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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House resumed at 6 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Oh sorry, I apologize; we have to bring the House back.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wouldn't want to pre-empt the Leader of the Opposition but I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to come back again after our supper break to continue debate on the 2021-22 budget that will reflect the programs and services for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and reflect the fiscal situation that we're facing; hopefully, the plan to move things forward, stabilize the financial woes of our province and start us on the path to a brighter future.

Mr. Speaker, this is my 40th budget where I've been directly, or even indirectly but indirectly still fairly close to budgets. I've been fortunate enough going back 40 budgets ago to either be directly involved in pre-budget consultations or sitting in this House because I worked for departments where I had to ensure things were relevant and advise our communications people of what potential questions could be coming. Also, I worked for a Crown agency of government where our budget was hinging on what was happening in the House of Assembly.

Obviously, for four years I had the privilege of chairing Committee, so I know exactly what Estimates is all about and I know the integral workings of the budget process. I particularly

know and appreciate the work of the civil service and what they do. I have not heard one person on our side since I have been on the Opposition side criticize departments for not having the information to be able to answer questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: I have been a minister and no doubt as minister sometimes you're coy on your answers because you either don't want to share all the information right now or it's information that's probably not the best time to share it, because there may be other things in the works that you want to do. Or this might be relevant to some good announcement that is coming down the road so you massage it somewhat at the end of the day.

But when you have the civil service who specifically can give you intricate details so that you know when you ask those questions in Opposition that the information you're getting is – not only is it accurate but it's based on the path forward that the intent of the budget would be to ensure that the programs and services are funded and the money is being spent on the line items where it would need to go. I have been fortunate to be in that category. I also got to sit as one of those staff in my former career to get to answer some questions for people, so I had a good understanding of what goes on in here.

You get a different perspective when you're a minister, because it's not only about answering the questions – the notes are already done by the bureaucrats themselves – but you also have to feel that what you're selling is actually what you believe in. The line items, the programs funding and where you're going to invest for government is going to be to the benefit of the people of this province.

No doubt, people forget – and I'll just do a little education for the general public who may be watching – a budget doesn't happen overnight. The printed booklet might be done overnight, but the months – and I do mean months. I suspect every administration has its starting and end time, but early fall every department is intricately looking at how the budget lines from the previous budget went; what particular nuances or situations or programs did they run

into that had to be adjusted; what are the new changing trends or what are some emerging things that they had no foresight on – never could anticipate that happened, emergencies happen, that you start budgeting for. I suspect you also start looking at new, innovative ways to address issues for people. That could be in anything from health care to education, to social programs, to infrastructure, for example.

As ministers, the objective ministers just drive the headings as such and probably set the tone, based on what you've heard from the general public around what policies and programs should be the primary objective of that line department. But the civil service then goes to work to first, balancing and projecting – because you still normally have three to four to five months left in your budget process to know that the uptake is going to be there to justify it. Or if it isn't, then an analysis is done to determine whether or not that program is still necessary in the next budget lines or reduced, or increased as part of that process.

If there are some issues there that weren't spent for a particular reason, that has to be identified to know what went wrong or why there was a change in what was the expectation for that particular program. There is a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes on by the civil service here to ensure that the budget lines, once produced and once the debate in this House of Assembly – particularly the line by line critiqued in Estimates are accurate, can be justified and can have the documentation to back up exactly the relevance and pertinence and, more importantly, the way that this is going to be implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to thank the civil service for doing that. I want to thank the agencies, boards and commissions that work to ensure that the information is relevant and given. In a lot of cases, a lot of these agencies, boards and commissions and/or the civil service must find ways to be more economically efficient. At times, there are always challenges there. They go back and look at and analyze exactly what it is that they're offering and how they can offer that in a more efficient and financially less-burdening-to-the-province manner.

I want to acknowledge that. I've had some very unique situations. I've read the 2000 budget because there were a lot of similarities to where we are right now in certain cases. I read the '89 budget because it was again similar to where we are. There are always lulls, peaks and valleys in our financial woes in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'd like to be able to say that, unfortunately, there should be a process or there should be plan that it doesn't happen, but no matter what administration – and it's not labelled to one particular party – circumstances change. The volatility of your commodities and the volatility of your resources hinge on other jurisdictions and the world markets. You can plan all the things in the world, but sometimes it doesn't work out. I saw that as a minister at one point when oil was nearly \$80 a barrel, and before we wrote our budget, it was down at \$36 a barrel. We were hinging, as were the previous administration before us, that that was going to generate X number of dollars in revenue. You have to adjust accordingly.

To get my head around this particular budget and what was being proposed, I wanted to go back to some former budgets that were close to it and may be relevant to some of the same challenges and may be a different perspective when it came to what was causing the lull financially or what was causing some of the other wants that people would like to have but no longer were viable in our province and the changing tone when it came to the demand on services.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out from '89 to 2000 to 2021, the aging demographic and the costing of health care is a dramatic change. Even in education, while there may be a shift, the shift has been that health care has overtaken education. In some of these budgets, education was the biggest expenditure in the province at the time. Again, if you look at the demographics, double the number of students existed then than did senior citizens. Now the demographic has quadrupled in the opposite manner. You have to adjust accordingly.

Plus, I give credit, over the last number of decades, that we've modernized our education process, we've put in extra supports to ensure

that every student is engaged in our system and get the best supports possible to ensure that it's an inclusive system and that they have access to that education. Is it a perfect system? Not at all. Are there a lot of gaps in service? Yes. Are we doing a lot of good things? Of course we are. Are there tens of thousands of professionals providing services? Of course there are. Could we use another \$50 million to provide services? Of course we could. But you try to work within the parameters of what you have and the monies you have to be able to provide the best quality service for all groups in our society.

I tried to get my head around it because – and I'll say this with all respect – I don't know if this is a great budget in getting us where we go, or if there are a lot of gaps in what happens there, only because it appears to set a framework that could get us on the right path. I say it appears because the devil is in the detail.

My colleague, the critic for Finance, has asked questions and we've gotten good dialogue back and forth, but there's a lot of supporting documentation that I think would make it easier for us to determine if this is the path forward that will be the light at the end of the tunnel and will keep our society in a positive light and that things are going to improve and get better.

I'm still hopeful, as we have debate over some of the other money bills here, that there will be some more information discussed. Maybe it's just that we're not interpreting the information in the same manner yet, so that hopefully will get clearer as we go through it.

Right now we're open to trying to see what approach forward is the best for the people of this province, and the best to address our financial challenges. We accept that. There's no debate about the financial situation that certain things have to be done, that a different path has to be taken. We haven't disagreed with the government on that. We've seriously talked about reviews of boards and agencies and commissions. We've talked about our educational institutions, how we better fund them so that we get better outcomes. We've talked about how we approach health care so that we get better outcomes and we have a healthier society.

Sometimes it might mean you invest money to save money in the long run. That's the balance that you must find when it comes to figuring out the best path forward.

In the debate tonight, we're going to be talking about – and I know the Premier will talk about – the path forward and the framework that's been put forward with this budget and the fact that it isn't a budget that would at this point stall the economy. I'll give credit to that. That was one of the fears when we knew a budget was coming down after the Greene report, because the Greene report painted a very sombre situation. It actually basically drew a line in the sand that said if we don't move past this line, we're destined to fail as a province. When you say things like there'll be somebody else administering our operations and that the federal government will have sole ownership of Newfoundland and Labrador's future, then that makes you very alarmed at the future of this province.

I think that may be done for a reason. It may be to really frighten people into saying, you know what? While it's not doom and gloom, there are certain things that have to be done. Sometimes a reality check is perhaps the best thing for you to really look back and prioritize what are the most important things in your life and what are the most important things for a sustainable economy and a sustainable society.

While we've talked about the Greene report and I think there are some very important recommendations there – I think there are some real important approaches forward – I do still have challenge with some other ones. I'm not dismissing all of them, but I'm saying there is some other analysis that needs to be done or the information – if the analysis was already done – to be shared so that we can make an informed decision on if this is the path forward on some of these recommendations. Is it a combination of certain ones at a certain time in a certain program? Is it a combination of some in different stages over periods of years? Is it a combination of some in certain budgets that you move forward?

There is a framework now, I think, between everything we have. It is not just based on this budget and it is not just based on the Greene

report, because to me the Greene report is based on about 35 reports going back to Dr. Doug House's Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment. There are a number of things in that that I remembered as a young civil servant working with the commission and actually presenting on behalf of a couple of outside agencies to the commission about how we stimulate employment in Newfoundland and Labrador; how we grow the economy itself; the role of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, what that meant; the role of the industries that we had that were vibrant and were the mainstay of our society at the time.

Looking from then to where we are now, nearly 35 years later, seeing what industries are still there that are still vibrant and still can be built upon; what new industries, when we talk about diversification, that really were either just talked about then or didn't exist; and what industries really didn't flourish and, if they didn't, why they didn't flourish, as part of that whole process.

There are a few things there that I think the framework determines that we have the ability to do certain things. I'm not sure that we have put enough meat on some of them, and maybe that wasn't Moya Greene and her committee's responsibility, but I think to really move forward, we need to do that.

We need to look at what agriculture means in Newfoundland and Labrador, what we invest in that. Do we go all in on it and make that one of our biggest priorities now because it is an industry that can grow? It is also an industry that gives us food security. Is it an industry, then, that can be part of our exporting versus importing? There are a few things there that I would like to know, because I am not fluent in that; I wouldn't know that. A little bit of knowledge of agriculture for me is probably more dangerous because I would think it could only go skewed one way versus the multitude of things that would be out there. I would look at those things.

I do believe hydroponics is a very important thing. I know we dabbled with it and it is probably the bad word for a PC here to say it, but we dabbled with it. I think the concept was perhaps the best thing ever done. I think the

implementation was perhaps one of the worst things that were ever done. Where it was located, the crop that they were trying to grow at the time and maybe even some of the partnerships that were developed at the time were questionable. But the potential for the industry and the actual technology, to me, was second to none.

I got to tour it at the time and talked to some of the actual workers that were there, who were – it is ironic – rank-and-file people. These were people who were in the farming industry themselves who went to work there because they wanted to learn the technology. But just the skill set they brought, adding to the technology, it was amazing some of the stuff.

I saw some 55-year old farmers from Central Newfoundland come up with ways with the hydroponics, the way to run lines so that water would come in better and the vapours would be better for growing as a process. These were probably people who never had any technical training in the agricultural industry. It tells you about the innovation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when they're in their element. The fortunate thing in this province, our element is basically, in my opinion, in every industry. There's nothing that we don't have the capabilities to excel in. That was another one.

I do look at the Greene report. I've analyzed it with the budget. I see there are subtle nuances; there are subtle adjustments into where Greene is. I'm not in any way, shape or form criticizing that, because I don't see that as a bad thing. You've heard me say in the past – and I think some of my colleagues here have said it – maybe we needed to move a little bit quicker on some of the things we're doing, but that all depends. Maybe there is some heavier movement in this budget, it's just we're not quite sure where it is or the information is not all out there yet. Or maybe it's not the timing for the information to be out.

Don't forget, a budget is an evolving process that takes 12 months. Sometimes, as they say, it comes to fruition on month 11 before you realize the benefits of that. So I'm giving benefit of the doubt that there's some more information that maybe can be shared with us that may turn us to believe that this will take us in the right

direction. I'm hopeful that the Greene report doesn't become the bible for the administration to set all of its tone. I would hope it would become one of the frameworks, but not the only one that you refer to when you're making decisions around the future economy of Newfoundland and Labrador and the path forward.

That's not to take away anything from Moya Greene or the 65 appendices of information that went to them, because a lot of them – I've known some of the orchestrators of them, the architects of them. I've believed in a lot of what they've written. What they've studied and what they've looked at has been very credible. There are parts of that which have already been implemented. There are parts that were implemented and unfortunately let go before it got to a point where it showed that it would be viable. That unfortunately becomes a little bit about politics. Sometimes you'll only half implement something because you're afraid of the political backlash. That sometimes does more damage than it does well.

We need to be diligent enough and, I suppose, strong enough to make decisions that may not be popular. They may not be popular immediately, they may not be popular with specific groups and they may not be popular with a financial sector of our society or a particular governance agency. But if they're backed up with facts, data and proper analysis, and they fit within a plan that actually shows the benefit to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – regardless if some may benefit more from it but at the end of the day, the major benefactors are the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – then we have to stand our ground.

I've said it before in this House and I'll continue to say it: We've taken that stand that if there's a collective approach to doing something that improves our financial situation, improves our competitiveness on the world market, if it improves our industries to be able to be globally known and acknowledged, if it improves the fact that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have more control over their own assets, then we're here to collaborate and find a way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: If it means potentially we all have to take a hit from certain sectors in the general public, well then you know what, we're willing to do that. I can tell you, everybody on this side of this House here wants as their legacy that when they walk out of this door they can hold their heads high and say, at the end of the day, we left this place in better shape than when we found it.

Every society should look to do that and I think we all aspire to do that. I don't think any politician before us, or any of these pictures of any of the individuals who sat in that chair, Mr. Speaker, didn't aspire for the same thing. We may have different approaches; we may have different philosophies. We may even have different moral beliefs, but I would hope the biggest stance and the biggest commonality would be at the end of the day we found a way to do what was right, rectify some of the wrongs and put us on the right path forward, so that our successors are at a good place to be able to continue moving things forward.

I wanted to talk about some of the other things. Particularly, what people don't know, my real passion – I shouldn't say real passion, but one of my favourite passions is and value I think as an industry that we very seldom talk about – is the not-for-profit sector. I think the community sector, what they do from an economic point of view, what they do from a social point of view, what they do from a mental and physical health point of view and what they do to even drive and support our infrastructure is second to none.

I think we sometimes dismiss them – and I say we as a general society – because we always feel, well, they only exist because government had given them some money to start, or there's a special program for them where it's easy for them to get up and running. But I think people forget if you really look at budget lines of any not-for-profit organization, any agency that government sponsors through some way, shape or form that's not an entrenched Crown agency or board or commission, are, at this point, probably nowhere from 1 to 5 per cent receiving government funds. They may get a load of money that they're getting from different agencies and that, but at the end of the day they generate much more than they receive from the

coffers of the general public here. That's a testament to them.

If you look at some of the agencies that are out there now – and we have a multitude of volunteer agencies – they might have four or five staff, but they have 12, 15 or 20 volunteers who are almost the same as staff. A lot of them come with a skill set that they've learned somewhere else, from an educational thing or an experience point of view, which they then pass on that doesn't cost five cents to the coffers of the general public, yet provides an unbelievable set of supports in this province.

I want to tie that in. I want to talk about one particular organization because I think it should be the crux of what we're doing in this House now. I say the crux because I'm talking about an organization that serves young people. If we don't start thinking about the future of our young people, if it's about the oil industry, if it's the tech industry, if it's about health care, if it's about education or if it's about any industry that we're talking – the fishing industry, the forestry industry, whatever it may be. If we don't find ways to keep young people engaged, keep them active in their communities – and it could be in any rural community from Nain, Labrador, to Bay Roberts in Conception Bay and all communities in between – then we're going to miss an opportunity and we're going to be in hard shape in the next generation or so. That's a reality of why we need to do some of these things.

I'm just going to read a letter because I want to tie it into one particular organization. I'm going to talk about them; I'm going to give them some kudos because I think they do great work. I think they represent what we're trying to do in this House of Assembly, collectively, as a province. In every little nook and cranny and every little corner, they do things that are above and beyond and thinking outside the box to engage people and address some of the social and economic needs of people in this province.

I'm just going to read this: Since the first CYN site opened their doors in 2001, the Community Youth Network has played a pivotal role in enhancing the well-being of youth and reducing poverty in our province. This work is important, as the social and emotional prosperity of our

youth is a direct predictor of the economic health and quality of life of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This past year has been marked by social and economic turmoil. Despite these challenges, community organizations nimbly continue to provide much-needed supports to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Organizations comprising the Community Youth Network across the province pull together and advanced and involved as many people as possible to ensure uninterrupted access to valuable resources for our young people.

As demonstrated in this report, the dedication and passion of the people working within the Community Youth Network was on full display this year, as they not only continued regular programming, but added new initiatives to meet the challenging needs of youth and their communities during the global health pandemic.

This annual report provides a snapshot of just some of the innovative programs delivered by the Community Youth Network and their positive impact on the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This letter was signed by Premier Dr. Andrew Furey.

That speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, because the Premier understands, as we do, the value of organizations and not-for-profits, but particularly those who work for young people and, in some case, challenging young people. Not only do they do valuable work in all parts of our province. There are Community Youth Networks in Nain. They're in coastal areas in Labrador. They're in the Northern Peninsula. They're in the Burin Peninsula. They're in the heart of Central Newfoundland and Labrador. They're in the Avalon Peninsula area. They're in the St. John's urban areas, the Corner Brook area. They're everywhere here.

They represent what we need to see. What we need to see here is a collective approach to solving our problems in an innovative way. Who better than young people to be innovative and creative and think outside the box. Not label people for either coming with a different perspective or not being cognizant to be able to jump right on board with a particular idea.

I want to talk about the Community Youth Network because, to me, it becomes of relevance here. They were established in 2001, another tumultuous time for us economically. If people remember what happened, that was the offset of our financial woes that took us for the next five or six years. I look back and compare; it's a similar situation we're in. There was an investment at the time and I give credit; it was the former administration. Premier Grimes saw the value of working with the federal government, of leveraging some money to find a new way and a creative way of improving the lives of young people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That began a journey that saw expansion to 40 sites in Newfoundland and Labrador but gave communities stake and control over their own destiny in a lot of cases. The core funding that was given by government was only a small proportion of what they managed to raise, what they managed to leverage from corporations and agencies. They developed their own partnerships with the federal government that we weren't even aware of to bring programs and services and employ people. That, to me, sets the template of where we are in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've got an agency that deals with everything from education to health care, to mental health, to re-employment, to social engagement, to community supports, to every sector that you would think that a good society needs to have as its key component of the fabrics of inclusion. They've done that with support from government and it's continued to happen. It continued under the previous PC administration; it is continuing now under the Liberal administration. I think it's a predecessor of what would be done and it sets the tone for where we need to go. I say this because when we ran into the same situations that we have now, they ran into that then. People didn't give up. People didn't say: We need to cut everything; we need to cut all of our spending. Society got creative and governments got creative at the time of putting money in the right direction.

I keep going back to saying sometimes you need to spend money to make money. At the time, putting \$3 million or \$4 million in a program like that – keep in mind, now, in 2001, the

budgets weren't at \$8 billion. That was substantial at the time. The fallout in a positive manner since then, the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been generated from that but the hundreds of millions of dollars – or the immeasurable, priceless services that have been provided to keep young people on the right track, who are no longer the young people of the day; who are the leaders in our society now. I ran into one of the individuals who was a young person on one of the CYNs that I knew years ago who is now a key person with Verafin. We're all very aware of what that's done to put Newfoundland and Labrador on the map.

That tells you about what agencies like that. I'm specifically saying the CYNs, but I'm using them as the example of the potential we have here for giving communities an opportunity and the resources and the supports to take control and have a major stake in designing their own futures and letting them offset some of the services and that which we may not be able to have or provide because the resources are just not there. There are going to be decisions made on how you provide various services in various communities with our geography.

Finding creative ways, bringing in partnerships, letting the general public know that we value their input but, more importantly, we value their resource to be able to take a leadership role in providing services and partnering with them. We have continuously talked over here about developing partnerships with every entity in our society. Developing partnerships with those outside of our own jurisdiction, we're not adverse to that. Developing partnerships on a global perspective, which would have probably never been heard of 20 years ago, but Newfoundland and Labrador, the innovative way we do things, how we have made a mark on the world markets, no matter what it may be, gives us that opportunity to do that.

To first make that work, we have to do that in-house. We have to be able to make sure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and those who have a skill set in this province are engaged more in helping us solve our own problems, our own financial woes; helping us find creative, innovative ways to provide the same services or better quality service more equitably and in a quicker manner and more open to the masses to

do that. We need to find a way with technology to engage as many people as possible to get their feedback.

I get that when we start engaging the general public, we're going to get feedback and we're going to get a lot of negative feedback because some people, for the sake of being negative, will only talk about the negative stuff. But let's dissect that. Let's talk about those who are going to share great creative ideas; are going to share their experience with us; and are going to share their optimism, the same that we all have in this House of Assembly, and I would hope most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have.

While we all get emails – and we all get them – where they're upset over a certain circumstance or a certain decision or a certain view that we may have, if you read closely, the underlying thing is people are doing that. They're lashing out or they're sharing their opinion because they want this province to flourish. They want it to excel. They want to make sure that we're told we either need to rethink what we've done or we need to continue with the stance that we've taken.

That's on both sides of this House. That's not isolated to the Opposition that everybody's going to rah-rah because what we said is the only way to do it. Far from it. We know for every action that we have, there's a reaction, and every view we have, somebody has a counterview. Somewhere in the middle, I think, is the right view. That's how we do the right thing and get to the right end result.

We've been doing a lot of good debate on our budget here. We have a lot of dialogue. We've dissected some things. I may be corrected, but I think on this side there's still some information that we would like to have for us to really know where this budget is going to take us. We're extremely optimistic that the province does have a bright future if the right plan is put in play. We'd like to be able to say this is the right play and the right plan, but we're not quite there yet.

Maybe your caucus is there, and I hope you are, because maybe you have a little bit more access to some information. Maybe the Minister of Finance can over the next week or so, while we're still in debate here and when we talk on

some of the bills – that may make it clear to us. That'll be even better. That'll be perfect, because we don't want to not support things in this House because we don't have information. That's not right and it's not fair to anybody.

If we don't agree with it, then we'll have trouble supporting it and we'll tell you that. If we agree with it, then it will be based on the fact that the information was relevant and clarified any challenges or any concerns that we may have had.

I do ask, in the next week or so, as we're into our last week or so of debate on the budget, and particularly all the bills that are attached to it before the budget itself can be fully implemented, that if there are questions asked, as clear as possible, the information be shared; if there is information that we didn't ask for because we didn't think it was a part of it but can be of a benefit to us understanding how the budget is going to move us to the next level, please share that. We ask that.

We do ask, at the end of the day, that nothing be taken personally if we're challenging something around a particular line item. Or what would be thought to be the benefit of a particular program if it's funded, or if there's a particular program that's going to be cut, if we challenge whether or not we think there is still benefit to having that program. I'd like to have open dialogue where somebody explains to me and to this side of the House that you know what, we've analyzed it, we've looked at it, but this is not the best – while it still might serve a purpose, there is another way of doing the same thing, getting better outcomes and probably doing it for more people.

I'm a big user of the economy of scale. If you can find a more economical way to do more with less, then that's the best approach forward. There's nobody that will not agree to that because if you save on one side, you either have the ability to address your own financial needs, or put that money in another program that also benefits the people of this province.

As we move forward, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to hearing the dialogue and the discussion on the number of bills that we'll talk about over the next week or so. I do solemnly

ask that we try to find the best path forward for all of us. This is a very important budget. It will be the framework for where we go over the next four or five years. There's no quick fix to our financial situation, we all know that, but we have to find the path forward.

Hopefully we can find that. I look forward to further debate on the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, let me thank the hon. Member opposite for mentioning the third sector, the community sector, who are not only important contributors to our social fabric, but provide a model of cross-sectional approach that we should all support, grow and aspire to be more like. It's not only an important social space but an incredible economic driver that has good returns for the province socially and fiscally. I echo and commend the Member opposite for recognizing the importance of such a sector.

Budget 2021 marks a key step in the beginning of the transformation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. This spirit is reflected in the very title of the budget itself: *Change starts here*. It shows the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that our government is prepared to make bold decisions to address the fiscal challenges we face. Those bold decisions are and will continue to be evidence based, balanced and measured. This budget is about taking control of the provincial finances and sending a signal that we are transforming government and modernizing for today's world.

We're taking immediate action while recognizing that this is not the time for severe austerity. We're supporting families and businesses, investing in growth industries to build our economy and finding smarter ways to deliver critical services. Newfoundland and Labrador, we didn't get here overnight and there is no single budget or magic bullet that will fix

everything and turn it all around. I'm sure every Member of this House really wishes there was.

It's impossible to talk about this budget, Mr. Speaker, without recognizing and thanking the incredible leadership the Deputy Premier, Finance Minister and President of Treasury Board has shown in putting this together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: Working with the stakeholder groups and organizations, listening and taking that feedback into account, not to mention my own pen on her speech at times, which I'm sure was frustrating.

I must also acknowledge and thank all the dedicated, hard-working people within the department who worked around the clock, taking time away from their families and their personal lives to do this important piece of work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: I hope that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and all Members of this House of Assembly can see that we are all, as a government and the members of the public service, grateful for the opportunity to serve you at this critical juncture. Our government is fully focused on building a brighter and stable future for our beautiful province, as evidenced in this budget.

Let's take a look at some of the big pieces in *Budget 2021*, starting with the transformations. Mr. Speaker, transformation is powerful and so is the outcome. We are taking steps towards a sustainable fiscal future. Change, as we all know, can be hard, but it gives us the opportunity to discover new ways of delivering services, become more efficient and agile and become better versions of ourselves. Change is good; change is necessary.

Budget 2021 sets direction to modernize and transform government, to improve service delivery and to address financial concerns. We are currently evaluating Nalcor in order to streamline and remove duplications and, ultimately, save money for the Provincial Treasury. We are merging Crown corporations

into core government, beginning with the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information and NL911. We're taking steps to integrate the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District into the Department of Education to make better use of investments in education and ensure that investments target the classrooms and teachers, not administration and executives.

When it comes to health care, we know that we need to focus on better outcomes and better value for the billions we spend in that system every single year. The corporate services of the four regional health authorities are being integrated to streamline the delivery of functions, such as payroll, finance, accounting, human resources, information management and technology and procurement.

In partnership with business, social enterprises and other organizations, we will establish a process to maintain and improve service delivery through joint solutions. This will more effectively deliver facilities management, provincial registries and ferries. We need to spend our money wisely, Mr. Speaker, invest in the social determinants of health and support Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in living healthier lifestyles to be well overall. That encompasses both physical and mental health. Any savings found in the health care system by working more efficiently, by doing things better, smarter and modern will only go back into the people of this province. These transformations will address our province's significant debt profile and reduce our expenditure on debt servicing.

The projected deficit of 2021, as we know, is \$826 million. An improvement of \$1 billion from *Budget 2020*. This is the first step in our government's plan to return to a fiscal balance within five years. *Budget 2021* targets reaching surplus by 2026-27. That's a target we believe we can reach if we all work together.

There are plenty of other smart, responsible measures in this budget that will help us get there, Mr. Speaker, starting with the interest costs on our debt service alone, one of our largest expenditures. By taking a more proactive approach to Treasury management, our government will reduce debt expense by up to

\$10 million annually. Being more active in the capital markets will consequently result in more efficient borrowing.

We also updated our income tax structure to ensure our province's high-income earners are paying their fair share. In this year's budget, we are adjusting tax brackets for higher income earners and creating new brackets for those making over \$250,000 a year, Mr. Speaker. For anyone with taxable income of less than \$135,973, there are no personal income tax changes. The changes will bring in an estimated \$15.3 million in additional revenue, while keeping us comparable and competitive to taxation in Atlantic Canada.

One of the initiatives I'm really excited about in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the Physical Activity Tax Credit. This will provide a refundable tax credit of up to \$2,000 per family. This credit is estimated at \$7 million. It will be a helpful incentive for families as they look to access sport and recreational activities and become healthier. It also holds the added benefit of supporting local health and wellness industries. From the soccer pitch to the dance studio to martial arts dojos and beyond, physical activity helps young people develop, build confidence and practise leadership, and offers a sense of enjoyment and well-being to people of all ages.

Physical activity is important in my own life and for my own health and mental wellness. I need it more now than ever before. We are fortunate to spend a lot of time as a family at the hockey rink or on the soccer pitch. This credit is designed to help make it easier for families and encourage them to participate in physical activities and healthy lifestyles.

But it's for people of all ages too, and it's important to remember that. Seniors benefit greatly from increased movement and socialization, and we hope this tax credit encourages seniors to participate in physical activities in their communities that will help their physical and mental health.

Budget 2021 includes investments to grow the economy and create jobs for a sustainable path forward, Mr. Speaker. The past year has been tough – and we know it – for families,

communities and all industries. It's our responsibility to support the resiliency so that Newfoundland and Labrador emerges from the pandemic a healthy and prosperous place. The sense of hope and optimism in our province is palpable.

The spending in *Budget 2021* is smart spending, strong investments. It's a continuation of spending to ensure that community groups, organizations, seniors, teachers, nurses, all those important, hard-working people in our province have the resources they need to do their critical work and meet their full potential.

Our government has committed \$30 million for tourism and hospitality supports to alleviate pressures experienced by COVID-19.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: We all know that the tourism and hospitality industry was hit particularly hard by COVID-19 and we must be there to support them now. We have been hearing really positive things from operators now that we have some light at the end of the tunnel, reopening, welcoming family, friends and tourists back to Newfoundland and Labrador. Getting together again.

Our government has allocated \$20 million for small business and community organization assistance to help with increased costs and losses as a result of the pandemic – another group hit hard by the pandemic. Our government has continued to show its commitment to small businesses and community organizations. Like the Members opposite, we see the value the work of these members do for our economy and our social fabric.

This budget has close to \$600 million for infrastructure projects to help improve access to services and create more jobs for people in this province. We know that access to the Internet is critical and we've seen it now in this pandemic perhaps more than ever before. It is a priority for this government and for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, for families, for small businesses, for health care, for rural communities, Mr. Speaker. We hear this over and over when travelling the province and

connecting with people, from Cow Head, down to the Boot and across the Island and Labrador.

The pandemic has highlighted again just how important connectivity, communication, virtually is for people, not just in the province or the country, but, indeed, all over the world. We have committed \$25 million over the next three years to improve connectivity through cellular and broadband throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: Importantly, we will use government investments to leverage that private sector, maximizing the impact and the connectivity.

Our province is ripe with opportunities across sectors, and this budget makes strategic investments to ensure we maximize our collective force and potential. We have allocated \$27 million to support economic development initiatives, including research and development, commercialization, regional development and business growth activities such as investment in our growing – thriving – technology sector.

An investment in the technology sector is an investment in all sectors, from fishery to mining to education and health care. The digital economy is providing economic growth and better services throughout the province and we are leading the country in this regard.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: This budget also allocates \$10 million for the film and television Equity Investment Program. This is an area of particular interest to me, again, because we see the potential for growth here, Mr. Speaker. The film and television industry in Newfoundland and Labrador is significant, attracting a number of productions. People want to shoot here. The landscape alone draws interest from all around the world.

During the pandemic we made history with two TV productions happening at the same time for the first time. And it's only going up from here.

This budget also features an additional \$2.5 million for mineral geoscience data collection and interpretation, and \$5 million for ArtsNL to support the incredibly talented artists in Newfoundland and Labrador – the people who help enrich the culture that makes this place so special, draws people here from around the world and makes us all feel special when we're elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

Additional spending in *Budget 2021* reflects federal government support, specifically focused on certain areas. These significant investments are a direct result of our government's close working relationship with our partners in Ottawa, including the \$320 million in Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Recovery Assistance Fund and Safe Restart funding for municipalities and schools.

Mr. Speaker, this budget marks the beginning of a new era of transformation, of collaboration, of economic recovery and growth. In that same vein, today also begins the transition phase of the *Together. Again.* reopening plan. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will see select public health measures start to lift. The light at the end of the tunnel is drawing near.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER A. FUREY: On June 23, we are welcoming Atlantic Canadians to our province and as early as July 1 we will be reuniting with family and friends from across our great country. This is possible thanks to the continued expertise of Dr. Fitzgerald and the whole team at Public Health; the dedication of our front-line health care workers; and the efforts, frankly, of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for following the public health guidelines and getting vaccinated.

Our vaccine rollout continues at an impressive pace and we are well positioned to address the continued impacts of COVID-19 on our population. I know, Mr. Speaker, from my conversations with friends around the world, we are the envy.

In *Budget 2021*, we are taking the responsible step of continuing to allocate \$100 million to respond to demands for such things as personal

protective equipment, testing and supporting vaccinations. This will ensure that we can continue to lift restrictions responsibly and all come together again.

Mr. Speaker, this budget set the course to achieve fiscal stability by commencing transformations to ensure we spend within our means while delivering quality service. It is not about doing less; it is about doing more, better. It ensures a return to fiscal balance within five years. This budget makes strategic economic investments to guide growth in key industries. It supports those that need a hand up, including those who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Once again, I would like to thank the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, and her team for their exceptional efforts in delivering this budget and setting the course, Mr. Speaker.

Change starts here, with this budget, with everybody in this House and with this government, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, it is moved and seconded that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of this government.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

SPEAKER: Seeing all Members present, all those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK (Barnes): Mr. Furey, Mr. Crocker, Mr. Osborne, Mr. Haggie, Ms. Coady, Ms. Howell,

Mr. Byrne, Mr. Bragg, Mr. Loveless, Mr. Davis, Mr. Abbott, Ms. Dempster, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Andrew Parsons, Mr. Hogan, Ms. Stoodley, Mr. Reid, Mr. Warr, Mr. Pike, Ms. Stoyles, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Lane, Mr. Trimper.

SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Brazil, Mr. Petten, Mr. Wakeham, Mr. Wall, Mr. O’Driscoll, Mr. Tibbs, Ms. Evans, Ms. Conway Ottenheimer, Mr. Parrott, Mr. Pardy, Mr. Paul Dinn, Mr. Forsey, Mr. Dwyer, Mr. James Dinn, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: 24; the nays: 15.

SPEAKER: I declare this motion carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, Bill 8.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

SPEAKER: All rise.

Dated the 11th day of June 2021:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 March 2022 by way of further Supply and in accordance with the provisions of section 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd: _____
Lieutenant-Governor (Judy May Foote, PC, ONL)

Please be seated.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the message together with a bill be referred to a Committee of Supply.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are debating Bill 8, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 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, 2022 the sum of \$4,565,934,100.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

I'm sorry, the Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

S. COADY: Do I speak first?

CHAIR: I'm sorry I didn't recognize the minister.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. I need to see hands up.

S. COADY: Thank you.

I have to wave more.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and thank you for your indulgence. I promise I won't be long.

This is the *Supply Act, 2021*, for main Supply. It's introduced following the completion of the budget debate. The main Supply bill is routine and an administrative measure. I will say that. An approval of this bill will ensure funds are available to meet government expenditures during the 2021-22 fiscal year and provide sufficient legislative authority for government to meet its financial obligations.

The requirement to introduce debate and pass a main Supply bill to cover government expenditures during the fiscal year is a requirement, Mr. Chair, of the *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Financial Administration Act*. The introduction of this bill has no incremental impact on the province's financial position in '21-'22 beyond what is included in the budget of 2021-22.

The total amount of the main Supply bill is \$4,565,934,100. This, when combined with the already approved \$3.5 billion from Interim Supply, gives a total of \$8,024,380,400. This, of course, ties to the total amount voted on in Statement III of the Estimates.

Now, Mr. Chair, you will recall that there were two Interim Supply bills approved for the fiscal year. Interim Supply, Bill 1, the amount from

April 1 to May 31 was \$2,086,721,900. Then Interim Supply Bill 2, which ran from June 1 to July 31, was \$1,371,724,400. The total of both amounts is \$3,458,446,300. The total time frame covered by both the Interim Supply bills was four months or 33 per cent of the fiscal year. Now, the main Supply bill will provide further funding for the remaining of the fiscal year up to March 31, 2022.

The total amount voted, \$8,024,000,000, represents the total amount, total gross cash expenditures minus payments that are preapproved by statute such as interest payments, deferred pension contributions, debt –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

S. COADY: – management expenses and the salaries of the Auditor General and Comptroller General. The highest amounts can be attributed to health care, always the highest level of expenditure, which is not abnormal, and Innovation, Energy and Technology; a large increase in main Supply due to 100 per cent funded projects, which have no overall impact on our deficit.

So, Mr. Chair, I will say that in the Schedule attached to the bill under the Head of Expenditure there was a movement of a title of Municipal Affairs. I will be moving a slight amendment just to make sure we have it in order. It's supposed to be in alphabetical order and the numbers line up. This total amount is still the same, but I will move that at the appropriate time.

I think, Mr. Chair, I will conclude my remarks by saying to the House that we've had a good number of hours debating budget. I look forward to their interactions on this main Supply bill and listening to the issues that are faced in their districts and hearing more about their concerns. I do appreciate the fact that the budget is now passed and this is falling from that main Supply.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The main Supply, as the minister just stated, is the final step of the budget; \$4.5 billion is the amount that's needed. The sister bill that is coming, which would be the loan Supply, is what money we'll need to borrow up to March of next year. That is coming either tonight or tomorrow and that is \$1.7 billion.

The next bill that will come will be the one that we're going to vote on, Mr. Chair, and that's what we're going to need to borrow in order to see through all the government functioning up to the end of March of next year. That's a significant amount of money that we'll need permission to borrow. I'm sure we'll play the capital markets and we'll do whatever we can to make sure that we get the best rate we possibly can, but the people in the District of Bonavista may be surprised that we do need to borrow that much money this year to see us through.

The Premier mentioned that we need bold decisions. They ought to be balanced and measured. I think all MHAs had a magazine that was delivered in our mail slots. It was the *Atlantic Business Magazine* and that was the March-April issue. The last page in that magazine was an article by John Risley. The title of the article was: Newfoundland and Labrador's budget cuts will be painful and unavoidable. That was the title.

What he had mentioned as key things that we ought to be doing; one was immigration. We need to grow our population, which is sound. He said that we need to invest in small business start-ups to grow our economy. We need to see something that's tangible to make sure we grow our small businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador because it is quite a revenue generator for our economy. That was there.

Then he wanted to know where the spending cuts were. We've heard some of these tonight. We talked about the merging of the Newfoundland and Labrador Eastern School District with the Department of Education to find efficiencies in the backroom financing and management of the finances. But what is gleaned from those savings will be going straight to the classrooms, which is what I would celebrate. Any savings, it's not going to go against the \$1.7 billion that we're going to need to borrow, but it's going to go to make sure that

those classrooms that need the extra resources, they will be attainable.

One thing that Risley did suggest – I'm not sure if the minister read that article or not – was: "Set up a transition fund by borrowing against the incremental proceeds available when the benefits of a revised Churchill Falls agreement begin to flow." Whether the exact figure is that in 2041 we have \$800 million to \$1.2 billion coming into our coffers – if that is accurate, then what Risley is saying, that a transition fund can help bridge us between now and then, it ought to be a consideration.

I want to read the last paragraph that he states. We've talked a lot about Terra Nova today and yesterday. I guess with no announcement being forthcoming today we may be talking about Terra Nova tomorrow. John Risley states: "And, before I forget, make sure the door is wide open to exploration and production plans for the province's offshore energy sector." Make sure the door is wide open to exploration and production plans for the province's offshore energy sector.

He says: "The world will wean itself off hydrocarbons, but in the meantime why does it make sense to hand the oil market to foreign interests where environmental regulations are much less restrictive than they are here?" That's a little redundant because we heard that being stated as well, and he names Venezuela.

He thought the carbon emissions of the oil that we would have are far better than what they would be in those markets that will be all there to step in to supply the parts of the world for the next decades. Maybe it should be something that we ought to look at as a country, certainly as a province, to market our oil, our energy sector. While we go towards the green sector, then we know that we're doing it as carbon-friendly as we possibly could.

One thing amiss is that we don't talk a lot about the fishery. The fishery now is my new portfolio, and while I dearly love education and to discuss education, the fishery is one now that I would look at that we have a wonderful renewable resource out in our oceans, a wonderful renewable resource, but I would say it is collapsing. I would think in the House if we

look at how much we've heard from Fisheries in this sitting, the 50th sitting of the House of Assembly, not a lot.

I recall it being stated by a past premier of this province that they're on the record as saying – and I quote – “The biggest mistake of Confederation in 1949 was the ceding of the Fishery to almost total Federal control.” I've said some figures and I hope my memory serves me well. When we look at the fishery being a \$1-billion industry – and I think \$33 billion in the fishery goes towards the GDP of our country, Canada, and we're producing a little over \$1 billion – then I would say that while it's good, many fishers and many people in the province would say it's not good enough. We ought to be doing far better than we are doing.

The principle of adjacency: When we had the Estimates, Mr. Chair, I mentioned to the minister at the time that I would hope that he champions the principle of adjacency. Adjacency would indicate – much the same as when John Crosbie and the government of the time championed adjacency and we saw the benefit of the Atlantic Accord, where we became the primary beneficiaries of our oil resources – something similar to that in relation to the fishery.

I know the terms of agreement that we had in '49; I know that's a tough journey ahead, but we have to attempt to make sure that we have a bigger voice in our fishery than what we currently have. My understanding from talking to some people and trying to get up to speed on the fishery so I can come here and try to talk something that would make some semblance of sense in the House is from the learned people who had stated that the fishery, back when the ground fishery was on, in the 200-mile limit, they thought that Canada generally, before the collapse of the fishery, followed the historical dependence. They looked at the adjacency; they looked at the economic viability and we had the majority of the share within the 200-mile limit of the groundfish stock.

Then, of course, came the collapse of the stock. Then in the mid-'90s came the shellfish industry – the very lucrative shellfish industry. From the people I spoke with, from that point in time on we've seen an erosion of the adjacency of the

principle of historical dependence and we find now that larger portions of the quota that would be inside our 200-mile limit are going to other provinces of Canada.

I would say to you we are a very sharing type in Newfoundland and Labrador but I would say, at what cost, Mr. Chair? We are a very sharing group, but at what cost do we continue to know that we can't go into other jurisdictions in Canada and fish within their waters, but they can certainly come here to Newfoundland and Labrador. I am not totally opposed to it, but I've since asked DFO to send and release and provide for me the figures of relation to the allocation of quotas within our 200-mile limit.

I would say to you when we get that, the data will show, if the experts that I talk with are correct, that we're seeing a diminishing return on our allocation and what the total allowable catch would be in our 200-mile limit. The minister may be able to speak to that at some point in time in the near future as well because he may have access to that data. Keep in mind, I haven't asked the provincial body, which I probably ought to have; I've gone through DFO to make that request to see where the allocation of the figures would be.

What are the some of the differences with other jurisdictions? I stated with the seals and I said I wasn't going to talk about seals tonight, and I'm not, but I look at other jurisdictions that we have. In 2020 all of Newfoundland had a 12,000-metric-tons quota of cod – 12,000. That's not a lot of cod that we harvest and move. Keep in mind that in other jurisdictions, like Norway and Denmark, they are significantly, significantly more than that. In fact, they're between 150,000 to 200,000 metric tons. Their cod industry and fishery are doing well.

In a world where we have global warming and we know that we're struggling with those elements, we find that other jurisdictions are striving while we're losing our resource. Keep in mind – I'm just going to slip in one thing about seals – remember that in six days they eat the total amount of what we harvest in our waters, 200,000 metric tons.

One would say, we've sat in this House of Assembly, the 50th House of Assembly, haven't

heard one word in relation to the urgency that we must have to save our stock. Iceland, 200,000 metric tons, with warming of waters, climate change – 200,000 metric tons. One figure which I had, which I think is emblematic of where we are, we've discovered that we've got a market for mackerel, a new species – relatively new – that we have markets for. But let me share with you what our catch rate is and our quota for mackerel. I'd like for everybody to remain seated, because our quota for mackerel is 4,000 metric tons – 4,000 metric tons. But I hear somebody singing out –

AN HON. MEMBER: How many?

C. PARDY: Four thousand metric tons.

I hear somebody asking, well, what does Iceland – what are their metric tons? What is their catch rate? I just happen to have the answer for that: 400,000 metric tons.

The minister had stated that his background is the fishery, that he's from a fishing community. The minister says: Come join me. Speak about it any time on the floor of the House of Assembly; join him in his effort. I'd like to join him. All he needs to do is just invite us and say: Join me and let's tackle it together.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm certainly delighted this evening to have my first opportunity to speak to this bill. Of course, this being a money bill, we kind of have the flexibility to speak about whatever we want. There are a lot of subjects I could cover and a lot that I probably will cover before the night is out.

I just want to talk specifically to the budget, which is good, I guess, seeing as how this is a budget bill; this is Supply, basically allowing government now to be able to actually pay the bills.

I just want to, first of all, say as it relates to the budget, I said from day one when I was elected as an independent Member – even the last time when I was – I said I committed to myself I would do my best to respect decorum; to not be partisan or political in my comments, as best as I possibly could; and to attempt to be the voice of my constituents; and to be fair and reasonable and balanced in my approach, in times supporting government, in times not supporting government. I think the votes will show that since I've been an independent, there have been times where I've voted with the government, been times when I voted with the Official Opposition, times I voted with the Third Party, because I'm just trying to make decisions based on what I feel is right and what is in the best interest of my constituents.

On this particular budget vote – I just want to be sort of clear on that one – what I could have done – and you've been around long enough; you see how things work. The reality of it is that the government has a majority. I could have easily voted against the budget knowing that the budget would go through anyway; we wouldn't topple the government. Then if anyone came to me and said, B'y, that's shocking about what they're planning on doing for MUN, I could say: Well, I didn't vote for the budget. They could say that's shocking about the taxes on whatever; I didn't vote for the budget. That's shocking what they're doing on sugary drinks; well, I didn't vote for the budget. I could have taken that approach.

I could basically let the budget pass, but then vote against it anyways so anyone who had a complaint about the budget, I'd be able to say I didn't support it. But that's not the approach I'm going to take. It's not the approach I took, because ultimately I don't see any major issues, personally, with the budget.

Are there some details lacking in the Budget Speech itself? Yes, without question. There are a lot of things in that Budget Speech that talked about this transformation that the details are not there. By and large, none of those things are actually in the budget in terms of an actual budget item to vote on.

The budget is kind of a stay the course. There are no major tax hikes, so to speak. There are

some there and no one likes any taxes, of course, but there's nothing off-the-wall major. In terms of reduction in services and so on, I don't see anything major there either. There are no massive layoffs or anything like that.

I think the Leader of the Official Opposition even said that from that point of view, keeping the economy going and not shocking the economy and not being drastic, he acknowledged that himself that he agreed with that. I agree with it, as well.

I didn't see any major things there that I would not support the budget, but I would agree with anyone over here who perhaps didn't support the budget who would say the details are the issue. No details in what the plans are. Well, I said from day one that as these – quote, unquote – transformations occur and we start looking into this and looking into that and looking into something else, then I will make my views loud and clear at the time on a case-by-case basis depending on what is done and how it was done and, of course, the details around it.

We know there are going to be things that have to be done. That's the other reality. It would be hypocritical to be here on the one hand saying spend, spend, spend, spend, spend, and we need more money for this, more money for that and more money for something else, and then by the same token to say: Oh, my God, we have to borrow \$1.7 billion this year, to add to our already crippling debt. We didn't need Dame Moya Greene to tell us any of this. The Auditor General has been telling us this for years. We didn't need the Auditor General to tell us. Common sense, sure. You can see how the debt is climbing. We have a population of a half million people, 516,000 or 520,000 or whatever it is, somewhere in that neighbourhood. We're up to our necks in debt. So, yes, something has to change.

Now, this budget, one would argue – and I've heard from a lot of people who said: My God, the government is not doing anything to tackle the debt in this particular budget; they've cut literally nothing. They've talked about doing this and doing that, but they haven't done a whole lot. I've gotten that comment from a lot of people, actually. I just want to be clear: That's why I support the budget. But I support it and I

also support a lot of the proposals, if you will, the part of this transformation. I support a lot of those things, in principle, if they're done right. I look at the idea of the back-office functions of the four health care authorities.

Nobody here in this House with any – well, I shouldn't say with any common sense; that wouldn't be fair, because people can have differing views for differing reasons. I think most people would recognize the fact that if you have four lots of people basically doing the same functions in four different locations, if you can bring them all together in theory, there's no reason why you can't create economies of scale and so on and you can't create efficiencies and save money while still doing what needs to be done. So when we look at that, it makes sense to me. Something has to give.

We look at Nalcor, and I know that I have my own personal issues with Nalcor. No secret. It has nothing to do with Nalcor or the people working there; it has to do with a handful of people who fed us all a bunch of lies. Anyway, that being as it may, it makes sense. The Muskrat Falls Project now is winding down. We have Nalcor, we have Hydro, we have OilCo and we have a core government department all looking after these assets. We don't need it all. I absolutely support the notion of dealing with that and finding efficiencies and saving money – absolutely.

Now, do I want to see people just tossed out onto the street? Of course I don't. You have to recognize these are human beings with families and so on. We can't just kick people to the curb. I would never support that. But if it is done in a methodical way and we utilize attrition and early retirement, or find positions for people in other core government departments so that everybody is looked after as best we can – minimize any damage that way, but still achieve that same goal of finding efficiencies and consolidating – absolutely I'm going to support that, 100 per cent.

I could go down through other things – the school board is another one. Again, I'd like to see how it is going to be done, how it is going to be organized; understand the facts and the figures, which we don't have. But if it can be done properly and still offering the same

outcomes and what the needs are in our education system – again, not kicking employees to the curb; utilize attrition and early retirement and all that kind of stuff – I’m going to support that as well. We can’t afford not to do it. The reality of it is we cannot afford not to do it. It has to be done.

I’ll just finish off this particular time by saying in the 2016 budget, I was bombarded with emails, phone calls – you name it – from constituents. This time, guess how many calls and emails I got on this budget – nada.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: I got the standard one from NAPE, I got the standard one from the NLTA and I got all those from the Employers’ Council, the same cut-and-paste emails. I got a few there the last couple of days, a couple about MUN students, but beyond that I got nothing really. I think maybe one or two people that have reached out to me in some way.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I’ll –

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The chuckles are starting already, before I even start.

AN HON. MEMBER: You’re not done yet.

J. HOGAN: Yeah, we’ll see. I made it this far last night.

I think it was the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port said he likes using quotes. A quote came to my mind tonight before I started speaking. It’s déjà vu all over again here tonight.

It was nice last night, closer to the end of our session, for everybody to have a bit of a chuckle.

I don’t know if everyone was laughing at me or laughing with me. Either way, even if everyone was laughing at me, I’ll take one for the team if everyone left here on a happy note last night. The sun was shining when we left. It was a good day in the House of Assembly overall after a lot of debate, Mr. Chair.

I did hear a couple of comments from the hon. Member for CBS last night; he was sort of shouting out some tips, I guess. I am still fairly new. I’m going to rely on the newbie excuse for a little while longer yet. I might not know all the rules of the House or the conventions of the House. I don’t know if the hon. Member for CBS was heckling me or trying to help me.

B. PETTEN: Help you.

J. HOGAN: Trying to help me. There you go.

Anyone who is listening tonight, I think we proved a point that Members of the House of Assembly can get along when necessary. Thank you to the Member for CBS last night for trying to help me. I don’t know if it worked but he tried. He tried.

Mr. Chair, as I was saying last night, I did want to talk a little bit about the Department of Justice and Public Safety. It is two branches the way I see it and what I’ve come to learn since my time in the department. Justice and access to justice is very important to me and to everyone in the department who works so hard.

I do want to thank everyone. Just broadly speaking I want to talk about how I think it reflects what the public thinks is the justice system here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that’s our two branches of courts: the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador, where there are courts throughout this province; and the provincial court as well, where we have courts, again, throughout the entire province. There are staff, judges and clerks in all the offices throughout the province who work very, very hard to service all the people and all the litigants that come through the court system in this province.

It’s a very difficult job, Mr. Chair, and I learned that first-hand. I was very lucky and very fortunate, during my time as a private practicing

lawyer in this province, to see first-hand those great staff that deal with all the issues that come before them. Obviously, we've talked a lot about COVID and how difficult it has been on all aspects of our lives. It did have a big impact on access to justice in this province and around the world.

I was a practicing lawyer when COVID hit. I'd say what people might refer to as small-firm lawyer's bread and butter would be real estate files, real estate transactions and wills. Anyone in here who has done a will or done a real estate file, anyone who owns a house I'm sure has done a real estate file. You do know that you have to meet with your lawyer, Mr. Chair, to sign the documents. You might not understand what the lawyer is saying, telling you all the risks about buying a house and the obligations of your mortgage and debts, et cetera, but you do have to meet the lawyer in person to sign it and have to witness it.

Obviously, when COVID hit in March, that wasn't possible anymore. So it was a real concern and it was a real worry for the lawyers who had to do the work, and for all the people who all of a sudden thought maybe I'm not going to be able to buy my house, I'm not going to be able to get my mortgage. Or even maybe more importantly, I'm not going to be able to sign my will and meet with my lawyer, which is obviously a very important thing for someone who's nearing the end of life and need that document. It's important to them, it's important to protect their family.

But we were lucky enough that the Department of Justice and the great staff here – and everyone in the House of Assembly – passed emergency legislation that allowed lawyers to meet with people not face to face. I can tell you that an industry that's probably as old as time, lawyers, it was a bit strange to get used to it. We were signing documents through video chat, we were doing it online, but it did work well and it's probably the way of the future.

Obviously, this is not the only industry that has had to face something like that, but we did adapt. I think all the lawyers in this province would thank the Department of Justice for that to ease access to justice, and thank all the Members of the House of Assembly – whoever

was here at that point in time, because I think you weren't allowed to sit with a full House – who passed that emergency legislation.

It does show the power of this House of Assembly, that when push comes to shove, things can get done. I know the Member for Ferryland – I think it was today or yesterday – said, let's get going. I think we can get going when things need to be done. I think what this budget does show – and I know I'm here to talk about the budget today – is that the time has come for us to get going. Thankfully, everyone, at least, in Mount Pearl see it that way and see that this government is getting going. They obviously agree with the budget and that's good to hear.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I'm sure it's not only people in Mount Pearl that see what a fantastic budget the Minister of Finance put together. As the Leader of the Opposition did say earlier tonight, Members opposite might have some issues with it, but overall I think people are satisfied that it is a budget that's going to move us forward. There might be some issues here and there, and we can talk about and continue to debate over the next few years, but I think it is a strong budget. It does show a strong government willing to move forward and make changes.

Mr. Chair, some other groups I just want to say thank you to in the justice community include the Legal Aid lawyers. Hopefully, everyone in this House hasn't had to use a Legal Aid lawyer. I say that because people that need Legal Aid lawyers are those who don't have the financial ability to pay for their own lawyers.

Mr. Chair, I did speak to the executive director of the Legal Aid Commission in Newfoundland and Labrador. He has a concern that's probably everlasting for him. People view Legal Aid lawyers, for some reason – maybe because they're not paying out of their own pocket – as lesser lawyers. That's certainly not the case. These lawyers work day in, day out. They're public servants and they do a great job. They've gone to the same law schools that all private practice lawyers and big firm lawyers went to and they're as learned in the law as anyone, certainly, that I know and that I've come across.

I think it was this week in the House I made mention of a lawyer by the name of Derek Hogan, who was admitted to the American College of Trial Lawyers, and he's a legal aid lawyer, Mr. Chair. That's a very prestigious recognition and a very high distinction. For a legal aid lawyer to get it, I think what it does demonstrate is that these lawyers are there, as good as anyone else. If someone is in trouble and doesn't have the financial ability that's what the Legal Aid Commission is there for. I want to commend all of them for their hard work. I'm sure during the COVID pandemic – they deal mostly, Mr. Chair, with family law files and criminal files, and that's not easy to do when there's no pandemic going on, and to have to deal with all that during these difficult times, I commend all of them for their hard work and effort and to stick with it.

Another group that I want to say thanks to is the people that work at the Human Rights Commission. I guess, fortunately or unfortunately, we do have a Human Rights Commission. It's unfortunate that we do need this group in this province because there are human rights violations that I'm sure a lot of us don't see, but unfortunately we do know about and it happens every day. Fortunately, we do have this Human Rights Commission because we recognize that there are human rights in this country and they're important to all of us and they have to be respected.

If there is a violation of someone's human rights based on their race, religion or sexual orientation, all these things that aren't choices – this is who people are and everyone deserves to be treated equally – and if there is an issue with regard to a human rights violation, that's what the Human Rights Commission is there for: to deal with them and to sanction people appropriately who don't view human rights the way they should be viewed. I want to thank everyone who works at the Human Rights Commission, Mr. Chair, because they do very, very important work.

I also want to talk a little bit about the Public Safety part of my portfolio. When you think of public safety, obviously, it's something that you know in the background there are always people out there working very hard for us to keep us safe, but hopefully you don't ever have to hear

the stories, because if you hear the stories, it usually means it's a bad news story. It's great that we know they're there; it's great if we don't hear any stories about them because it means they're doing their job and they're doing it well. Unfortunately, things do happen. Thankfully, we do have two strong police groups in this province, Mr. Chair. We have the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, who do a fantastic job, and we have the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, who also work very hard throughout all areas of this province, and we're very lucky to have them.

One final group with regard to the Public Safety I'd like to thank are the firefighters. Being from St. John's my whole life, living around the corner from a fire department, I always thought everyone had their own fire department in their town or in their city, and clearly that's not the case. All the rural MHAs are probably looking at me now and shaking their heads. I have come to learn that volunteer firefighters are truly very, very important to the fabric of these communities and the safety of these communities.

I do want to thank each and every one of them for putting in the hard work and taking the time – time they could spend on doing other things, but they see the value in their community. They see how important these things are and they know someone has to do this very difficult job and they step up and do it. I want to thank each and every one of the individuals who see fit and see it necessary and are happy to do it on behalf of their community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Mr. Chair, with that, coupled with the few minutes speaking last night, I think I have reached the end of my moment in the sun. So I appreciate speaking to this bill, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will start off by echoing (inaudible) just did say and that is the lawyers at Legal Aid are some of the finest and they are well trained and some of them have gone on to be appointed judges in the system.

I guess it's a key point, too, to keep in mind that our public servants do a very good job, an excellent job under the restraints they have.

I was trying to figure out how I was going to frame what I wanted to say at this point, and my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands gave me the overarching theme about how when it came to the budget, if I heard him correctly, that he didn't hear from most people. He heard from, yes, the unions, the Employers' Council, you name it. I would argue, yes, we might, indeed, get it from the organization because the organizations – and when I was the president of the Teachers' Association, we had the opportunity to see and look at how the budget could potentially impact teachers. We would hear from teachers. It was our job to make sure that the issues that we were hearing were heard. Why do up a form letter? Because I can guarantee you that most people working at their jobs, by the time they are finished, they are pretty beat anyway. Their energies are directed just in front of them.

But why else didn't we hear from people? I'd say, for the most part, people are just too busy with life at this point in time, and not just because it is COVID-19. There are people who are – like when it comes to the taxes, they have the money; they're going to be comfortable. They'll deal with it.

There are those who are so vulnerable – part of our vulnerable population – you're not going to hear from them. They don't vote, a lot of them. Why? Because they probably feel they have nothing for which to vote. It's a pointless exercise. I don't know how many times I hear it – from more than one person knocking at the door: You're all crooks. All politicians are crooks. Didn't know me from Adam; nevertheless, I was now in to that. That was the first time I ran.

I look at the people who I've helped serve lunches to at the Ches Penney Centre of Hope. I can tell, you they're worried about where their

next meal is coming from. Can they make it from there up to The Gathering Place?

The people who are out in street corners are probably looking for enough money either to take care of their habit or their next food. You don't know. They're struggling; they're vulnerable.

One of the things in the Estimates Committee meeting and this budget and in the Budget Speech we hear – listen to this: Balanced budget legislation to tighten controls of the public purse ensuring our government spends within its means. We have zero-based budgeting – a term I was introduced to when I was first elected – attrition, vacancies.

Here is the thing: I was trying to figure out why you need balanced budget legislation if you have zero-based budgeting. Seriously. If, as I understood from zero-based budgeting, it's about building up from what you need, we already should be trying to achieve balanced budget because we are only focusing on what we need. What do any of these terms mean to the person on the street – balanced budget legislation? No one knows until it affects them.

I don't know how many times things are changed with the Teachers' Association and the teachers would ask: Where did this come from? Oh, we voted on that last year. Here's what this is all about.

For the person who is struggling to survive, balanced budget legislation, reducing the debt by \$10 million, what does that mean? Those are some of the questions that we've asked here in the House.

The Budget Speech talked about “solutions are needed to address long-standing structural issues such as the high cost of providing services to nearly 600 communities across a large” geographic area. What does that mean? I would say that many of us here would probably have a hard time talking about what are the structural issues. To the average person on the street, what does “structural issues” mean? Does this mean we're going to shut down communities? Does this mean that it's going to cost higher ferry fees to get there? Because in another part of the budget it talks about: “... joint solutions for a

more effective way to maintain and improve the delivery of ferry service, taking into consideration the perspectives of the people who use it." What does that mean?

Now, every profession has its jargon. Education does, too. We can talk in jargon to the point where I can tell you what it does: it excludes people from the conversation. All you have to do is read a will or any legal document and you'll see that in just trying to figure that out, it will boggle the mind.

So, yes, we're not necessarily going to hear from a lot of people, because think about it, that's the speech. I have the Estimates book there that we sit down and go through, and think about the amount of labour that goes into going through Estimates here. If we're expecting the ordinary individual, the person on the street, to go through this and then expect a phone call – I'm waiting for the day when someone calls me and says: I've gone through the Budget Speech, the budget documents and the book *The Economy* and I'd like to ask a few questions. It's not going to happen. It's not going to happen. But –

AN HON. MEMBER: What's your number?

J. DINN: You know my number; call me. I'll expect questions tomorrow. I'll pass you on to someone who knows what they're talking about.

The point, regardless of this, is that it's going to affect the lives of many people.

We talk about poverty reduction and there are things to be commended in this budget. I look at the money that's being put into housing, the Rent Supplement Program and the low-income homeowner modifications, but in the end we still have some issues. There are people who are just trying to survive.

We've asked for here a \$15 minimum wage. We've asked for a guaranteed basic income pilot project, which was unanimously passed by this House with some modifications. We've got to do more because I can tell you that the people in my district are not going to benefit – not all. A lot of people in my district are not going to see the benefit of a 20-cent sugar-sweetened tax. It's not going to make the carton of milk any more affordable. I applaud the \$1 million towards

Kids Eat Smart, but in the end it's like the organizations I have been a part of, like St. Vincent de Paul, it's a charity and it's not going to solve the issue for them.

A three-cent increase per cigarette. Those who can afford it are going to pay it; those who can't – and I can think of several – they're already getting the contraband cigarettes. Why? It's not going to solve the underlying problem because a lot of the people I've dealt with they're dealing with an enormous amount – sometimes that cigarette is the only thing getting them through the day. I can afford to go up to the river and go fishing or whatever else, I have other outlets, but for some people this is what's getting them through the day.

Go down to a kitchen sometime and you'll see them, five or six packs of sugar in a coffee and I'm amazed by it. I don't use sugar anymore. But at the same time, why? It's that boost that's getting them through the day. So sometimes we've got to bring ourselves down to the level of the people – believe it or not – who are not tuning into the House of Assembly broadcast. They probably don't know what a budget is, a main motion, Estimates or anything is about.

I'm glad we have a few more money bills to talk about and I'll bring up other issues. Not tonight. I'm going to parse out my wisdom over the next few days, such as it is. I think, if nothing else, we take away from the fact, at the end of it, this budget, despite its language, is going to have a very real effect on some very vulnerable people and we've got to take that into consideration. Just because they don't call in, doesn't mean they don't care.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have a few words here tonight also. As my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned, we voted for the budget and, as we said, there are not a lot of details in the budget and we will hold government accountable to

follow up on their commitments that they made within the budget.

Before I get into that, Mr. Chair, I just want to recognize the Town of McIvers, and it's a town out in the Bay of Islands, the second-farthest town out on the North Shore. Today is their 50th anniversary of being incorporated and I just have to recognize all the volunteers, the town council, the fire departments, the church groups, the recreation groups and the many other groups in the Town of McIvers that made that town so special and to become so prosperous. It's a great town. They had Chase the Ace and they raised almost a million dollars for water improvements in the town.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: One of the people I dealt with on a regular basis in the town was the mayor for many years and on the council, a person by the name of Warren Blanchard, and he was also on the North Shore development association for a number of years. Warren was a tireless worker for the town and for the whole North Shore. He put a lot of time, energy and effort into making sure that his town is prosperous, and so did all the other councillors, but as the mayor you usually deal with the mayor in the town. Bernice was there for a number of years also. I just have to recognize the work of Warren, the council and all the volunteers in the town that made McIvers such a great town. A very prosperous town, a very tidy town and a lot of great homes are after being built there recently. Water and sewer is after being improved.

So, Mr. Chair, to the town's current mayor, council and all the groups, congratulations on 50 years of being incorporated. To all of them, great working with you. Sometimes we had discussions on how to get things moving forward. We didn't agree on how we should get it forward, but we always found a way to get it forward to the Town of McIvers.

Mr. Chair, I'm just going to have a few more words. I mentioned earlier in one of the speeches that I had and we'll just wait for the next budget just to see – and I'll give you a good example. As I mentioned earlier, there are 16 Cabinet ministers, 16 people in the Cabinet now. Extremely large. I just want to look back in

2016, and it was brought up a couple of times here today, when we decreased the size of the Cabinet and had a much, much smaller Cabinet. I'll just give you an example. I'm saying to government now, for me, personally, you're on notice that I will be watching, I will be noticing. I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt because there's not a lot of information in the budget to vote against it. But to give you the benefit of the doubt.

Just to give you an example. The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs now, just that alone, right now the Building Canada Fund is out of it, engineering is out of it and the MMSB is not in there. It's a much smaller department. I look at Women and Gender Equality also, that was always a division in another part. Labrador Affairs and Indigenous Affairs, again, I'm not saying they're not important departments, but that was put together after the fiasco with Dwight Ball and not getting the capping done in – so that was all put in there, but it was always a division before. So when you start splitting off divisions and making more Cabinet positions and then you turn around and say: Everybody else, you have to tighten your belts, but we don't have to because politically we need to spread it out a bit, carve a bit off here and put it in here. When you look at some of the larger departments – Health, Education, Transportation and Infrastructure and Justice, some of the larger departments, the amount of people that they have there.

I'm not saying the department shouldn't be standing alone; I'm just saying when you increase the Cabinet and you shave bits and pieces off here and there so you can say we have this part done, we have that gender equity done, we have the geography done and we have the representation across the province done and then you're asking the people of this province to tighten their belts, it's a tough one. It's definitely a tough one. I'm not justifying or saying that these departments shouldn't stand alone, there was never a justification; I'm not saying they should or shouldn't, but I'm just explaining what I'm hearing out there in the general public. I've seen it here before. That is an issue that I will keep government accountable for.

Mr. Chair, when you look at the budget and you look at some of the possibilities – as we

mentioned, the school boards. Now, we're going to bring the school boards into core government. We don't know how much we're going to save by bringing the school boards in and we don't know what the services are going to be like. I'm sure if there was an analysis done already, it should be presented in this House of Assembly. I don't know if there was. If there was, it should have been presented in this House of Assembly so we can evaluate it. This is the first step of saying believe me. There are other parts to it; other decisions that were made where they were saying believe me. Mr. Chair, I know I'm speaking for myself: We'll believe you this year.

I have no problem if we're going to make the tough decisions. I heard the Leader of the Opposition state it today and I know my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands said that everybody that's here is willing to help out - everybody. I can tell you, I know the people associate me with the Liberals and some people get upset if I go against this or that, but all my discussions over here with the Opposition and also with the independents - everybody is willing to chip in. Don't be afraid to ask and give ideas. Don't be afraid. I've yet to hear on this side something saying we will not try to help government - I haven't heard it.

I'll go back to a good example, Mr. Chair. I'll look at the Kruger mill. There's one person in this House that him and me were worse than cats and dogs: Jerome Kennedy. We had some good come-tos in this House. We did. We always met behind that screen and worked it out though - we always did.

I remember the Kruger mill and the pension plan. Jerome Kennedy came across the floor and asked me to help out because I had a good rapport with all the unions. I can tell you, Mr. Chair, Jerome Kennedy at the time gave me a lot of personal information and he had my commitment that I would work with him on it. I know we asked the question, the status, we walked over and gave him the questions and said, look, here's what we're going to ask. Thanks, not a problem. I remember a minister said something in Corner Brook, which was different from what Jerome Kennedy and me were working on. Jerome Kennedy walked down to that person and he chewed that person out.

We did get the pension straightened up. My point to the story is don't be afraid to reach out to people that have expertise on this side. There are people - and I'm a prime example of it; I did it on several occasions when I was in Opposition - here with expertise in different parts. Don't be scared. Don't think that it's a sign of weakness if you have to reach out to someone over here who may have a bit more expertise in a field. Be trustworthy on it.

I know when I was in Opposition there were many times that I sat down - and another one was Tom Marshall. The reason why I'm saying this is the collaboration you can see is just not there. I'll use Tom Marshall and we'll go to the hospital in Corner Brook. Tom Marshall, to this credit, was in with the government and they weren't going to do the radiation. Tom Marshall took over as premier. I used to go behind the screen and ask questions in the House of Assembly - Dwight Ball and myself, I give him credit also - and then we'd be shot down. We called Tom Marshall behind the scenes and said here are the facts.

This day when I asked a question in the House of Assembly, Tom Marshall said whatever the answer was to a question. I called him aside. I gave Tom Marshall two names. It was a director of radiation in PEI and a director of radiation in Cape Breton. Tom Marshall, as premier of this province, on a Saturday and a Sunday morning phoned those two people and asked those two people can a radiation unit work? They said, yes, Mr. Premier. They were shocked, first of all. Tom Marshall came back and put \$500,000 in the budget for a study for radiation in Corner Brook. That's how collaboration can work.

I see my time - I'll be back again, but that's my point, how collaboration can work. I'm sure there are people on this side of the House who are willing to collaborate to make this province even better.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I wasn't expecting that. I thought you were going back there, so no problem.

There are so many subjects from listening to people do all their speaking on their districts and remind you of some stuff in your own district. Yesterday, with the Terra Nova news, I had a lot of people in my district that were certainly affected. I wanted to be able to go on record and speak on that as well, because I didn't get an opportunity yesterday in the three hours we had here on debate. I have a lot of constituents that are affected by that. There are some constituents that are rotational workers now and others that are laid off.

I'll use the example of the marine base in Bay Bulls, as a spinoff, I'm going to call it, from the Terra Nova FPSO. I don't know if they got work from that, but I know that I have a relative that works down there, my brother. They're not as busy as they were two years ago. Exactly in the oil industry – I don't know as much as my Member for Terra Nova about it, for sure; he's pretty adept on it. You do notice that chain coming to the wharf and piping and all kinds of stuff. The seismic vessel was in Bay Bulls only last week, so it does affect the area and the people that are there.

They're down on work. They're still working a couple of times a week or once every couple of weeks. If there are ships in, they're there for however long the ship is in, but it certainly does affect. That's just in Bay Bulls. There's another proposed marine terminal in Fermeuse and all the other people that are tied to this unit and the spinoffs. It's very important that hopefully we can get this back on track and get that working. I certainly support those workers and would love to see that come back. Certainly, in our town as well, it's very important for the town.

Another opinion on that, I'm going to say, we're talking about going green. I don't think oil is going away. That's my opinion. We look at all the vehicles that we have here now. Yes, they're going electric, but that's not going to happen in the next five to 10 years. So we still have to keep plugging away, drive this industry more.

Just think about all the little things that people think about. What are you going to do with lawn mowers, Whippersnippers and ATVs? I only

saw it on the news probably a month ago or two months ago talking about electric airplanes. Now, technology is not there yet, and do you trust that? You're talking about airplanes and jet propulsion and all that. It's a long ways away.

We really have to push it, I think. It's more than 50 years away. We'll be gone and our kids and our grandkids will still be with oil, as far as I'm concerned. Now, do we have to change and look at other things? For sure. Absolutely, we have to go green. We made a step for sure when we talk about Muskrat Falls, but it is a step that eventually is going to payoff. Right now it doesn't look that way, but I think it really will.

That's the same question I asked when they did consultations at the hotel when they were doing some stuff. I spoke to one of the ministers at the time and said to him: In 30 or 40 years, will this be good? Yes, this will be a great project at that point in time. Same as when we get back Churchill Falls. Let's keep going on our oil and gas.

The one thing I would say – when it all happened yesterday, it came down pretty quick when we were all going in the House and not getting a chance – well, we got a chance to go out on the step but not to get there to represent our constituents and all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. If this happened in Quebec, I just wonder how it would turn out. That would be my only statement on that. Alberta, they lost their pipeline. You just have to wonder how this would all turn out for us if it was – based on equalization, if this was happening in Quebec I just wonder how this would turn out. That would just be my comment on that and I won't dig any deeper into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I did see in the budget – and I'll touch on a couple of budget things. To the minister that was speaking earlier there, the Justice Minister, when you got up to speak. When I first got here, it was 20 minutes, and I said: How am I going to speak for 20 minutes? How is that going to happen? I remember getting up speaking; I was 11 minutes in, and I finished in 11 minutes. Now, I have notes here

and I don't know if I will get it in for every budget item that's here that you're going to get to speak on. It is funny how things change and you sit down and you listen to what happens.

Also, speaking with our colleague from Bonavista, I said I'll probably touch on it a little bit. He was talking about seals, the fishery and the budget. When I was young, I will say – I'm not very old but when I was young, you'd never see a seal on your beach way. When you go to Chance Cove park right now, you go down to park, you go down to the beach you see seals out bobbing around.

Where else was I to? I was up in Trepassey. There was a post today in Witless Bay; there was a seal up on the beach. That never happened when we were young; you never saw a seal. If you did, they didn't live to get back in the water most times because somebody got them. That's just the way it was. If there was an opportunity there for somebody to have some seal on their own, then they went and done it. With the regulations today, you wouldn't get away with it but that happened.

With the budget, speaking on the fishery and the seals, as the Member for Bonavista has said – when I was young, I wasn't a fisherman by no stretch of the imagination; my dad was and so many people in the community. You stand up on what we call the cliff and they come up over the hill – and I was only 16; I fished for a couple of years with him and never got paid. I was out fishing but not paid. You come up on the hill and the fishermen would gather there on the side of the road, foot up on the guardrail and they'd be talking about no fish today. Next week, there would be all kinds of fish.

I always thought after the fishery closed – and that happened, and I said that before, closed on my birthday on July 2, '92. It was a pretty big devastation. Talking about those seals, we really have to get to that point to be able to cultivate them and make that market something that's viable around here.

To get back to the fishing story – I can remember a time we went out fishing on a Saturday. Anyone who is from rural Newfoundland would know when you go out fishing, on Saturday evenings, the fish plants

would only take 5,000 to 6,000 pounds of fish. You had to go out and haul a trap that would be full and you'd take in 7,000 or 8,000 you knew they were going to take it; they were not going to throw it away. At the time in the community I was in – every community had a fish plant along the Southern Shore.

When we take in the fish on Saturday evening, you'd take so much and you'd go out on Monday morning after a trap had been full – I remember we went out and we hauled a trap that was full, more than 30,000 pounds of fish and the boat couldn't take it. They'd bag it up and they'd go out again that evening and take some more out of it to bring it on a Saturday. They let it all go and, on Monday morning, you'd go out to go haul the trap, there wasn't a fish to be seen. They'd cook fish stew every morning and they had to go to another boat to get a fish to have a fish stew. That's how it changed.

I really think, again going back to it, that the foreign countries coming in here taking our fish and not being accountable for it and we're letting it happen, that's a big issue. I agree with the minister; it's something that we should make a stand on. I know that they did years ago, but they're still there fishing, in my mind. It's something that should be looked at.

Again, in our budget, there wasn't a whole lot mentioned. That was one of the things that when somebody spoke on it I said: Well, I'd like to touch on it. I mean, when I was young, Portuguese boats would come into Bay Bulls and tie up on the wharf and take all the salt fish that we processed in the plant. That's what happened. That's only 35, 40 years ago. It's something that happened on a regular basis and there was a good market for it at the time. Those boats, they didn't just fish offshore; they came right into the wharf and we supplied them with the fish.

With that being said, I really think that's something we should look at as a government and push for. I'm not here to cut up any ministers in no way, shape or form, but that's something that I really think we should have a hard look at.

Again, with the opening of the tourism coming up now in June – I think it's June 23 when it

starts to open. I'm glad to see that in the whole district from Petty Harbour right up to St. Shott's. It's a big district. Tourism is very big, boat tours, Colony of Avalon opened this week. Mistaken Point is going to be open. The Trepassey hotel, all the Airbnbs that are there. All the little places that they can stay, bed and breakfasts. It's very important. It's a big industry in the District of Ferryland, and it's very encouraging to see that come open and hopefully we can get back to normal.

I will touch on the Minister of Justice saying that, you know, the Legal Aid lawyers – my daughter just graduated from Leicester, so she's going to be a Legal Aid lawyer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'm a bit of a softy, so I'm trying to get it out. I think it's the third time I thought about it and I couldn't get it out. Yeah, so she graduated this week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: It's a pretty proud moment.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always an honour. I won't take the full 10 minutes tonight, but I'd be remiss today if I didn't talk about some important events that have happened and that I want to bring to attention to.

In particular, we heard in the news, of course, about the Pride flags being stolen from schools; those are public properties. Of course, education institutions for our young people, our most valued resource in this province, and we saw those flags stolen, trampled on and burned. I want to recognize that and I want to, of course, give my sympathies. But that said, I also want to call it out, Mr. Chair, because if we don't call out bad behaviour when we see it or when we

hear it, in my opinion, it's the same as endorsing it.

I also want to commend the hon. Member for Ferryland. He's a gentleman and he always talks with class when he speaks in this House of Assembly, and there are many people in this House of Assembly who use class when they speak. That's important because we're all here and we're all speaking on behalf of the people who we represent and who elect us to be here in these 40 seats. Again, just look around the House of Assembly and how many are occupied by women, Mr. Chair, we are very well in the minority.

We are discussing the budget and, of course, money bills and the finances pertaining to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's important to take criticism and to debate because that's what it's all about. But, Mr. Chair, what I say, I respect good, respectful debate. That's what counts, that's what people hear and that's what is credible, in my opinion.

At this time I do want to say, again, I am disheartened and disappointed to hear an hon. Member stand in this House tonight – one thing, criticizing a size of a Cabinet is just, and that's fine to do. But the Member who criticized the size of this Cabinet, the increase in the size of the Cabinet, I want to first of all draw your attention; there are more women in this Cabinet. There's an increase in women around that table, at the Cabinet table, from three to five.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: We all know there are not a lot of women in this hon. House and we always ask why we don't get more women in politics. Well, I would say, Mr. Chair, and I would ask all Members, and I challenge you all to ask yourself, do you think it's because we hear criticisms that are geared and targeted at women?

The hon. Member for Humber - Bay of Islands just spoke and criticized the size of Cabinet, which is fine and which is just, but I noticed he didn't criticize the Minister for Transportation and Infrastructure, he didn't criticize the Minister for Justice and Public Safety, but instead he criticized three portfolios, Mr. Chair.

He criticized the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality –

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. Member on a point of order.

E. JOYCE: At no time, Mr. Chair –

AN HON. MEMBER: Standing Order, please.

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: Standing Order.

E. JOYCE: Forty-nine.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Who said that?

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Member to come on with his point of order.

E. JOYCE: Mr. Chair, at no time did I criticize; what I was talking about was the size of the departments. My point was, Mr. Chair, at no time did I criticize, I even said I'm not even criticizing the need but could you add something to it because of the size of the Cabinet to make the Cabinet smaller in these lean times. So get it straight what I said.

CHAIR: There is no point of order, just an honourable disagreement between the Members.

Thank you.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it is fair to criticize and to ask questions because that is the process, that's the beauty of democracy that we have and that we get to live privileges daily in this country and in this province, Mr. Chair. But I am sorry, I just find it hard – it is just very disheartening and sickening to see – fine, criticize the size of the Cabinet but don't just pick on the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs and talk about how it is diminished and its importance is diminished and how there is a woman minister. A woman I am

very proud of, Mr. Chair, my colleague, the first female mayor, I might add, of St. Anthony.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: Also, myself, I am very honoured and privileged to be the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality, which is a standalone portfolio which this Premier saw fit to create. Is anyone in disagreement that the issues facing women, the 2SLGBTQIA+ and marginalized groups don't need more support than what they have? Is anyone disagreeing with that?

Of course, the minister and the Department for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, we just saw the reports come from the leader of our country about the supports that are needed and the results and the call for action for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I just want to draw that point, if you will. No male ministers or departments were criticized, yet the three that are held very important portfolios that were held by women were criticized.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, being the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality I cannot stand by and just accept this kind of debate. Be professional, bring the facts and have class. We should all have class, Mr. Chair.

I didn't plan on speaking tonight, but I'm no better if I just stand by and say nothing. If this is an hon. House, I ask that we all keep in mind that we are here on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's keep our debates professional and classy and with the facts.

That's it for me right now, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not going to get into any debate with the minister, but if you look at my speech in totality I did mention the size of the Cabinet of

Transportation and Infrastructure, the size of his department. I mentioned Education. I mentioned Justice. My whole point was that in a government in lean times, if you're going to expand your Cabinet, carve off places to make extra Cabinet positions and ask people in this province to tighten their belts, the government should show some kind of leadership. That was my point.

Did I ever question any of her ability? I seen the Minister Responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs handle two departments at once – two departments. Mr. Chair, at no time did I question anybody's ability or their gender. I'm just talking about what departments and the size of certain departments compared to other departments, Mr. Chair.

If I can't stand in this House and happen to point out that there are departments in some fields, I'm only doing it, I pointed out six or seven and someone says, well, there are three here that are women ministers. Well, I guess I'm not allowed to speak in this House of Assembly. If anybody out there ever thinks that it's just me who is thinking that this Cabinet up to 16 is large. Why there is some with just – I use Transportation and Infrastructure, I always said it's too big of a division. Education is another one. I always said that. It's just so huge.

If I can't point out the smaller departments, Mr. Chair; I never mentioned the Minister of Service NL because she has a large department. I'm just talking about government in general. If people wants to take that personal that's not my problem, but there is no time when it's a reflection on those departments.

I've seen on many occasions, Mr. Chair, during lean times that there were departments, Mr. Chair, that had two and three different portfolios that are here now.

I

If you want to stand up now and criticize me for bringing something up, and this is the budget time to bring it up, and say to the Premier: If you want to show restraint, make a smaller Cabinet. But if people want to think that I'm just going to back down because I point out a few Cabinet sizes and how it increased so much, Mr. Chair, they're not going to keep me quiet; not going to happen.

If I'm here as an independent and you think that I'm not allowed to speak – and I just want to say to the minister for the Status of Women: You think that I'm to the point where I'm pointing at women. I ask the Minister of Service NL: Do I give you the questions beforehand in this House? I do. I don't try to embarrass anybody. I did it to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. Do I give you the questions beforehand? I do. The reason why, Mr. Chair, is I want answers. I'm not trying to embarrass anybody. I want results; I want answers. I don't know if there's a minister over there that I never gave the question to before, because I want an – the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, I gave her the question.

This idea that I'm just out here now and the minister for the Status of Women thinks she can stand up and say I'm signalling out women. It's absolutely false. I know your personal vendetta against myself and Dale, I know that, but let me tell you something: I will not back down. If I have something to say in this House, I'm going to say it. I say to all my colleagues in this House of Assembly, everybody in this House of Assembly, if I have a concern about a budget, if I'm going to raise something about the budget, I'm raising it.

I say to the Premier: If the budget is going to increase in size and you're asking people to tighten their belts, which we're going to have to do, which I'm going to be a part of and going to be asked to do, it's fair for me to point that out because it is brought to my attention across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Is it right? That's the Premier's decision; that's his prerogative. But is it right for me not to point that out? Is it right that I should sit down now and not point those things out? Mr. Chair, that is where, all of a sudden, now you can't say anything, you have to hand back. I will not do it, Mr. Chair. I will continue to speak as I always found and if I have to raise concerns in this House of Assembly, I will raise concerns in this House of Assembly. I will not and I refuse to – the concerns that are brought to me by the constituents that I represent.

I'll just ask the minister for the Status of Women: I was out to a function this weekend, a great function out in Corner Brook. My family is

Aboriginal and my wife's family is Aboriginal. What if I stood up in this House today and said I was singled out and I was never, ever mentioned by anybody? What if the Member for Labrador Affairs and Indigenous Affairs was sitting at a function and the Premier was there and wouldn't recognize her in front of a bunch of Aboriginals? She's Aboriginal. Should I stand up and say: Oh, I'm being prejudice because I'm Aboriginal, my family is Aboriginal? No, you shouldn't be.

Any time you want to just go out and do that, then jump up and say, oh, I'm Aboriginal and didn't recognize me because my family is Aboriginal or my wife's family is Aboriginal, it's wrong. That's their right if they want to recognize somebody or not. But you can't keep on, because someone raises a point, think that it's so personal and try to get people to stop talking about it. You just can't do that. Anyway, I'll come back to that later, Mr. Chair.

I just want, again, to talk about the district of Humber Arm South, as I did before. In the Town of Humber Arm South they have a tourism plan, \$10 million. Mr. Chair, a \$10-million tourism plan that they have. Hopefully, that's going to improve the whole South Shore of the Bay of Islands. I have to recognize the mayor, Eric Bourgeois, town council and the federal government for helping with the funding for that.

I know a lot of people here don't understand the District of Humber - Bay of Islands; the largest point in Newfoundland and Labrador is Lewis Hills. I should say Newfoundland, not Labrador. Mr. Chair, Lewis Hills has this minimal on top. It's part of the old Appalachian Trail, all along. It's a great tourism area, Mr. Chair. It's a great potential that the people of Humber Arm South are endeavoring on. I'm confident that we'll get the money from the federal government, provincial government and the towns on the South Shore to help out with this here, which will create employment.

Another thing that they say that's going to be great for them is cellphone coverage, to get in the backcountry. A lot of tourists won't go in the areas where if anything happens they can't get hold to 911 or somebody to help them out. That's going to expand a lot of tourism in the Humber - Bay of Islands area. I know in Lark

Harbour, York Harbour, I know the Minister of Environment was a part of it that got the funding for that. That was a big boost for that area and for tourism and for business opportunities also and for tourism opportunities in the area.

There are improvements. There are definitely improvements. Again, our role as MHAs is to try to work with the governments, work with the town councils to improve the situation all throughout our districts. I don't think any of us here should be criticized for that. I know we'll hear it from the government every now and then that when you ask for something, you say: Well, you're saying cut the budget, but you want this. That's normal. That's the political banter back and forth. I have no problem with that whatsoever, Mr. Chair. I expect it and I understand it. That's the banter coming back and forth. I have no problem with that.

But it's our role, all MHAs, not just on the Opposition side or the independents or the Third Party, and also on the government, to lobby government to help out their constituents that they were elected for, Mr. Chair.

I see my time is short. I'll have another opportunity to have another few words later.

Mr. Chair, thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I had a couple of things I wanted to say, and then I'll be done on this bill. I'll pick up on the next bill, I guess.

Anyway, first of all, Mr. Chair, I do want to say – and I don't want to make any heads swell or anything. I meant to say it the last time, actually. But I do want to commend the Leader of the Official Opposition. I've listened to him since he's taken over in that role and I listened to him today in his speech. The approach that he has taken is what was desperately needed in the last session, I will say. I have to give credit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: And he is a good speller.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Mr. Chair, the other thing I just want to pick up on: When I spoke last time, I referenced the fact, in the end, before I ran out of time – that’s the difficulty, of course, when you only have 10 minutes at a time – that I didn’t get a lot of calls. I got basically no calls other than I got a bunch of form emails from special interest groups.

Now, that’s not to diminish it. We have NAPE employees who are obviously worried about their futures, worried about their jobs. I get the – and by the way, I answered every single email. Now, maybe they’re all going back to Jerry Earle and the other ones were all going to Richard Alexander and the other ones were all going to Dean Ingram. I don’t know, but I answered every single one of them. I understand that they have their concerns.

The Employers’ Council obviously are saying we need to grapple with our crippling debt and I do agree with him. But public employees, whether they be teachers or other public employees, are concerned about their well-being and that of their family and what their future will hold and I can’t knock them for that. I have a lot of public sector workers in my district. I just want to make that point.

I would also say that I also understand that my district, from a demographic point of view, is quite different from my colleague in St. John’s Centre. I get that. I don’t have near the amount of low-income – I don’t know if I have any low-income housing. I have some co-op housing, a few Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, but not very much. Most of my district is middle-income, high middle-income working families, generally. I get that.

I also understand and I agree with him on the point that the average citizen is busy with their lives and they’re not going to go and scrutinize the budget and read it from cover to cover and start calling and asking questions. I get that as well. The point I was just trying to make is, as an example, if there is anything that is totally egregious to the public, something that is really a major concern, you’re going to hear about it.

2016 budget comes to mine. My phone, my email, my Facebook; I couldn’t go to Sobeys or Dominion or anywhere in the community. Coffee shop or Tim Hortons, you were hearing it everywhere. I can remember after Bill 29. At that time, I was getting it with both barrels. I guess my point is that if this budget was so egregious and people were so upset about it and so concerned and so worried, I think I would have heard more feedback from constituents up at Tim Hortons, up at Sobeys. I would have had a bunch of emails, a few calls or whatever. I’m just saying I’m not hearing that in my district. Maybe other Members are in their district; I’m not hearing it, not in any major way.

Are there some people who are obviously concerned about MUN and tuition fees? Absolutely. If you work for Nalcor, are you concerned about your future? Of course you are. If you are working for the health care corporation and you’re in one of the back-office positions, are you concerned? Of course you are. If you are an employee of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, are you concerned? Of course you are. If you work at Motor Registration, are you concerned? Of course you are. But we don’t know at this point in time how these things are going to be done, how they’re going to pan out, what decisions are going to be made and how they’re going to be made.

As I said, when the time comes to deal with these issues on an individual basis – because some of these things might not happen this year or next. They might be two or three years out, some of these things, and some of them may never happen. When the time comes – as my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands said – I’ll be there. I’ll be there, I’ll ask questions and I will challenge things, if necessary, and I’ll support things, if necessary.

In terms of this particular budget right now, this particular document right now – and we can use MUN as an example. In the Budget Speech you’re talking about next year with tuition fees, and they’re not going up this year in this budget. It’s not being cut. When we talk about concerns of things that could come in the future, well, in the future I’ll deal with them. If there are things I agree with I’ll support it, and if I don’t, I

won't. But at this point in time, in this particular document, I think it's a reasonable budget.

As a matter of fact, as I said the last time, there are many people who I've spoken to who felt that the budget didn't go far enough. They're not seeing – they said: Jesus, it's another year gone by that we're not tackling the deficit. I've heard that from a lot of people, actually. More so than people being concerned about what's in it. I've heard the other side, more so. Because people realize, people understand the fiscal situation that we're in. How can you not understand it?

We're going to be – it won't be tonight; I guess it will be tomorrow, whatever – debating a bill to borrow another \$1.7 billion on top of the \$15 billion or \$16 billion, or whatever. I think it's probably closer to \$16 billion, I believe, that's our net debt now. We're going to borrow another \$1.7 billion. If we have to wait until 2025-2026 – I believe it is – to get to a surplus, that means for the next two or three budgets we're going to be adding on another billion-plus onto that debt. That's what's going to happen, I would suspect.

The easiest thing to do is the status quo. The easiest thing to do is the status quo. Leave everything alone, kick the can down the road and bury your head in the sand. We can't do it. We can't do it anymore, Mr. Chair. We have to have the courage, collectively, to make some changes. Credit to all my colleagues. I think pretty much everyone has said that they're willing to make some tough decisions. We'll see when the time comes. But they're saying that they are, and I believe them, because we're all concerned.

Now, does that mean Newfoundland and Labrador is going to sink? That there's nothing to look forward to and that we have no future? I don't believe that. I don't believe it for a second. We look at what's happening in Terra Nova. Very concerning, obviously. I'd love for it to be up and running tomorrow. But do I believe that it's going to spell the end of our oil and gas industry if it doesn't work out? I don't believe that. I don't. It's going to be a kick in the teeth, obviously. It's going to be a major issue for those workers who need a job now or who needed a job yesterday. But as far as the future – and we have to look after those people. We

absolutely have to make sure those people are looked after.

But does it mean it's the end of our oil and gas? No. No it doesn't. There is lots of opportunity here. But we need to get ourselves out of the hole from where we're to. We really do. We need that to get to balanced budgets, and once we get to a balanced budget we need that balanced budget legislation. I'll be supporting that as well, because it makes sense. We're paying more on the debt now than we're paying on education. That's where we're at.

As far as this particular budget goes, I'll say again for the final time – I said it numerous times and I'll say it again – I think the budget is a good budget overall. Many people would argue it didn't go far enough, but at least the signals are there that we're going to start moving in the right direction as we move forward. As long as it's done in a fair, reasonable manner that makes sense, and as long as government is open and transparent with all the information – I'm not rubber-stamping it and just trusting you on everything – all the information is available as to how the decision is made, I will support it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I'm seeing no further speakers.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 8)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Schedule in the bill be deleted and the following substituted, and I have copies here for my hon. colleagues.

Mr. Chair, under Head of Expenditure the Head of Municipal and Provincial Affairs should be moved. The numbers remain the same, it's just – I know the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs would love to have \$2 billion, I'm sure, added to her budget, but that will not happen today. We are going by what the Estimates had indicated. There has just been an unfortunate mishap in the listing under the Head of Expenditure and I'm happy to table this Schedule that should be correct.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Order, please!

The House will recess just for a few minutes so we can have a look at the amendment and make sure it's in order.

Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Are the House Leaders ready?

Thank you.

Order, please!

The amendment is in order.

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule, as amended, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, the Schedule, as amended, carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, long title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 8 carried with amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the total contained in the Estimates in the amount of \$8,024,380,400 for the 2021-2022 fiscal year be carried. I further move that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

CHAIR: The motion is that the total combined in the Estimates in the amount of \$8,024,380,400 for the 2021-2022 fiscal year be carried and that the Committee report that they have adopted a resolution and a bill consequent thereto.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, Chair of Committees.

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed the amount of \$8,024,380,400 contained in the Estimates of Supply for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

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

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the amendments be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the amendments 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.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: First reading of the amendments.

On motion, amendments read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the amendments be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the amendments now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: Second reading of the amendments.

On motion, amendments read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 the sum of \$4,565,934,100."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this resolution now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2022 the sum of \$4,565,934,100.”

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a Supply Bill, Bill 8, as amended, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon, the Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service, as amended, Bill 8, the Supply Bill and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce the Supply Bill, Bill 8, as amended, and the bill shall be read a first time?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, “An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service,” carried. (Bill 8)

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 8)

On motion, Bill 8 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the Supply Bill, as amended, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply Bill, as amended, be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 8)

On motion, Bill 8 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the Supply bill, as amended, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Supply bill, as amended, 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.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 8)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act For Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2022 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 8)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper: Motion 5, Bill 17.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider a certain resolution and a bill relating to the raising of loans by the province, Bill 17.

SPEAKER: The motion is that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Trimper): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 17.

Resolution

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,500,000,000."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know the hour is late but today we are introducing the loan bill, which accompanies the main Supply bill. Obviously, both bills are debated at the completion of the main budget, which we did earlier this evening. *Budget 2021* was tabled in the House of Assembly on May 31, 2021. It identified a borrowing requirement of \$1.7 billion for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022. Now, that is comprised of loans moving forward or carrying over as well as the new requirements of the \$8.24 billion.

On April 29, 2021, \$0.2 billion was borrowed under the authority of the *Loan Act, 2020* and authority for the remaining \$1.5 billion needs to

be provided under the *Loan Act, 2021*. Under the authority of the *Loan Act, 2021* and section 38 of the *Financial Administration Act*, we will raise by way of loans not exceeding the amount of \$1.5 billion. The *Loan Act, 2021* will continue in full force and effect until the \$1.5 billion limit is reached or it is replaced by a subsequent loan act.

The last loan act passed by the Legislature was the *Loan Act, 2020*, which provided long-term borrowing authority of up to \$3 billion identified in *Budget 2020*. As of March 31, 2021, the province borrowed \$2.8 billion in long-term borrowings of the \$3 billion.

The *Financial Administration Act* authorizes new borrowings for the purpose of redeeming or retiring debt, making sinking fund contributions or retiring unfunded pension liabilities. The 2021 loan bill is required in order to provide specific long-term borrowing authority to meet the 2021-2022 budgetary requirements. Borrowing activity is necessary in order to allow the province to meet its day-to-day financial commitments.

I thank Members of this House for their deliberations around *Budget 2021*, their comments have been noted and I look forward to the continuing debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Next speaker?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have another opportunity to speak to the budget, I guess, or budget bills. Of course, this one here, Mr. Chair, I referenced last time, although I believe I said \$1.7 billion but I wasn't correct, it is \$1.5 billion. I was close.

This is going to allow us to borrow up to \$1.5 billion. Not saying the government will actually end up borrowing that amount in the end but they can up to that amount. I would equate it to when you go to Costco or something to get gas

and it says authorized payment up to \$150 worth of gas and then you end up getting \$80 and whatever and that's all you needed. It's the same idea; much larger scale but the same concept I guess.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker – or, Mr. Chair, I should say, we are in Committee – it's something that I think we all have to continue to be mindful about. This is up to another \$1.5 billion with a B, on top of over, I believe, \$16 billion in net debt, which we've already accumulated. As I said, if that goes up to 2025 before we hit balance budget, we're going to be close on \$20 billion in the hole by the time we get a balanced budget with that trend, if it continues.

Hopefully, there'll be some good news and a few windfalls along the way that will help keep that number down as much as possible, but the reality of it is, is that we're continuing to head in a direction that we don't want to be heading in.

Again, that also reiterates the point that we all have to be committed here in this Legislature for the next four years, assuming we don't get another election before then. We all have to be committed, I believe, to collaborating, co-operating and finding ways to reduce that deficit. As I've said in the past, I will say again, I'm prepared to go down that road. I'm prepared to go down that road if it's done fairly and it makes sense but – here's a big but – I need the information. I need the information. Not like this whole Terra Nova deal where we're expected to support a particular action or particular position, we don't have the details.

Now, when it comes to this scenario, unlike the Terra Nova deal, of course – the Terra Nova deal you're dealing with private business, there's commercial sensitivity and so on. When we're talking about agencies, boards, commissions and core government departments, the big difference is, I would suggest, that everything we're talking about here is publicly owned infrastructure, public programs all paid for by taxpayers' dollars.

There should be no reason to my mind – no reason whatsoever – why when government goes down the road on reimagining and reshaping government, absolutely no reason, no

excuse not to share each and every detail with Members on this side of the House. No reason. As long as you're prepared to share all those details, all that information and truly collaborate, then as one Member I'm willing to go down that road with you. I know I'm not alone, but I'm just speaking for myself at this point in time. I'm willing to go down that road.

But if the plan is that we're just going to sort of do our thing in the Cabinet room behind closed doors and make all these decisions and just come in here, in this House of Assembly, and say we need you to support it because this is the right thing to do, this is what we've decided, then – you'll still do it because you have a majority. That's the reality. Unfortunately, and I say unfortunately, because the downside now of a majority government – it was better before, as far as I'm concerned, with the minority. At least you had to find at least one Member on this side that agreed with you. If you couldn't find one Member that agreed with you, probably what you were doing wasn't a good decision to begin with, if everybody disagreed with you.

Now, of course, in a majority situation you're going to do what you want anyway, which is unfortunate. It's sad. Nonetheless, whether you can do what you want or not, I'll die on the hill with you on certain things, if necessary. I'm prepared to do it, to do what's right. But if you're not going to share information, you're just going to come in here and just throw stuff at us and say here's what we're doing, get on board – ain't happening. I don't care. It's just not happening. It's not going to happen. I just say that and I put that there just for the record.

Now, as this is a money bill, we can talk about whatever we want. Something I haven't talked about for a while, but I said I was going to keep bringing this up – and I am going to keep bringing it up – is the recent provincial election. I want to bring that up again. I don't want us to forget about it, I don't want it to get lost because what happened was wrong. I don't care what anybody tells me. You can come up with any rationalization, any excuse, whatever, it was wrong.

I won, so at the end of the day I could just simply say nothing about it and say: Hey, it was great. I won handily. It was perfect; it was all

fair and square. I'm sitting here. We could all say that. There's nothing for me to gain by bringing this up. Not a thing. Nothing for me to gain and nothing for me to lose, other than the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

Now, we all know – I could repeat all the things that happened during the election. We could talk about the thousands of people who did not get to vote, a lot of them who are seniors and people who voted their entire lives, always voted, that were denied that opportunity. We can talk about people who were special people that got to actually vote in person on the last day; went down to Elections NL, apparently, and voted there in the parking lot. How that could happen?

We can talk about certain people that were allowed to vote over the telephone. We can talk about the phone lines that were down more than they were up. We can talk about the computer system that crashed I don't know how many times, including the deadline for voting online and people who didn't get to vote because of that. We can talk about the more special people that actually had the Chief Electoral Officer hand-delivering ballots to their house. Can you imagine?

We can talk about the scrutineering process. Anyone who has been involved with an election before, you get to scrutinize every single ballot. I was given the option: Okay, you can go online and we'll show you. I go online and I can see a table. I can see a bunch of people off in the distance doing something. They could have been having a game of Rummoli for all I know. I don't know what they were doing. A bunch of people sat around a table; you're getting to scrutinize.

Then, at the end, they said: Well, these are the rejected ballots that we determined are rejected. Any objections? What about the ones that you determined shouldn't be rejected? Should I be able to see those? How do I know you counted them right? Normally, they put them in piles of 10 or whatever; they make a bunch of piles. How do I know that my ballots never went over here when they should have been over here, and my opponents went there when they should have went there? How do I know they were counted properly? How do I know they were recorded

properly? That's what happens with scrutineering. That's the whole purpose of scrutinizing an election. None of that happened.

I mean we can go on and on and on about the things that happened, but we all know that. The big piece for me – I know there are court cases going ahead and that's their right. We know there was one challenge that was put in for a recount. That was turned down. There are a couple of challenges going before the courts on – controverted election, I believe, is the terminology they used. Fair enough.

The part I want to go back to, which I've gone to before and my colleague has – and I have no axe to grind. I've said it before and I'll say it again: I have no axe to grind with the Chief Electoral Officer. He's done nothing to me. Not a thing. I have had no interactions with him, really, other than when you send in your annual conflict of interest statement or whatever. There is never anything questioned on that. Thankfully, I've never been under investigation. I hope I never am.

I've had no real interaction with him. I don't know him. I'm not his enemy; I have nothing against the man, but he's an Officer of this House of Assembly. He was appointed by this House of Assembly. He's our employee. We are his employer. He's answerable to us. It is beyond me why we don't bring this person into this House and have the ability to question him or even have a Committee – if we don't want to bring him into the House, at least have a Committee. Use the House of Assembly Management Commission as an example, and bring him in and question him on all these irregularities and all these decisions that were made. Let him justify why he made them.

He even said himself to the national media that he wasn't allowed to take votes over the phone. He said I'd be – what was it? My head would be spinning or something if I did that and then he did it anyway. I have to ask if this was the Auditor General or the Citizens' Rep or something and they were doing things that were improper and so on, would we'd just say, oh well, that's all you can do, b'y? That's all you can do. Would we?

I mean, that's the precedent we've set. We've set the precedent that basically says an Officer of this House can make very questionable decisions, breaches of the act – admitted to breaches of the act – and we're going to pretend that it didn't happen. We're going to change the legislation to make it better for next time. It doesn't matter what the legislation is. We already have a piece of legislation. It is called the *Elections Act, 1991*. He breached that, admitted it and we're going to forget about it and pretend it didn't happen. I just cannot understand for the life of me why we would do that. It makes no sense. He needs to answer to it.

I'm not prejudging the outcome. Maybe he has a total explanation for everything. Maybe this House of Assembly will say: Well, he made a couple of minor errors in judgment, but not a big deal. He did the best he could under the circumstance and we're satisfied with that. Maybe that will be the outcome. I don't know. I don't even know if some of the things that are out there are actually true, to be honest with you. A lot of it is hearsay. Some of it is true, for sure. I have experienced a lot of it. Some of the things out there are hearsay, but we need to get to the bottom of it.

The most fundamental right we have in a democracy is the right to vote. That's it. That is your fundamental right. If we can't get that right, everything else after that is secondary. People need to have confidence. They have to have confidence in the electoral system. They need to have confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer.

We also have to remember that the Chief Electoral Officer holds a dual role. He is also the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. He's the guy that's going to be investigating you and me if there is a complaint on something. We need to ensure that he is impartial, that he's fair, that he's competent and that he's non-political. This is impacting everybody in this House. If he can't carry out an election properly, can he carry out the other functions properly? Can we trust him to? I don't know. I'm asking the question.

Again, it is not about him, there is nothing personal here. It is about what happened and it is about having integrity in that position. Someone that we can trust and someone we can have

confidence in. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador do not have confidence, at this point in time, in that office. I don't have confidence. I don't. I have no confidence. We know what would happen if this wasn't – if this was in private industry, how long do you think this would last before it was dealt with? Immediate. You wouldn't stand for it. It's not good enough for here either.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Next speaker, the hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's almost worth speaking to take off the mask for a little while, I have to say.

This bill, Bill 17, is extremely important and I don't want to take away the gravity of what we're doing because it is extremely important. That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1.5 billion. A billion with a B, as my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands said.

That is a significant amount of money. I can't even fathom how much money that is. I guess I want to assure the province that I have confidence in our prudent financial decision-making and we will only use what is necessary. In my department, in Digital Government and Service NL, we are actively finding ways to save more. Anything that's nice to have we're not doing. We're only doing the core things, so I hope to be able to save more than what the Estimates are showing.

Then that's kind of a challenge, year after year. I know that as we hopefully reduce the amount we borrow over the next so many years, that target is going to increase the amount of money that we each have to save. In my past life, in the private sector, saving money and doing more with less was a core part of what my job was. It's very important to me and that's giving me an

exercise that I look forward to doing with my department and with my colleagues over the next few years.

Shifting, I guess, because we can talk about our districts and the budget. I'd like to highlight some things from the budget as well as my district and my department. I'd like to recognize this week is Public Service Week. This morning I handed out three certificates, one of 30 years and two of 20 years, to long-serving public servants in Digital Government and Service NL. I'd like to thank them and the entire public service for their work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'd also like to recognize and thank the staff of the Queen's Printer. I know that during budget time, it's particularly busy for them. They are up all night printing Budget Speeches and budget documents. I just wanted to thank them as well. I know the task that they expect, but they are here late in the night when everyone else goes home the night before, making sure that we all have our very important budget documents. I just want a shout-out to the Queen's Printer.

I just want to touch on some of the things in the budget that are kind of smaller that I just want to highlight that are very important to people in my district. The first one: I know the minister obviously mentioned all these in her Budget Speech, but the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement and that's kind of closer to my world at the moment, obviously, with a baby at home. The amount that low-income mothers are getting per month is increasing from \$60 to \$100 a month for when they're pregnant and up until their child is one so that they can hopefully afford more healthy food.

I'm not a nutritionist or a health expert, but I understand that, obviously, the quality of food that the mother eats when she's pregnant and also then for the first year of the baby's life while she's breastfeeding, if she's luckily or able to do so and chooses to do so, it significantly impacts the health of the child. I think that's a very important initiative and I'm very pleased that we're able to increase that amount from \$60

to \$100 a month in the budget this year, Mr. Chair.

The other item I think that is worth noting – I don't think it was announced this year, but it's a continuation of something that was announced last year – was the low-income bus pass. In Mount Scio we have a lot of residents on income support. They are in a range of different circumstances. I'm sure none of them would choose to be in that situation. I think the bus pass for them can go a long way for those residents, whether it's helping them get to interviews or helping them travel to shop and get specials in different stores where they wouldn't normally be able to walk, and they can travel with their children on the bus.

I think that that is a great initiative that I know is being funded again through this budget. It's not a new announcement, but I'm very pleased that that's still there. I've worked very hard with my city counterparts on that when the program was announced, so I'm very pleased that we're still supporting that and it's very important to me in Mount Scio.

The other one that I'll mention is the Accessible Vehicle Program. I've been recently helping constituents who have accessibility needs and I guess I've been very fortunate to have been quite sheltered in my life and I haven't had the same exposure to the challenges that some of my constituents face. I think programs like this where we help residents with tax relief and grants so that they can buy accessible vehicles for their families and the Inclusion Grants program, I think those are incredibly important. I don't know how some of my constituents do it on a day-to-day basis. I would certainly support more of those programs, so thank you, Mr. Chair.

The other one I'd like to touch on is the \$25-a-day child care, which as a mother of an eight-month-old child who will hopefully take advantage – we're on lots and lots of wait-lists, which I know is a popular thing amongst new parents to put your child, as soon as they're born, on all the wait-lists for child care. Hopefully we'll get a space, but you don't know. Actually this morning I met with some daycare operators in my district, and they were highlighting some of their concerns and also

some recommendations. I look forward to discussing more about some of the challenges that the daycare operators have with the Department of Education. But it's very important, and I think the benefit of the \$25-a-day child care is felt and will be felt by residents across the province. So it's incredibly important.

Lastly, I thought I'd give an update on the breastfeeding journey, which I know for my colleagues I went into before. Well, I know we represent people in our district and I'm very proud to represent the economic powerhouse of Mount Scio, but I'm also here representing women, we're here representing everyone and I'm also here representing the breastfeeding women in Newfoundland and Labrador. In our Facebook group there are 6,900 active breastfeeding women in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is twice the population of Lewisporte. So there are a lot of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: No, it is. Yeah.

There are a lot of breastfeeding women in Newfoundland and Labrador and so I just wanted to give them –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: No, it's just for scale.

Now, there could be more. That's just the ones in our Facebook group, which is very helpful and I have to recommend – all the tips and things I've learned from that Facebook group. When I talked to my mother and my mother-in-law, all the challenges they had that they would've never – obstacles they would've never overcome if it wasn't for the support of those virtual communities, especially through COVID.

It's going well. I'm not able to keep up with my son's demands at the moment, so we do have some formula as well, which I know is a challenge that many breastfeeding moms go through. He probably has 90 per cent breast milk and 10 per cent formula. But that's okay, I'm trying my best. It does mean pumping all day and all night, which is a thing. Someone on my

team, when we're here late, drops my breast milk off on their way home to my husband, because we don't have a stash anymore. We're kind of using it as we pump it. Angelica or someone on my team drops my breast milk home when we're staying late here so that he can eat that for supper. Otherwise he will eat formula and that would be fine. So it's logistically a new challenge. I'm not renting a pump anymore, I've invested in a different pump and that's going well. It's battery operated and I can pump in the car; not when you're driving of course.

I've read a lot of feminist things and I know from a woman's perspective women spend more time getting ready in the morning. You think about the pink tax and all that kind of stuff. Well, the breastfeeding tax is even higher, I assure you. When I originally wrote my notes it was a Wednesday morning, I think. So tomorrow morning when we get here at 10:30 I will have breastfeed once and pumped twice, and I will have washed all my pumping equipment twice and each pumping session is, like, 15 to 20 minutes and then washing it. I will have spent probably an hour and a half feeding and pumping and washing the pumping equipment before we get here at 10:30 in the morning, in addition to my MHA and minister job, which I'm very happy to do because all that is for the benefit of my son.

Just to, I guess, shine a light on some of the things that a lot of women in our province are doing on a day-to-day basis. I guess I'm trying to raise awareness of some of the complexities of breastfeeding, which I know is very important for residents of the province and for their children. I recently noticed that a breast pump is not a tax-deductible medical device from the federal government, so I plan on writing the federal minister to recommend that they make breast pump expenses taxable as medical devices because they are not. I was very excited, I had all my receipts ready, I went to do my taxes and I was, like, what? Anyway, that's an opportunity and maybe I can impact some change there.

Overall, I'm very pleased with the budget, but the loan is very serious and it's very important that we take that job very seriously.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm not going to take too long tonight. I have 10 minutes; I don't know if I'll use them all. To me, despite the late hour and the fact that it has been a long day, this particular bill highlights the real problem we have as a province. The fact that we're here talking about having to borrow \$1.7 billion just to meet our needs for the province. It's a pretty serious amount. My colleague from Bonavista pointed out in real language, we're here talking about billions and billions of dollars and for a lot of people in their homes who may be watching or just listening they have no concept of that. It's \$142 million a month, that's what we're talking about borrowing. Now, that's a pretty large amount.

I think a couple of the key words the minister said earlier in her speech are: up to and if needed. Clearly those are important words because at the end of the day the objective, obviously, is to try to borrow as little as possible. Some of that is within our control and some of it is not. I mean, our budget is based on a number of projections around oil, our offshore royalties and our taxation revenue. Then, of course, there are expenses that we would normally budget for and then there may be some that are coming up and that are unforeseen. We do have contingency monies in the budget in different places. There might be some for certain parts of my district – I won't say which. I just want to throw that out there. In all seriousness, it is a huge amount of money. I look at the numbers and I recognize, though, that our projected deficit for this fiscal year is \$826 million. If we keep on target or do better, then potentially we have an opportunity to borrow a lot less.

I noticed today when I was reading an article from Goldman Sachs where they have actually raised their projections for Brent crude now to say that they're looking to forecast – it's up to

\$75 US for the second quarter of 2021 and up to \$80 US for the third quarter of 2021. If those projections hold true, it would have a significant difference in our budget if we are able to maintain the same production. The minister alluded to in her speech there that every \$1 US a barrel, I think, works out to about \$19 million in royalties. That's a significant amount of money that could come into the government should those oil prices move up.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

T. WAKEHAM: Yeah, and the exchange rate would help it even.

I mean, those are some of the factors and I recognize that nobody wants to borrow \$1.7 billion if we don't have to. We hope that the projections again – there are obviously concerns around – we've talked about the Terra Nova and what the impact of that may or may not be depending on what happens with that project. I think we're here this evening and I certainly haven't heard anything. Sometimes no news is good news, I guess, in the sense that the talks must be continuing amongst the partners. We hope they're able to work out a solution on that because there are a lot of people in the province, of course, that depend on that. Again, that impacts our taxation. If all of a sudden 400 or 500 people who currently work on that particular area are thrown out of employment, then it certainly has a significant impact on our economy, our taxes and the spending in the province.

All of those things are all part of a budget and, as I said, it's something that we really have to get a handle on. I truly hope that, at the end of the day, this time next year when we're sitting here we'll be talking about not having to borrow \$1.5 million because we will still have a significant amount of money left over from what we are about to pass today.

I look forward to continuing to ask questions and to continue to probe and to get the answers and to see where this budget takes us at the end of the day.

With that, I will conclude.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to have a few words about the budget and just a few issues. I'll just let the people who are listening a bit know that this is a money bill and we can talk about most anything in government, any issues that we have.

One of the issues I'm going to speak about is the election. I agree with my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands: Why are we not doing something? Why are we not looking at some kind of investigation into the election? It was a catastrophe. Right or wrong, it was a catastrophe.

Mr. Chair, I said it before and I say it again, when you had senior citizens coming to your door trying to get a photocopy of their ID so they could vote, when you had people going up a camera with an extension to take a picture of someone's driver's licence, there's something wrong. When you get the Commissioner saying I can't take ballots over the phone or I'd be in court so fast my head would spin, then take ballots, there's something wrong. I use this for an example: When you have one party with a number to call in two or three days before anyone else got the number to call in, there's something wrong.

When you lose 140, 150 ballot applications faxed in, can't find them until you're threatened and give his personal phone number – I actually got threats from people saying: Are you sure you sent them in? I don't think you did. And you had to go show them to the people and then give the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, his number to the office – finally they found them – there's something wrong. I know a lot of seniors – a lot of them women, a lot of women seniors.

I look forward to the minister for Status of Women now asking for an investigation, because there were a lot of women who couldn't get the ballots, a lot of women who lost ballots, a lot of women who couldn't even get an application because they don't have a computer. Let's just see if the minister for the Status of

Women now, if you're true to your virtues, stands up and asks for an investigation. Because a lot of people, Mr. Chair, that were affected were elderly people who never had access to a computer.

The minister for Status of Women, you just stood up and you're saying you're fighting for women's rights. I agree with you. Here's your opportunity. You should demand an investigation. Because I can assure you that if you had the number of women that knocked on my door that we had to go to their house because they never had access to it, you would be outraged. Let's see if you're going to stand up and be outraged. If not, you're letting the women of this province down.

I'll say that to the minister and I'll stand with you. I'll stand with you if you want to call for an investigation because as we know, 52 per cent of the population are women. Statistics show that if there were a certain number that were disenfranchised, 52 per cent of them were going to be women. I say to the minister of Status of Women, I'm with you. Let's get the investigation going to find out why seniors who couldn't get their ballots or seniors who never had access to a computer, never had access to a phone to download a picture. Let's find out why. I'll stand with you.

I trust tonight now that you're going to stand up and put a motion on this floor that we do an investigation. I can guarantee you that I'll be the first one. You can even put me down to second that motion because if you've seen the anguish on their faces, if you'd seen the grief on their faces, men and women, if you had seen the grief and anguish on their face, Mr. Chair, you would be in my – and I'm sure you did, too. I'm sure we all did.

This is not just my issue; it is not the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands's issue. I'm sure every member in this district seen that and was a part of that, I'm sure. It is not just my issue. I just happened to bring it up because I made a commitment that I would bring it up. I think every Member in this House should be outraged. Every Member should be outraged. When you have Aboriginals who never even had their ballots in their native language, there is something wrong. How can anybody here in this

democracy say that the election was run properly? Anybody?

That is why we need the investigation; that is why we need to hold the Commissioner for Legislative Standards accountable and let him come in and explain to the House of Assembly. It is our duty, if the explanations come in and they say, okay, here is why and we say, oh jeez, we didn't know all that – there are a lot of questions we can ask – it is our role then to go out and explain it to the general public and also then make the improvements to the election committee to make sure it doesn't happen again. That is our role. Until we get the facts of what happened, how can we explain to the people who were disenfranchised?

And if you go on statistics, 52 per cent of the people who were disenfranchised were women. Should they be disenfranchised? Should men be disenfranchised? Of course not. This is what I'm saying. This is not a male, female, but I look forward to the minister for the Status of Women to stand up and put a motion in this House tonight. I'll second that motion right away, Mr. Chair.

I'll be back to the election again sometime, but I just want to speak about – there's a wellness centre in Placentia. I know I was speaking to the minister. This wellness centre has been on the go four to five years. This is a bit of a personal issue with me because if people can remember this so-called bullying and harassment, the big scandal that rocked this House of Assembly, one of the allegations that I had to defend myself on is that the \$30 million from Vale – I went and got federal funding and spent it all on the West Coast. I had to go defend that. I actually had to send in documentation to defend \$30 million which we never even had.

I have to give the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board credit. She wrote a letter saying we never even got the money to put in with the investigation. Never even had the money. But I had to go. I was accused of slowing that down, spending the money and it's still not done.

The first issue I think now is resolved. I was speaking to the minister that it may be in a flood plain, so they built it high enough to mitigate

that. Plus, also we know about the mental health facility. The second thing now is that when they put it out for RFP, it came back a bit higher than usual. I know the minister is dealing with the town council on that, trying to work that out.

This is a great facility for the whole area. The town can't afford the funding for it. The one in Happy Valley-Goose Bay is finished. That one hasn't even started. I urge the minister. I know the minister met with the mayor or the town council; I'm not sure which. I know the minister is working on it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Both? Okay, thank you.

I ask the minister and the government to work on that because this Town of Placentia, who put that in as a priority, has been working on this for a number of years. I know Jamie down there with the Lions Club. They raised almost \$650,000. A local Lions Club raised \$650,000 to go towards it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Here today, we're talking about volunteerism and talking about the private sector and the public sector: This group did that down there. Jamie Neville, who headed up the Lions Club, raised that amount of money, yet we have nothing to show for it.

I'm not being critical of anybody here. It's us, as the Legislature, and, me, who has a personal flavour to that. We have to try to find a way for that. I know the minister is working with it. I'll say to the minister now: If you need any extra details on that, I'll help wherever I can to get that facility moving. I'll work with you because I know the town is anxiously trying to get the RFP awarded. It's getting soon the steel is going to go up and they may not have the funds to do it, Mr. Chair.

I thank the minister for the conversations on that. I thank him for meeting with the town council, but let's get this moving. Let's sit down and say that this is something that's been on the go for a number of years. It's something that the voluntary group – Jamie Neville and his group, Mayor Bernie Power and others – have worked

so hard to do. It's something that has been delayed long enough. It's also a connection to their arena, so it would be a wellness centre, not just a swimming pool for the area.

I urge the minister to keep working hard on this, which he is, and working with the town council. Anything I can do or any history I can put on that, Mr. Minister, I'll be more than welcome to pass that on.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll be brief. I just want to speak to this for a bit.

In the budget, like I said, we talked about the investments in cellular service and all that. My biggest question I always have with it – and the Minister of Industry has heard my gripes before about it – when we go out and we give this money to any of the big three telecoms, the large national telecoms, they're usually backed by fed money, provincial money and stuff like that. Then, they bring in their own.

I went and got a cellphone for my daughter. I accidentally went in on the site with the company and that; it thought I was in Nova Scotia. I said, oh, that's a good plan. That's pretty cheap from what I thought I was used to. It told me I couldn't get it because I put in my address and it said, oh no, you're Newfoundland and Labrador.

I put in the thing. It was more expensive per month because of here. I stopped and thought for a second and I go aren't we, as a province, investing in cellphone infrastructure for these large telecoms? Aren't we putting money down for these? Yet they still take the time to gouge us. It's unreal. I went and got a cellphone for my daughter's birthday. That's what I went and got her, a cellphone. I just look at the price of adding up the bill. We're paying more here in this province than we are in our neighbouring provinces for coverage that we're investing in as a province. We're putting public money, we're putting our taxpayers' money, into this

infrastructure and we're still being extremely ripped off, no doubt about it.

I stop and think and then go so if someone wants to get a cellphone, a low-income person or a senior or anything like that, the amount of money a month that these people are paying for these services now that are required for day-to-day life – it's almost a necessity now of some sorts. Most people now are not really fixed in place and landlines are a thing for offices and that's about it now; you don't see many in a home.

We're investing in this infrastructure as a province, but we still, at the end of the day, are paying the same price as if these large companies are billing us. I always try to think that if we're going to invest money into this infrastructure, there have to be conditions placed on these companies to bring down the cost, to rein it in. It's outrageous. We're expecting people like low-income people, seniors and stuff, to pay these massive prices when they're on fixed incomes. It's unreal.

I think if we're looking at the budget and we're looking at this, these things need to be taken into serious consideration; that we try to do everything in our power to bring down costs of broadband, bring down the costs of cellphones, bring down the cost of this. At the end of the day, the taxpayers' money is going to go back into some of these investments back into these communities for these companies. Yet they're not turning around, looking at us and going, we'll bring down the cost, we'll bring down this to help the residents of the province.

It's something that I just can't fathom. I can't get my head around why we're allowing this. Yeah, I know telecom is a federal thing, but we should be making a lot of noise about how much more we pay in this province for these companies. We're paying more here than Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec – we're paying significantly more for telecom in this province. Then we turn around and we have to pay the most. It's unreal. These large companies – we're giving them taxpayers' money to do the upgrades to their infrastructure and they turn around and charge the residents exorbitant amounts of money.

It needs to be looked at. It's something that I have a serious problem with and it's outrageous. These small communities are going to get these towers, yes. Great, wonderful, should've been done a long time ago, but when they have to go and buy their first cellphone and get their first phone bill, they're going to realize very quickly that they're being gouged. We really need to take a serious, serious look at when we invest public money into these telecoms, about what they're charging back to the residents.

That's my gripe for this. I know that we're in last of it so I will leave it there.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Any further speakers to Bill 17?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak again. This will be my last time for this evening. I know everyone is going to be disappointed.

Mr. Chair, I normally don't get into little issues, so to speak, in the district, because I'm usually pretty focused on the bigger provincial issues. I just wanted to take this opportunity just for a number of little quick points and kudos I wanted to throw out, in my district, in my community.

First of all, Mr. Chair, I just want to acknowledge the great work of Meghan Rubia in Mount Pearl. She's been involved with the Mount Pearl Sports Alliance in the office for a number of years, along with Mike Bugden. Meghan is going to be moving on to a new opportunity but we're all certainly going to miss her. She's definitely been very much the face of the Mount Pearl Sports Alliance. She's done tremendous work for sport in Mount Pearl. I want to wish her all the best and thank her for all that she did in the district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Mr. Chair, I also want to mention – the next one is Seniors of Distinction. The Seniors of Distinction Awards are coming out; they're taking nominations up until June 28, I do believe. We certainly have tremendous seniors in our district who have done yeoman service in many aspects of life; certainly, the Mount Pearl Seniors' Independence Group is one that comes to mind. Whether it be collectively or whether it be on an individual basis, we have a number of great contributors. I'm certainly encouraging the citizens of Mount Pearl, and Southlands as well, to consider nominating a worthy individual in their district.

Mr. Senior – I'm not sure if you are. That probably is true.

Mr. Chair, I also wanted to highlight that we did have an incident in Mount Pearl and Paradise only a couple of days ago. It was a very shocking event as it related to somebody took down the pride flag at the school in Mount Pearl and also one in Paradise and they actually burned the flag. That was a terrible situation, obviously, nobody in this House of Assembly would ever support that and I know that people in my community don't support that.

I do want to throw kudos out to the City of Mount Pearl in reacting to that, because our city council had been quite vocal publicly about that issue and the fact that it is not something that we tolerate in our community and it has been condemned. In addition to that, I have to say the city made sure the pride flag is back up in the school of course.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Absolutely. But also the city has taken a step further with the pride flag, outside city hall now in the nighttime they have all the different coloured lights shining on the building so it kind of represents the pride flag in lights. They have painted up the crosswalks with the pride colours. They have done picnic tables. They even got logos now that are on the city vehicles; pride logos attached to all the city – I don't know if they're on all of them but certainly a number of the city vehicles as well.

I have to say that I have to give credit to the city that they have taken this issue very seriously and

they've done everything that they can do to continue to send the message that we have a very inclusive community and we will absolutely not tolerate any kind of discrimination or hate. That's all that act was.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Mr. Chair, next on the list here, I wanted to throw out a bouquet to 10-year-old Gavin Mulroney of Southlands. Gavin, for the last few years – it's just an initiative that he took on his own. He has a little lemonade stand out in front of his house on Palm Drive in Southlands. Unfortunately, I never got there yesterday, I was there last year. He had his lemonade stand, he was just selling it for 50 cents a glass, he raised \$124 – 10 years old and all the money he raised goes to homelessness.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: I think that is worth recognizing for sure.

Another very good news story I wanted to mention, I was asked to – I have shared it on social media but I will bring it up as well now. This is technically not in my district, I think it's in the Mount Scio District, I could be wrong. It's right on sort of the border or close to border. Anyway, Elim Pentecostal church, this Saturday – they asked me to sort of share this, they contacted me – from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. they are – normally you see like a flea market where you're selling household items and gently used clothing and so on. They're not selling it as a flea market. They're giving it all away for any families or anyone who's in need that want items. Kudos to the congregation at Elim Pentecostal church for taking that initiative. That will be Saturday from 10 to 1.

I also wanted to mention, of course, this is Public Service Week. I'm sure we all appreciate in this House of Assembly, we know all the hard work that our public servants do. Sometimes they get a bad name, unfortunately, in the public. There is this perception sometimes that you see. I'm sure like any organization or any occupation there's always going to be those that outperform and there are going to be those who underperform. That's natural everywhere.

I have to say in my experience of dealing with the public service here at the Confederation Building and so on or other government departments, by and large, has been very, very positive. I know a lot of work goes into – even the people who make this House of Assembly function, and certainly the budgetary process as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

It's getting a little bit loud for the speaker.

Thank you.

P. LANE: I'd like to throw out a bouquet to all of our public servants this week and let them know that we all do appreciate the work that they do.

I also want to throw a bouquet out to the minister responsible for natural resources.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: Yeah, I own a flower shop here.

I do want to throw a little bouquet out to him. I did read with great interest and I was pleased to read in a news release, it was today or yesterday, but anyway, he indicated that he would be taking action on Nalcor, on these ridiculous corporate bonuses and so on. It seems that he's done just that; trying to reign in Nalcor, trying to get things under control, trying to save some of the taxpayers' money and bring it in line with other public entities and so on.

The man said he was going to do it and he did it. I have to give credit where credit is due. I thank him for keeping his word in that regard.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: Absolutely.

Mr. Chair, the final one I have here – and I did do a Member Statement on this I think it was last week, but I do want to make mention and congratulations to Mr. Herb Jenkins in my district. Herb is a long-time community volunteer, but he's also an amazing soccer

player. He was one of the better soccer players in Newfoundland. He was one of two – I think he was even better than the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands at soccer. He's in the Mount Pearl Soccer Hall of Fame; he's in the Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Hall of Fame. He was one of two of the first Newfoundlanders to have national certification in coaching and so on. He brought that expertise back here to Newfoundland and he trained an awful lot of individuals.

While soccer is one of the big things he's known for, the reality of it is, is that over the years pretty much anything that's been on the go in Mount Pearl, Herb has been involved and he's made a tremendous contribution.

Just last week, he was honoured by Mount Pearl Soccer being made an honorary lifetime member. I think he's the third – I'm not sure if it was the third or the fifth, but there's only a small group of them –

L. STOYLES: Five.

P. LANE: Five. My colleague for Mount Pearl North says five. So he's the fifth. I want to congratulate Herb.

With that said, I'm out of time. Thank you, Mr. Chair, I'm done for the night.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you very much.

Any further speakers to Bill 17?

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province." (Bill 17)

CLERK: Clause 1.

Carried.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

On motion, long title carried.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 17 carried without amendment?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

Carried.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

On motion, clause 1 carried.

Carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 6 inclusive.

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

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 6 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill –

On motion, clauses 2 through 6 carried.

CHAIR: Seventeen.

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

S. CROCKER: Seventeen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

CHAIR: It's okay.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 17.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

On motion, enacting clause carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CLERK: An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

The motion is carried.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of Committees.

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

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

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,500,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$1,500,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province, Bill 17, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province, Bill 17, 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.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province," carried. (Bill 17)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 17)

On motion, Bill 17 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Anybody that knows me knows it is well past my bedtime.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that Bill 17 be now read a second time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 17)

On motion, Bill 17 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that Bill 17 be now read a third time.

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.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The 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 Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: The motion is 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.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m.
tomorrow.

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