministers and the department. I'm happy to say the Premier and I made a great visit out there last spring when we were doing an announcement at the Carbonear hospital, of course, a big funding announcement there, to increase infrastructure and staffing and

whatnot and those sorts of initiatives to improve and to enhance the care at Carbonear hospital.

I said: Premier, you're here in Conception Bay North; can you please make time to come and to visit Coley's Point Primary school? And we did. We went over and we met with the principal, Principal Blair Hurley, who was very excited as well to hear that this project is moving forward and Vice-Principal Lois Petten, who lives in Port de Grave as well. We took the time, we took the afternoon, and we went through the school – I really wanted the Premier to walk through the building to take in the ambiance and the atmosphere, in particular, the air, the smell of the air, the feeling of the air in there. Because, for years, the airflow, the staff and the school community have had to work with what they've had.

I'm told that they had to open up windows as opposed to having the proper air circulation and ventilation throughout that building. So you imagine these are our youngest, school-aged children, our primary-aged kids from kindergarten to grade 3. Having to have clean air blow through the building, they had to open the windows. That's what they were told.

We do know currently in the building that those children are eating at their desks. They don't have the luxury to have to enjoy their lunch and to socialize as they should in a healthy school environment in a cafeteria. The school population out there – the student population is on the 350 mark, give or take. We have students who utilize this building, kids from Port de Grave, from Bareneed, from Shearstown, Butlerville, Coley's Point, Bay Roberts and some kids from Clarke's Beach also attend school at Coley's Point Primary.

To say that I'm excited this is finally moving forward is an understatement. The people have been promised this for years. We had the previous administration – I mean, it's painful to go there but, in the 12 years, the promise was there for the money but nothing materialized. I'm happy to say it's happening. It's this government that's going to be delivering that school for that school community and they're very deserving.

We see great schools popping up around the province and that's wonderful, because every child deserves to learn and to grow in a healthy, modern facility. I'm happy to say that's finally going to happen for those children in Coley's Point Primary.

Prior to becoming elected, it was made clear to me by the residents out there, they said: Pam, this is very important; it's a top priority. Not only is it a top priority for the people in the Bay Roberts area and in those surrounding communities, but other residents from other parts of the district recognize the need. We would hear a lot of teachers who taught there over the years from Harbour Grace and throughout the region. It's something that everybody is excited to see and I'm happy to say that it's happening.

I'm told that the latest information today by the department, by the minister, that conversations are ongoing as we speak today on the progress and the schedule. So fingers crossed, if we get the good mother nature to co-operate with us and give us somewhat of an easy winter, let us have spring – we're keeping our fingers crossed Sheila's Brush won't be too harsh because, as soon as that weather breaks and allows, we'll see physical work begin on that school.

Mr. Chair, let me tell you, I can't wait. I'm going to be there. I'm going to be there with my hard hat on or whatnot and a shovel, and I will be there to witness that, to help, and I can't wait to see that first sod being turned. I invite all hon. Members who've supported this to come and be part of that, because it's something that I'm very, very proud, very relieved and satisfied this is finally happening.

But there are other good things happening the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. For the first time in our history, Bay Roberts is going to host the Newfoundland and Labrador 2020 Summer Games. This has never happened. Bay Roberts is a hub in Conception Bay North. Arguably, it is the hub of Conception Bay North and we've got a great business community there, our population is expanding. I live in the Town of Bay Roberts. I'm from Spaniard's Bay originally, but I currently live in Bay Roberts – beautiful municipality. We're getting to host the games.

This is something that they have applied for years and years, putting forth a great application. The recreation director, Ian Flynn, is a big sports fan and they've put forth a strong application year after year, again. It didn't materialize, but I'm happy to say it's happening now. Better late than never, I say, Mr. Chair.

Now, there are other priorities that I want to touch on such as Harvey Street in Harbour Grace. I want to tell the people at home and the people throughout the Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District who are watching that those meetings are ongoing. It's a process where all levels of government must be working together to make this happen. The underground infrastructure needs to be replaced before new blacktop can go on there, Mr. Chair, as we know. So, the water and sewer infrastructure beneath the ground, that needs to be replaced by the town, of course. That has to be a capital works project, has to be a priority for the municipality.

I am aware that those wheels are turning and in motion and, as soon as we get that infrastructure replaced, I want to get out there and we want to get new pavement for Harvey Street. There are a lot of great things happening in the economic community in Harbour Grace.

Harbour Grace was a very bustling place, especially years ago. It was rumored that it was supposed to be the capital of the province. Imagine, Harbour Grace being the capital of Newfoundland and Labrador. I certainly would have loved to see that happen, but apparently it was destroyed by fire back some years ago and we see St. John's as the capital. Having said that, beautiful historic Harbour Grace, it's a project we're working on.

I also want to mention in Port de Grave, the peninsula of Port de Grave, we're working with the federal government. As well, we had a huge funding announcement at the beautiful festival of lights for the Boat Lighting out in Port de Grave in December. Myself and my colleague, MP Ken McDonald, together we announced over \$154,000 to develop Green Point Light Station in Port de Grave, to make it a tourism destination.

As we know, tourism is a leading industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have a lot to be proud of here throughout our province, the natural beauty. Let me tell you, there is no shortage of beauty in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, history and the beautiful natural landscape, and the people of course. Our best resource, Mr. Chair, as you know, are our people and I'm happy to say that this is being developed: \$154,000.

Let me tell you, we're working with the volunteers, a group of dedicated volunteers. They're called the Port de Grave Peninsula Heritage committee - a bunch of volunteers: Roland Andrews is a member of that; Dr. Adrian Lear, a great friend of mind; a number of people from the community are a member of that committee. They're lobbying and they're taking that initiative and we're working together.

There's actually a meeting, I think, next Monday on the progression of this. They're working with a consultant to make things happen, but the goal is to have Green Point Light Station to be a worldwide tourism destination.

We're also told the Boat Lighting and the Christmas Boat Lighting brings thousands of people to Port de Grave during the winter months, during the Christmas season to see the spectacle. It's absolutely gorgeous. I have to give proper recognition, of course, to Ms. Joyce Morgan of Port de Grave. Some people refer to her as the unofficial mayor in Port de Grave. She's been the leader on the boat lighting, and she takes a lot of pride.

It takes a lot of organization. It started with one boat years ago. We just celebrated, I think it was the 20-year anniversary. I will check that, but it's about the 20-year anniversary on that boat lighting. I think it is 20 years this past December. It started with one boat by the Lear family, and now it has expanded. We have boats that berth in Port de Grave from as far away as from Charlottetown up in Labrador. So it's a spectacle to see. I invite everybody to come out, take in the great things that are happening.

I also want to throw a big bouquet to all the volunteer firefighters and our first responders in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. Upper Island Cove got their new medical rescue unit fire

truck, Mr. Chair, and I am so excited. That's another big project that they have been lobbying for, for some time. It's valued at about \$300,000.

So, we're making things happen. I look forward to speaking in the future, and I will now take my place, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

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

I'm happy to get a chance to speak today to Bill 55, the Interim Supply bill. For people watching from outside of the Legislature, basically what the bill is about is approving expenditures of money beginning on April 1, because our budget will not be in place and we have to make sure the work of the province continues after the end of the fiscal year, which is March 31.

It's important I think to use this time to speak to issues that really affect the lives of our people, and today I'm going to talk about child care. I'm not going to talk about it from the perspective of the weaknesses in our child care system, because those weaknesses are there and at various times I do stand and speak to them. I spoke to those today when I presented a petition from people in St. John's, and some of them from my district, actually.

What I want to do is look at what the economic and financial benefits of a real child care program are, and also to look at what has been done in other places. We have here in Newfoundland and Labrador a bit of a patchwork quilt. We have some private for-profit centres. In actual fact, 70 per cent of all centres are private for-profit centres. We have non-profit community-based centres, and we have family daycare, plus a small number of education and workplace-based centres.

For example, the House of Assembly has a child care centre. There's a child care centre at the College of the North Atlantic. There's one

connected to the university here in St. John's, but there are other places who had the same type of system that we have, and who changed. So I want to talk about that as well.

One place I'll look at in particular is PEI. I think when we talk about, or when I stand and talk about a child care program that's a public child care program, a child care program that has public money in it and a child care program that's fully regulated by government, people think it's impossible. That we can't have that here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That we have to continue with the system we have, a system which is not meeting the needs of the majority of families and children in this province. The thing is we don't have to continue like that.

So what I'd like to do today is to be a bit proactive, a bit positive in terms of looking at what the economic benefits are and how we can move towards a different system here in the province, because we can. People very often, and I'm afraid government very often thinks that social programs are nothing else but an expenditure. In actual fact, when it comes to child care, investing in universal, affordable child care will actually boost our economy. It will increase tax revenue, it will help families with the rising cost of daycare, and it will raise program quality and improve early childhood educators' working conditions.

These aren't just statements that I'm making. These are realities that have been proven where there are child care programs in place, public child care programs in place; as in Quebec, for example. We also have real strides being made in PEI. We have good programs in Manitoba. So it can be done.

Parents, mostly mothers, when you have a good, solid, child care program, you get mothers being able to go back to work. Also, you will have fathers who are not able to work because of inadequate child care. They too can go back to work. Very often you'll get women who've been at home, who train for better jobs. You get families moving out of poverty when you have a solid child care program.

A study of apprentices in 2003 – this was done here in Newfoundland and Labrador for our

Department of Education at the time – found that 28 per cent of the women who quit their training did so for family reasons. So women who were in training, hoping to train to get into good jobs, who were mothers, ended up having to quit training for family reasons; whereas, only 8 per cent of men apprentices had to quit their training for family reasons.

Now, that's quite a startling statistic. Because that statistic for the women means that those women, instead of being able to move into high-paying jobs as apprentices, these women had to stay at home, not work, and we don't have statistics on this, but I would assume some of those women having to get income support.

Women who would benefit from a universal program by being able to return to the workforce or transition from part-time to full-time work would cover a large share of the cost of the program through the taxes they pay directly to government. That's a point that gets missed when we think of a social program, like child care, as only being an expenditure.

In actual fact, the more people we have working, the more men and women we have working, the more taxes are being paid to government. When you have higher incomes as families, you also have higher consumer spending power. Higher consumer spending power benefits local businesses, and it also benefits local employment.

The financial and economic benefits of having a full child care program, quality care, regulated, publicly funded programing, it benefits the whole community and the whole economy.

Some of you have heard me use this statistic before, but it's such an exciting statistic that I always love using it. Quebec started a child care program. It's very successful, and they experienced a 25 per cent boost to the economy between 1997 and 2013 as a result of its affordable child care program. That's an amazing statistic. It's a statistic that is founded in economic analysis in Quebec. Household income rose, women's employment rate went from 69.7 per cent to 80.4 per cent, a higher rate of increase than in other provinces during this time.

It's an amazing statistic, and it's one that should inspire our government to look at putting a plan in place. It can't be done just in one year or just in one budget, but if you set your goal that, yes, we want to use child care, both as something that is a social benefit, but also as something that's going to benefit our economy and increase our economy, then you start the planning now and do a five-year plan to get there. But if a plan never starts, then we'll never get there. I always feel like I'm speaking to a wall. When I try to talk about this to government, nobody seems to actually understand the benefit.

This is an important quote, actually, from a University of Toronto economist; his name is Gord Cleveland. He said: "The net cost of government child care assistance is substantially lower than its gross cost, because increases in parental employment cause increases in tax revenue and reductions in social assistance and other benefits." Now, that's quite a statement from this economist at U of T.

He also says: "There may also be increased growth and productivity, multiplying the revenue effects." I think that was what they experienced in Quebec, was the multiplier effects of having more people employed, more people working and larger incomes on a family basis.

There are also social benefits, and these social benefits also have an economic part to them because studies show that high-quality child care and early childhood education programs result in better cogitative language and numeracy skills. If we have children coming in on an equal footing into primary school, and we have more kids staying in school, and we have disadvantaged children doing much better because of child care, then they are going to become working members of our economy down the road when they finish school.

So, I leave it at that for the moment –

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member her time has expired.

MS. MICHAEL: – Madam Chair. I have more to say. I hope I'll get another chance to speak.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure this afternoon to stand and have a few words on Interim Supply and take an opportunity actually to highlight some of the investments in my District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, and it's always a pleasure to have this opportunity.

Madam Chair, if you look at some of the investments in the District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, over the last year there has been some strong signs from this government to the people in my contingency and in the entire region. I know you referenced earlier today the new school in Coley's Point; the work we were able to do last year on the Veterans Memorial Highway, work that continues there for safety purposes. We all know some of the challenges that the Veterans highway has presented to people in our region.

Just last year, as a government, we announced almost \$6 million to renovate the third floor of the Carbonear hospital. This will bring that floor up to standards that would be some of the highest in the province. Health care is an issue that quite regularly in the district, I hear about.

It was earlier this week, actually, myself and the Minister of Health had an opportunity to meet with the Town of Carbonear and discuss some of the things we see in opportunities for the Carbonear General Hospital, including the addition of two new nurse practitioners, the fourth anesthesiologist. Just last year we opened the final floor of the new long-term care centre, and I know we're going to be also expanding the internal medicine at Carbonear General Hospital as well. Obviously, Carbonear General Hospital is the primary health care facility for the entire Bay de Verde Peninsula, and expanding.

Also, last year we were able, through our Roads Plan, to put new on- and off-ramps in Carbonear on the Valley Road interchange. This was extremely important to a lot of people in the

region because our two schools are located on that road and this is now going to give us an opportunity so that there'll be no left-turning traffic. This will benefit children from both the neighbouring district and children from the Trinity Bay area, as well as the children from the Carbonear area.

So, that was just some of the investments that we've made in my particular district over the last year. We'll continue, and I'll continue to work with the councils in the area and any other local groups that we can to make sure we're getting the necessary infrastructure funding that's required. It's always a pleasure to work with fire departments and town councils in any of our districts.

I'm going to switch hats just for a few moments and talk a little bit about the province and Transportation and Works and my role as minister a little deeper, and look at some of the investments we've been making as a department and as a government; tremendous investments, actually, when you think about the times that we find ourselves in, but we still have the ability and we're still committed to a very strong infrastructure program.

As I mentioned minutes ago, our commitment to Coley's Point school, our commitment to a new school in St. Alban's, our commitment to improvement of Bishop Feild, and I know there are some struggles in the Bishop Feild community but we're getting there. The tender is out right now to get the kids back into that school as quickly as possible.

A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to tour the new long-term care facility in Corner Brook, and that facility is coming along. It was ironic, the day that myself and the Minister of Health and the MHAs for the region were there, it was ironic in the way that – the clock on the wall said 365 days until this facility is turned over to government. So that partnership is working really well.

In the coming weeks, we'll be in Central Newfoundland to announce the successful proponents for the new long-term care centres in Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander. Work continues in Botwood with the protective care

beds. Also, our commitment to a new mental health facility.

That was a commitment that our Premier, when he was Leader of the Opposition, was very clear on. I'm very pleased to be in a department and have a Premier who supported and seen the needs for mental health care in our province. Far too long there has been a stigma around mental health that's not warranted, that's not needed anymore; mental health and physical health are health. It's important. I'm very pleased with where we're going with the new mental health facility here in St. John's.

This spring, we will announce the successful proponent for the new acute care facility in Corner Brook, and that's a major project. I know all the MHAs from that region have long, long fought for this new facility. Again, we're delivering on it. The people of the West Coast deserve this facility; the people of the West Coast need this facility.

We've also continued, this coming construction season, with our Roads Plan. We're going to be investing some \$130 million in the province's roads this year. It's a huge task. The needs throughout the province are great. Our Roads Plan is working. We've met recently again with the Heavy Civil Association. They tell us it's working. We're getting better value for our money and we're getting more work done.

That is some of the things; this year we're going to be introducing two new ferries in Labrador. Something that's long been needed. These are great boats. I had the opportunity to tour the *Qajaq* when it was here in St. John's before it went into service. This is a seven-year-old vessel, and when you look at a vessel seven years old that's replacing a 50-year-old vessel, it's really like going to a car lot and buying a demo for seven years for a vessel.

Madam Chair, we've made substantial investments in infrastructure over the last three years in difficult times, and we'll continue to make those investments.

As I conclude, yesterday afternoon in Question Period the Member for Conception Bay South raised a question on some circumstances or some incidents we had this winter with

ambulance services in the province. I want to take a minute just to address that, because it was a good question. Anytime there's public safety involved, it's important for us to make sure that we're doing everything we can.

Some of the things we've done this year and continue to do, because safety is ever evolving and we will never get to a point where safety is done. Safety continues all the time. What we've done now is we've actually broken down a silo that existed with Eastern Health, Health and Community Services.

They know where their ambulances are, so we now have access to their vehicle locating devices. What we can see now, if we're going to close a road, for example, or if we have a road that's in poor, poor condition, we can actually go on to Health and Community Services website and actually see where ambulances are. So that's something we do now before we close a road.

We've committed to modernize our dispatch centre. Dispatch centre, from Transportation and Works perspective, is in need of some modernization, and we've committed to modernizing the dispatch centre as well. As well, we want to continue to work with Eastern Health. I've met with ambulance operators; we want to keep that commitment. The reality is our first responders are very important to us. They do great work. They're out there when most of us actually in bed in the evening.

I want to give a shout-out as well to our staff at TW – the over 700 women and men who actually are out there day in and day out driving our snow plows and doing that work, lots of times, in tough conditions. So I really thank them for the work that they do day in and day out for us as a province.

Some of the snowfall amounts – I get daily weather updates and conditions. We have situations in this province right now where we're over double the snowfall amounts that we've seen a year ago on the West Coast and primarily in Labrador and the Northern Peninsula. I know the MHA for St. Barbe District has been working with us to make sure that we're getting the extra equipment in that region because of the

awful winter we've had and roads having to be closed.

So again, I just want to thank our workers and it was great to have the opportunity this afternoon to highlight some of the investments that we're making as a department, some of the investments in my own constituency, and look forward through this debate and through the budget debate in the coming weeks to have an opportunity to stand and raise some more of the important issues that are happening in my region.

So thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to get up on Interim Supply. It's always nice to get up and speak. Interim Supply gives you more leeway to talk about some other things that are important. Everything is important, obviously, but it's nice to have a bit of flexibility to be able to talk about important things to you or to your district, or to us as critics in the Official Opposition.

So I just want to quickly – the Minister of Transportation and Works just made some commentary, and I do commend the staff at TW as well. I think we have some of the best snow plow operators in the country. I've always felt that and I've always stated that publicly. I criticize policy, not the staff. Whether it be snow clearing, whether it be road maintenance, what have you, I'm more critical of our processes we need to improve upon, never the staff. I think we have some of the finest staff out there.

They go on our roads; it's not easy roads. Newfoundland is not an easy to place to navigate through. There are a lot hills, turns, and I fully respect them. So, I do join with the minister in taking my hat off to all TW staff.

On the stuff that, I guess, is of importance, there are lots of things I could talk about. I heard them mentioning about seniors' issues, they're mentioning about the Strait of Belle Isle ferry,

factual and not so factual, and they all get animated. You can play semantics with numbers. The bottom line is you talk about a ferry – I questioned, yesterday, the ferry; it's tied up. The Straits are full of ice. This is not a new thing, it's happened, but this is happening a lot this year. It's a new vessel.

I'll just point out something. There may be sensitive nerves on the other side sometimes, but us, as Opposition Members, as critics, if we don't question government and ask the tough question, ask the questions that no one is going to ask government, unless we do – the public may, but we have the forum to do it. It's our responsibility – not just this Official Opposition but all of us on this side of the House. It's our duty to do that and we'll do it to the best of our abilities.

There may be times you may not be totally 100 per cent on the mark with your information, but most times you're pretty close. I think the ultimate goal is to get the issues out, get the answers because people do want to hear those answers. Everyone out there is not in agreement with everything government says. Any government wants to think everyone supports them and they agree with everything they say. That's not the case and we all know that. On that note, I just want to clarify that as well.

I want to go to something else. We always talk about – I know I talk a lot about and my colleagues, we talk a lot about the 1.6-kilometre busing issue. Media coverage comes and goes. We talk about it here in the House. We do petitions. We ask questions. The minister comes back with his commentary, and that's all part of the game.

Last week, I was troubled when I heard the report about the cost of school busing in the province.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation on a point of order.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just for the purpose for the record of this House

—

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. DEMPSTER: — we welcome when the Opposition asks us questions. That's a part of democracy; lively spirited debate is good. But when the information that they come with is 100 per cent false, we have an obligation to the people of the province to correct it, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Sorry, there's no point of order.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It interesting, you get a response like that. I was just stating a case. I was not disagreeing with anyone on the other side. I was stating an obvious fact that the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, the minister, understands what I'm saying. She was undecided one time. There is nothing outrageous what I'm getting on with here now.

I get my 10 minutes. She will get her 10 minutes and I'll listen to everything — I'll listen to her criticisms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: I listened to her criticize me twice and guess what, I never heckled her, I never interrupted her, I listened to her intently and I expect the same respect back.

Thank you.

The 1.6-kilometre rule, as I was saying, the minister will get up and last week we heard in the news it's \$8 million maximum cost to get busing for all children. That number, I'd like to see that analysis because there are parts of this province that don't need busing. They don't need more busing. There are only certain areas where there are growth areas you're probably

going to need it. I'd like to see the analysis done on that.

In saying that, the minister will get up and say well, the cost. We're going to have to take this out of the classroom, less teachers, less this, less that. All the while, in the backdrop of every decision government is making, we have this Canopy deal, a \$40 million deal. But you can't find \$8 million — we'll take \$3 million, probably. We'll solve it with \$3 million. Maybe we'll get over it with \$3 million or \$4 million. That's what the public are talking about.

I'm standing here as the Member, I can talk about this all day, but the public are talking about that. Everything is prefaced by: They can give \$40 million to Canopy.

I was with a crowd a couple of weeks ago, if you want to talk about the real bread-and-butter stuff, and they were talking about potholes. They said government can spend \$40 million on the Canopy, but they can't fix a pothole. I never said it. That was said to me. Just to let them know, government know, outside the bubble, people do talk about this stuff. It's not just us here in this House; the public are talking about it.

So, you can have your head in the sand, you can refuse to hear the stories —

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of TCII on a point of order.

What point of order, Minister?

MR. MITCHELMORE: Madam Chair, I have to say that I said yesterday under section 49 of the Standing Orders to the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and now we have the Member for CBS, there has never been any \$40 million given in taxpayer money to any entity —

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. MITCHELMORE: — related to Canopy.

CHAIR: Order, please!

It's not a point of order.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member –

MR. PETTEN: Obviously –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I know this is Interim Supply and we're all excited to talk about these things but just, please, if we can just keep in mind that not everybody can hear the conversations and the debate, so I ask that we please keep that in mind.

Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to try again. I got about 20 topics; I might get through two, with all these points of order. But that just shows, though, Madam Chair, the sensitivities. You say it and they're getting up on points or order. The truth sometimes will do that.

The reality is it's easy for us to get up here and say what the public are saying. So if you got an issue with it, go talk to the general public, because I only repeated what the public are telling me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Forget about me, the public are telling me this. The minister should go out and talk to some of his own constituents.

People are not happy, Minister, they're not happy. You're giving a grow-up \$40 million but you can't put a school bus on the road. They're not happy. It's not me talking; the public are talking. So get up on another point of order. Get up again and question that. Question the people in your district. Why don't you all question

people in your own districts? Get on with your nonsense here today.

Madam Chair, they preface everything. I'd say when they go home and they ask what we're having for supper, Muskrat Falls comes out before their choice of food. That's the preamble to everything they discuss.

I'm going to talk about stuff that's important to the people in the province, people in my district, actually.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. PETTEN: I got a couple of minutes left. With all of the interruptions, I'll probably get one more comment in.

We talk about our population and the population growth strategies, and my colleague, our newly elected Member for Topsail - Paradise – who's doing quite well, I might add – mentioned about immigration the other day. So we're talking about retention. We're talking about our population growing and shrinking. Young people are leaving this province. They're leaving it because they don't see a future. We've said this before, we'll say it again.

I got a young family. They're questioning where their future is. I'd like them to stay; we all would. That's one of the biggest challenges to our population, our young people, whether they're going to move or stay. There is stress on a lot of families in this province because people are worried. We want our youngest and brightest to stay here, but we have to give them an opportunity. There has to be a sense of open optimism in this province for people who want to stay here.

I heard the Premier comment yesterday, *The Way Forward* is resonating with the people. Well, not the people I associate with. Obviously, there are some people around, not the ones I associate with. Your youth are leaving this province. If that was resonating, we wouldn't have the problem we have.

We have population decline. We have real estate being sold. That's not changing. Half the restaurants in St. John's – lately, every time you turn on the news, one after another after another,

they're closing. Why are they closing? Because people are not spending money. Why aren't they spending money? Because they got no confidence in the economy. It's pretty simple. This is not difficult stuff to understand.

I know Members opposite in government might feel that everything is rosy, but trust me – I got 30 seconds left and I'll point it out. The Member for Bonavista was up the other day, and he said the economy is great. He actually said the economy is great. And I'm like, what? Where, where, where? Can you tell me? You must be talking about Ontario or out West somewhere. It's not here. Our economy is not great.

Members get up and to make those comments, go talk to the people they represent. Go talk to the average person. Come out of your bubble. Because people got to remember, you need to come outside the bubble and listen to the people in this province.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I saw him first.

MR. JOYCE: Madam Chair, I'm just going to sit here for a few minutes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please.

MR. JOYCE: I guess that four-day training didn't work very well.

Madam Chair, I just got to say, of course I'm an independent. Absolutely, no doubt, I'm an independent, but I heard the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair yesterday talking about the ferry, and I heard the Member from CBS up talking about how bad.

I got to say, and I'm not here to defend the government one bit, but I remember being in the Opposition when we were trying to get a bit of

pavement here and there and we were criticized left, right and centre, and I was here when we stood up for a lot of the ferries. Just by luck, the person now who has all the answers, the Member for CBS, was executive assistant to the Minister of Transportation and Works. Did he ever stand up for anybody? Did he ever stand up when they cancelled the contract out in Humber - Bay of Islands, when there was life in danger when they wouldn't go up Summerside Hill? The executive assistant never even spoke up.

So please, please, let's try to be – now, if you had the opportunity, you didn't do the things. Let's just recognize that, because I know what was done in Transportation and Works since, and this idea of politics – and I got to give the Minister of Transportation and Works, both, the former minister also, for when they were doing pavement. Instead of doing a hundred feet to get some on political, they'll do five or six, seven, eight kilometres. By bunching them together you get more done at a better price; 33 per cent more pavement with the same amount of money. Because of the bundling, and the early tenders also. There were a lot of opportunities the Member for CBS could've had to help out but he didn't, but he got all the answers now. So I'm just not the one to stand for that.

I have to apologize to my colleague in front of me here for Mount Pearl - Southlands. When I was in government, and I admit it, when looking at all the officials over here, all the PC Members, when we got in government, came back and said, why didn't you stand up for Muskrat Falls? I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, sometimes I said to him you should've stood up and you should've spoke, but I can honestly say, from what I re-read and see now, they didn't have all the information, I can honestly say. So to the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, there were times that I said it. Now I realize that the backbenchers there in the government did not have the information.

I just want to recognize and say that when I was making those statements, and I'm sure other were making those statements, we assumed things were discussed in Cabinet or in caucus at least, giving people full information of what was happening. But you can see from the Inquiry that the backbenchers weren't given – the caucus of the PC Party – now, I'm not sure about Cabinet,

I can't say, but I want to recognize that all the information that has been given out is they did not have the information. I just want to recognize that and put that on the record.

Madam Chair, I'm just going to speak again about the district, and we all talk about the improvements. I know I was a small part of it and other people have been also, but the amount of Crown lands that has been opened up for agriculture. I know there are some people here who are very much into agriculture. Maybe it's not going as fast as we'd like, maybe it's not going as good as we'd like, but it is moving along. Crown lands is opening up and there are more people – I know people out on the West Coast are very happy about it.

Should it move quicker? Probably it can, but when you start and you make this big 67,000 hectares of land opened up, everybody wants it and you have to make sure the new entrants get some. You have to understand the policy now because it's new land.

One of the policies – and I have to give the minister credit for it, and the Member for Corner Brook is the – before, if you were a new entrant you could only get up to \$5,000 for equipment. That has been increased up to, I think it is \$15,000 or \$20,000. So, new entrants; you need the tractors to clear the land.

That's some good improvements. It may not be done this year, but in the next year or two we'll gradually see the increase. That's the kind of improvements, just to open up that Crown lands to agriculture is a big thing for the West Coast. I know a lot of young entrants who are into it; young entrepreneurs who are very happy with it. We know, and I know personally, it's going to take time, but it is good improvements.

I also look out on the West Coast, Madam Chair. Out on the West Coast there are – and you look at what government has done. I look at the Member for Lab West, and one of the things we did out in Corner Brook is the pension for the workers out at Kruger. What we did, we worked out a deal with Kruger, the unions out there, that if the power plant is sold the money would be put back into the pension plan, the deficit. That's saving \$18 million if that plan went under – \$18 million.

I look at the Member for Lab West, and I remember it was a sad day that the two of us had to go up to Wabush and meet with all the workers and talk about their pension, how their pension had to be diminished. We had to shut it down, if not they may be getting less and less. I can tell you, it's a proud day, and I'm proud of the Member for Lab West. This is the kind of thing that goes unnoticed, how hard he worked to go through the courts, how he stuck with the workers in Lab West, all through Lab West, how he stuck with it and how he convinced Cabinet and convinced caucus to stick with it, and they got a lot of money put back in their pension plan, Madam Chair.

So when people stand here and say that Members aren't doing anything, I think we're all doing our job in our own way, and I understand the role of the Opposition. I've been there. Sometimes I was a bit quiet, and I shouldn't have been as quiet as I was in Opposition. I was a bit quiet, but I understand the role of the Opposition, even Opposition Members. I know a bit of time that I was in government, in Cabinet, even the government before, when we get up here and banter in the House of Assembly, and we do on the issues and policies, many times we still work together. This idea that we get up and banter and that we're not working together for the province, we are – we are.

I know a lot of times when there's a situation that arises, an emergency, we all forget the political stripes and we all jump in to help out. That's just normal, but when we stand up we do have differences of opinions. We do have different views, and this is where to express them.

There are a lot of things that happen in Newfoundland and Labrador, a lot of good things. I know in 2015, 2016 with the deficit, it was a major time. It was a tough time for everybody, it definitely was. There is absolutely no doubt, when you speak to the Opposition, the Opposition Members, the PC Party, quietly, they know it was a tough time. They'll tell you privately it was a tough time. They know what we had to do. They say that privately. They definitely do, they know.

They can't put their heads in the sand and say everything was rosy. When you speak to them

privately – and we understand, I understand. I'm in an Opposition role now, I understand the role of government, but also you have to understand the role of people in an Opposition, which we're in now as an independent. I'm going to speak on behalf of the District of Humber - Bay of Islands. I'm going to speak on behalf of the workers at the mill. I'm going to speak on behalf of the people in Corner Brook who need me to raise my voice.

A prime example is the work for the hospital in Corner Brook; just a prime example. Last year, we thought we had a deal that local workers were going to be hired. It fell through, but I guarantee you – and I told the workers that and I told the iron workers, and I told the labourers. I went up and I faced them and I told them what happened. There was a misunderstanding there that I was put in the middle of, but I said everybody is going to know about that this year. Every opportunity I get in this House with a petition, I am presenting it.

I know the Minister of Transportation and Works already said he's moving with them, he's dealing with all the associations, all the unions and a lot of the companies to try to hire local workers. I guarantee you one thing, every opportunity I get to stand on a petition to present that, I will present it, Madam Chair, because that is my role. That is what people elect you to do.

I'm not going to stand and say everybody in Corner Brook or everybody in Stephenville or everybody in Baie Verte, everybody on the Northern Peninsula should be hired, but where possible, I honestly feel that we – and I can tell you, I spoke to construction Newfoundland and Labrador and I spoke to a lot of the unions, they're willing to sit down and work it out and say, what can we do? What can we do to make this viable for our local workers? What can we do to make sure that people are staying home in their homes for four years? It's a big project. It's going to \$600 million, \$700 million. That's a big project.

So, that is my role. I know the Opposition, we all banter back and forth and all that, but I can say to the government, if we all got what we asked for there wouldn't be enough money in Canada to do it. There wouldn't be enough money, because I know all the demands are on

people. When you go all across Canada, the demands across Canada, wouldn't be able to keep up with the demands that are in the federal government, and when you come to Newfoundland, the same thing. If we want to make all the demands here, we just could not make it.

So what I would say, and I'm in an independent role and I'm in the Opposition, is that when we stand up let's try to be a bit constructive, because we are going to have to work with the people, and we are going to work with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak on Interim Supply. First of all, I'm going to address something the previous, or the second previous speaker said, the Member for Conception Bay South, about there's a lot of nonsense in this House. He's right, he's right. And you know the way to stop it? The easy way to stop the nonsense in this House is stick to the facts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: A perfect example was yesterday when the hon. Member got up and started talking about the ferry across the Straits, how it was a lower capacity. Well, first of all, I'm going to say that the *Apollo* served us very well. The *Apollo* served us very well. But when he gets up in the House and says that it's less capacity than the *Apollo*, he's so wrong, and the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair corrected a lot of that today.

When you go from one deck to two decks, from a capacity of 80 vehicles to 120, a capacity of six tractor-trailers to 12 tractor-trailers per trip, passengers from 250 to 300, how is that less capacity. So I don't know where they're getting their information, but to me that's total nonsense. The way to stop that is stick to the facts and tell the truth. That's very simple to do.

Madam Chair, I just want to highlight some of the great things that are happening in the Department of Municipal Affairs and Environment because we're doing a lot of great things. The first thing I'd like to talk about, and I did a Ministerial Statement on this on Monday, was the new program for fire trucks and fire emergency vehicles.

We've made a great move by putting in three possible streams of funding for firefighting equipment. The first one is the traditional one that was always there, based on 80-20 for new vehicles. The second one is we're allowing municipalities to purchase, and fire departments to purchase used vehicles. This government will finance up to \$100,000 on a used vehicle at 90-10. This has been asked for by municipalities, and many municipalities are doing it and it works. The third stream, of course, is for new vehicles. If a municipality so wishes, and they feel they can afford it, they can accept \$100,000 and go and purchase a new vehicle and they will pay the rest.

Madam Chair, we have limited budgets but we feel this program will allow that budget to stretch much further and provide good firefighting equipment to municipalities in this province that need it, and the fire departments that need it to protect their citizens.

I can honestly say, Madam Chair, the fire services in this province, we need to applaud all the first responders in this province because they do a great job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: They do a great job, and we need to be able to provide the resources they need to do that job, and that's what we're doing. That's the number one fact, Madam Chair.

The second fact I want to talk about is the infrastructure program. As you know, and people in this House know, that last year the Premier signed with the federal government a \$555.9 million agreement for 10 years for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. That, combined with the same contribution from the province, will be in excess of \$1 billion of infrastructure for municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The largest

infrastructure program ever, ever announced in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Madam Chair, fact number two.

In that program, there are four components within that: green infrastructure, which is the largest component which will take care of water and sewer projects. And I will add that water and sewer projects remain as our number one priority, as it should. We still have too many boil-water advisories. We still have too much raw sewage going into our ponds and our oceans. That has to be our number one priority, and it will be.

Then, we have the public transit. We know that there are two cities in this province that can use that, St. John's and Corner Brook, and we will help them with that. The third one is the community culture and recreation, which will allow municipalities and us to cost share with municipalities, recreation centres and so on. The fourth and final is the rural and northern community fund which will allow for us to help municipalities with their streets and road reconstruction.

So, Madam Chair, we went out to our first call last fall on this. The deadline was December 21. Our total application when the deadline closed, we had in excess of 500 applications with a value of \$888 million. We know we can't do everything in the first year. We have to remember this is a 10-year agreement, and the agreement meaning that we have to have all the money spent within 10 years.

This year, to make sure that municipalities have time to do the work that they need to do, we are going out, starting this year in 2019, our next call for projects will be July and we shall close in September. We will then do our rankings, get our approvals in place, get our approvals from Ottawa and, hopefully, be in a position to roll out the 2020 projects by the end of this year, certainly early next year. From there on, we will be on track to do that each and every year.

That's something that municipalities have asked for because, up to this point, all too often, we've been losing construction seasons because we

haven't been able to get the tenders out the door and the approvals out the door in time to make it happen. Hopefully, Madam Chair, once this gets in place and after this year, we'll be able to get ahead of that game and start moving projects out the door.

One of the things that we just completed, Madam Chair, as well is our climate change plan. We released that just last week in Corner Brook. I have to say that it was well received by the public and certainly the different organizations that would be interested in that.

There are a number of actions in that plan. In that plan, there are 33 actions that need to be done with regard to greenhouse gas emissions. There are also actions there to address the climate change reality that we're facing, Madam Chair. Because climate change is real and we're seeing it in our municipalities, and I may add that a lot of the infrastructure requests that are coming in now are to ask for help in addressing coastal erosion, which is happening in many of our coastal communities, our fishing communities around the province. We're seeing more and more of it every day. It's showing up more in their application process for assistance with municipal capital works. So, this is something that has to be addressed and we're certainly working very hard to make sure that happens.

Within that, of course, just a couple of weeks ago the Premier along with the federal government announced an \$89.4-million program called the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. Within that fund, there are going to be a number of programs rolled out in regard to improving efficiency in homes and whatnot, to make sure that we close the gap on our greenhouse target emissions. Because we need to do that and we need to do that for the sake of our generation and generations that come behind us.

So, all in all, it's a lot of good things happening within the department. I will end by saying that we are working towards a ban on plastic bags, which would be more than needed. I may add that we have gone for consultations because the organizations and the stakeholders involved that would be affected by this asked for that. They

asked for it back in September that we needed more consultations. We're doing that.

I may add there's a survey online that can be filled out. Today, just over 24 hours later, we have almost 1,200 surveys completed. No other survey completed or put online by this province has gained the response that this survey has had.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: So we've broken all records, Madam Chair. We know it's an important issue, and it's one that we're going to address but we're going to address it the right way.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and you know it, too. It is a beautiful district.

It's indeed a privilege to get up here today and talk a little bit about my district. But first of all I got to today – I had the opportunity last night to attend a function. It wasn't in my district, it was down at Club One actually and it was for a good friend of mine. I'm sure there are a lot of people in the province because this gentleman has done a lot for a lot of people in the province – when I explain to you what his job was over the years you may say okay, how did he do that and then I'll explain that also. He's also the brother-in-law of the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay. My colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island had a chance to go there also.

Last night, we went to a retirement party for a gentleman named Gerry Manning. Gerry is a well-known name, especially in the Avalon area and I'm sure right across the province. He's actually known right across Canada.

Gerry started off with Labatt 38 years ago. I can remember – Gerry is around the same age I am, not that I'm going to tell Gerry's age or my age. Gerry started off and he started on a beer truck

with Gene McGrath, lifting beer out, like you see the boys on the beer trucks. He moved through the ranks. He went through sales and he even moved up as high as general manager of Labatt right here in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is a great feat for this guy. But if anybody knew Gerry or knows Gerry, they know what kind of dedication he has and what a hard worker he is.

I have to say that you might say how does recognizing a beer rep – well, I can tell you that when you're from small communities and everything else, we all go to different fundraisers. And, if you go a fundraiser, it could be someone raising money for a local church, it could somebody that needs a piece of equipment to make their home more accessible or whatever, Gerry Manning stepped up all the time and was there for everyone. If anyone, like I said, had a need and went to Gerry, he went over and above. I just felt today that it would be nice to recognize him here in the House of Assembly after 38 years.

Like I said, he could tell you lots of stories. I guess most beer reps and everything else can tell you a lot of stories but I can only tell you about the good that this man did for people in my community and for people around. Sometimes we need those people to step forward and do the little things. He's done it. It was a great time last night. I was down there with his mom, Rita, his wife and his family and it was a good time. Everybody there recognized what contribution he's made to Newfoundland and Labrador. Like I said, we need people out there that do step forward when we do have donations and whatnot.

Now, Madam Chair, I'm getting up today and I'm going to be very positive today in my speech. I'm going to be very good –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: No, it's easy to do the doom and gloom. As a matter of fact, I'm going to have about 20 speeches this session so I'll half 10, half and half (inaudible).

The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair got up earlier and spoke and she talked about her district. I have to say, I had the opportunity last

year to go over in your district, and I have to say, going to Red Bay was – I've heard tell of Red Bay, I never knew a lot about it, but I got over to see what was over there and to just see the – it was unbelievable, actually. I went in and heard the story of the rocks, how they brought them over across and then saw the boat inside and everything else. I'd recommend to anybody in this province, if they ever get a chance to go visit that part of the province because it is an absolutely beautiful part of the province. And so is all our province. We all got great areas in our province.

We all come here to the House of Assembly, and I'm hoping we'll do our best for our districts. Sometimes it's easier to do your best for your district when you are in government, because it's easy to get the ear of the ministers and be able to – you're in a caucus room with them, be able to talk to them a lot easier. I have say, I'm pleased with the ministers that give me their ear and let me have a conversation with them and do (inaudible).

I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs had a couple of towns in to meet with him. The Minister of Tourism, I had my town in – Bauline came in. We had a great meeting. Actually, I invited the minister to Bauline. Some day we'll take that up and we'll have a look. They were talking about cellphone coverage.

That in itself is – people think that cellphone coverage – it's only out around the bay, it's only on the Northern Peninsula, it's only on the South Coast, but the total distance of my district from St. John's to the end is 26 kilometres. So right in the St. John's area, here's an area of a community – partial, some parts of it have cellphone service and other parts don't, but I'm sure the minister is going to do his best and we'll probably see – we just went through a pilot project that we're doing down in Marine Drive park, and I thanked him for that.

Again, that's a little thing. Like I said, we're all here to do the best we can. While we'll disagree – we will definitely disagree on probably the direction of the province and what way it's going, and we'll have a different version and different vision of what we want to see in the province, but it's 40 people here that hopefully

are here for the right reasons, to represent their districts.

We talk about – and people will look at this on TV and say: Well, how do they ever get along? How do they – obviously, if you're in Opposition you can't get anything for your district. That's not true, because we got to be able to go talk to people, put in grants and put in whatever and roadwork.

I commend the Minister of Transportation and Works. Last year I went to him, and I had no roads on the five-year plan and had no areas that were going to be paved, but the Minister of Transportation and Works, I told him about a specific area that was down in Juniper Ridge school and he, I think on a Sunday, one Sunday he went down and actually drove the area that I spoke to him about and came back. The result was we got some paving in that district, and that got done. So I thank the minister for that.

Again, those are the things we have to do here in the House of Assembly. We have to be able to work together, but we will disagree, and there are times I know that there are ministers over there, when I get up and make statements they shake their head and shake their fists and shake everything else at me at say: Stop it, stop it. But at the end of the day, I'm here to represent the people from Cape St. Francis, and in order to represent the people from Cape St. Francis we have to have good rapport with people on the other side. I just want to let people know that, and that's important.

Now, when it comes to budget time, and this year being an election year, it's going to be interesting. Because my experience here over the years is that the first couple of budgets that come in after a government gets elected, they're hard budgets sometimes. This time, when it came in in 2016, it was probably the hardest budget I've seen in 11 years.

Now, it's going to be interesting to see this year what the budget will bring to the people of the province. I know it's – and that's just the nature of the way politics works. In four years' time, people across the way want to get re-elected and we want to get elected here, and hopefully we will and form government, but that's just part of what's done. So it's going to interesting.

I know there are a lot of people out there looking and wondering what's going to happen in this budget. I'm just looking at perhaps the biggest thing that can happen for people in this province is tax relief. I talk to a lot of people in my district, and I want to say to government that I hope they're listening to the people out there because the biggest issue I have in my district is people are finding they have less money to do anything with.

It's the reason why we're seeing people do less renovations, improvements on their properties. Even homes, housing starts, where housing starts are down, and the main thing is that people need – you have to have income to be able to do this. I'd say the majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians live from paycheque to paycheque, and when you take a little extra out of that paycheque, you'll see they don't have the means to spend any money.

I believe it's better to give incentives than it is to take away. I think if people buy new cars or they go out to restaurants or they do renovations, our whole economy benefits from that because it's a snowball effect. It's the person that you hire to do your electrical, it's the person that you hire to do the plumbing or whatever it is on your house when you're doing a renovation, and they spend money. Everybody spends money, but when there's no money in the economy – and that's what people are telling me today, they're finding it difficult because of the high taxes we pay.

An example, we're the only province in Canada that pays taxes on car insurance. If you took the 12 – or 13 per cent it is right now, I believe, Minister of Finance. If you took that away from – and that would put a lot of money back in people's pockets. There is the levy that was imposed on people. Now, I'm thinking a lot of this is going to be taken care of when we do a budget, but those are things that affect people.

What I want government to do when the budget comes up, I want them to be able to look at the people in this province and figure out how we can get them to spend some money and make our economy work, because that's the way our province has to go and that's the way we'll be successful. I want to see our province be successful, whether I'm on this side of the House or that side of the House.

CHAIR (Warr): Thank you.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I'm very happy to stand today and speak to this bill, Interim Supply, which, to those who may be watching or listening out there, is an opportunity for us to debate the interim provision of funds which ensures that government's work gets done until the budget is passed.

I look forward to that debate. It's one of the highlights every year, obviously, is the provincial budget and the process that goes into it, and I anxiously await the opportunity. Perhaps my favourite part, being a bit of a legislative nerd, is I enjoy the Estimates process, which is a great chance – whether you're in government or Opposition, it's a chance to sit down and ask substantive questions over a lengthy period of time to get answers to how money is spent in each department on a line-by-line basis. I enjoyed it when I was in Opposition, and I actually enjoy it very much being in government. So I look forward to that.

Today we discuss Interim Supply, and it's going to give me an opportunity – I'm going to discuss a range of things in the little bit of time I have, try my best to get the information out, and perhaps correct some of the information I've heard in the debate thus far.

One thing I want to talk about, obviously, from the Justice perspective is there were questions asked today about Her Majesty's Penitentiary, about measures we are taking there. And there's no doubt, there's no doubt that we need a replacement of Her Majesty's Penitentiary. It's not even from the last century, it's from the century before. Everybody gets that. There's no debate on the need for a new facility. Obviously, the issue is coming up with the money for a facility of that nature, of that magnitude when we do have fiscal challenges that have been left to us. Everybody is aware of that.

It was not that long ago that I sat and watched, when I was in Opposition, a Minister of Finance

stand up and talk about the issue he had is that he was flush with cash. There are times I question, why didn't we get some stuff like that done then? But I digress, the fact is you take the situation as you find it, here's where we are. But that's something we're working on, and I'm very excited.

Next week I think is going to be a good week for justice in this province. We have a number of policies and things that we're going to talk about that I think will make the situation better in this province. And it's not just a Newfoundland and Labrador issue, it's a Canada-wide issue, it's a North American issue when we talk about incarceration, when we talk about corrections.

A lot of it's not just money, a lot of it's not just financial, but it's the change of mindset. A sea change has to happen when we talk about the evolution of thinking when it comes to incarceration and penal institutions, so next week is going to be an opportunity to talk about that. And again, the fact that today is perhaps my first chance, actually, to get up and speak to any piece of legislation, to any bill, and being a money bill, as they call it, it's an opportunity to speak to just about anything.

One of the things I'm very excited – we actually had our first meeting – yesterday I think it was – of the All-Party Committee on Democratic Reform. That's something we've talked about and everybody's interested in it. So, we had our first meeting yesterday. We've already put out in the terms of reference that one thing we were going to discuss is campaign finance, which is an issue that I think has some traction out there in the public amongst certain sectors. But there's also the reality that elections require funding. So how do we come up with that funding? Is it from the public purse or is it from private entities? But these are discussions we'll have as legislators and lawmakers, and again with our experience sitting here, and looking to the outside to individuals that may wish to give their take on this.

We will be setting up an online portal, similar to what we did when we had cannabis legalization, where people from all over this province and outside had a chance to give their thoughts to government on what should we do going forward. So, I obviously look very much

forward to that. I think it's going to be an interesting process. At yesterday's meeting we had Members from all sides bringing forward ideas, concepts, things we want to see research on, and I look forward to our next meeting next week.

Again, that wasn't the only meeting of that sort we had this week. Just this week, we also had another Standing Orders Committee meeting where we discussed that hopefully, during this session of the House, we are going to have for the first time in more than two decades, a legislative committee do a review of a piece of legislation. It's not something that we've seen in this House since back in the Clyde Wells, Brian Tobin days. It has not been done. There have been calls for that. So we're working through that process, and I thank the Members on the Standing Orders Committee. It's a true example of bipartisan collaboration to make this institution better.

We all know by watching the Muskrat Falls Inquiry that we've had some deficits when it comes to review of legislation, we all get that, but it's not as simple as saying we're going to review it. It does require significant commitment, just from the House of Assembly staff, to make this work.

We are working on that, there's a lot of co-operation, and that's something that I think once we get through this test phase – again, the Standing Orders allow for it. Once we get through the practical application of it, making it happen, I think it's something that we can apply going forward to important pieces of legislation going into this House.

As I have less than five minutes left now to speak, what I want to do is talk a little bit about some of the comments I heard, and not that the Member for Bonavista needs any defending, but one of the things – he stood up and he had a chance to talk about his area, Bonavista, beautiful spot, and he talked about how the economy was booming. One of the Members on the other side, I think it was the Member for CBS, stood up and said: What are you talking about? That's not the case, look around you.

So, thankfully, again, I always like to – I did this once before when myself and the Member for

Conception Bay East - Bell Island had this type of debate where he made a claim and I stood up. What I look to do – there's a great news site out there called: *allNewfoundlandLabrador*. They're only available online. I have a subscription. It's a great spot to get news.

I have to refer to it here. The actual title of the article is: Booming Bonavista. And it says the community on the Bonavista Peninsula, about 300 kilometres from St. John's, has undergone a recent transformation as new businesses are drawn to the area. In a recent interview, Mayor John Norman said 31 new businesses have opened in the last couple of years. He said dozens of new residents have arrived, including millennials eager to run their own businesses. Our residential real estate market is up on average between 57 and 61 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: I want to say two things. To the Member for Bonavista: Keep up the great work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: And to everybody in this House what I would say is: Facts matter – facts matter. But I shouldn't be surprised because it was the same Member that recently put out a press release in which he called my hometown, the town in which I reside, the town where I will be going back home tomorrow to see my family and my friends, he called it a struggling community.

That was actually in a PC press release put out a few weeks back. Do you know what? It's funny because I had them join us here yesterday in the House, they came in for meetings, and I could tell you what, the town council for Port aux Basques was not too thrilled when a Member of the PCs said they were struggling.

I would invite all Members to come to Port aux Basques to look at the brand new daycare that we have open and operating. Thank you to the minister and the department. Again, now we finally see child care opportunities for people wanting to get back out in the workforce. It's the first of its kind – first one. And it was a true partnership. Again, I have to give a shout-out to

the Leading Edge Credit Union, a co-operative that formed this, worked the department, worked with the federal government and we have this new daycare.

We have the Bruce II Sports Centre which, due to recent upgrades, I'm going to put it up there against anywhere in Canada in terms of a facility for a small community. Again, that's something that draws people. There's constantly activity at that place. Or we could talk about the tourism businesses that have popped up just in the last couple of years. You just go online and you see their presence there, people coming, spending their money, getting out and enjoying, whether they're local residents or residents from away.

I'm only talking about the facts here. So what I would suggest is stick to the facts and when you call my community struggling, that's very insulting. But I'm not surprised sometimes at those comments that come out from certain Members when they talk about that.

In closing off what I will say, I'm not surprised because when we look at the disconnect that currently exists between the Members of the last administration, the PCs and some of the questions – for instance, one Member, it might have been the same Member, said something about people don't care about Muskrat Falls.

However, when I go home this weekend and I'm up watching the Port aux Basques Mariners beat the Corner Brook Royals in the senior finals, do you know what topic is going to be on all their minds? They're going to say: Where do you get the \$350 million to \$740 million we need to ensure that seniors can pay their heat bills? That's what they are asking. It's not just in Port aux Basques, it's in St. John's, it's in Labrador and it's everywhere in between. I'd say, Mr. Chair, you're going to have the same questions too.

Again, where does that fall to? It falls to the crowd on the other side. When I talk about the Member for Cape St. Francis, who I consider a friend and I respect, and he talks about tax relief, I get it. I do get it. I understand it, but the fact is we are dealing with a financial mess left to us. When we had to come up with \$700 million so that our grandparents and our parents and our seniors can keep the heat on, I would say you've

got to look at the fact that you created this mess and we are left to clean it up.

On that note, Mr. Chair, I would move that this Committee rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole on Supply has reported progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

I would move, seconded by the Minister
Responsible for the Status of Women, that the
House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and
seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House does stand adjourned until
tomorrow, Monday, the 11th day of March
2019, at 1:30 o'clock.

Thank you.

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