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*Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Osborne):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Prior to moving to the Orders of the Day and Members' Statements, I'd like to welcome representatives from the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers in the gallery today marking World Social Work Day and National Social Work Week. In our galleries we have Lisa Crockwell, executive director and registrar; Glenda Webber, president-elect; Niki Legge, board of directors; and Annette Johns, associate director of policy and practice.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

#### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we have Members' Statements for the District of Torngat Mountains; the District of Ferryland; Mount Pearl North; Bonavista; Mount Pearl – Southlands; and St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate Team 22, Maine Racing on winning Cain's Quest 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize this event that took place last week in all districts in the Labrador portion of our great province. Cain's Quest is a pan-Labrador snowmobile race that runs 3,500 kilometres over ungroomed trails and some of the most unforgiving terrain in the Land God gave to Cain. In a land as rugged as Labrador, Mother Nature took its toll on machinery, as well as mind, body and soul.

The racers endured the most extreme conditions and battled fatigue and frostbite as they competed for top place.

Many people across the province and around the world, including myself, followed the racers online as they travelled endlessly at all hours across the Big Land. The race began in Labrador

City, and the course ran east towards Rigolet, then North to Nain, and ended up on the South Coast and back to Lab West.

It's important that we recognize the organizers as well as the countless volunteers that put so much time and effort into Cain's Quest 2016.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the 74 riders who pushed themselves and their snowmobiles to the limit.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to recognize a group of female youth from Mobile Central High School and their coaches from my district who represented Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada in the World School Cheerleading competition in Orlando, Florida, the week of February 5 to 7.

They were awarded a full paid bid in October by the International Cheerleading Union. This is the first time that this bid has ever been awarded in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mobile Cheerleading was chosen based on their performance over the past few years, placing second place in Nationals in 2014 and first in 2015. The team won grand champions at the Nationals level with the highest score of all high school teams, with over 90 teams competing. The team also won two provincials two years in a row, competing at the highest level in the province for the high school last year.

At the competition in Florida, the Mobile High School Cheerleaders placed fourth in their division and took home the Canadian Cup for receiving the highest score for all Canadian teams in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Mobile High Cheerleading team for their outstanding accomplishments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate the volunteers and organizers of the 34th Annual Mount Pearl Frosty Festival. With over 60 events throughout 11 days, and over 10,000 people in attendance, the Frosty Festival is one of the largest winter festivals in Eastern Canada.

The Frosty Festival brings residents and friends in Mount Pearl together for a number of events such as the Jiggs' dinner and variety show, community breakfasts and this year's opening night show, Circus Glorious, featuring Wonderbolt Circus. The festival also includes a dinner theatre, Battle of the Brains trivia contest, visits to seniors' homes and even a birthday party for Frosty.

Mr. Speaker, organizing a festival of this magnitude takes many hours and much dedication. I would like to extend congratulations to all of those who made the 34th Annual Mount Pearl Frosty Festival possible: the festival's board of directors, the 24 community group partners, the festival's 35 sponsors, the over 500 volunteers and the many supporting organizations and businesses.

I ask all hon. Members to join with me in thanking and congratulating the 34th Annual Mount Pearl Frosty Festival on the tremendous success of this year's winter carnival.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KING:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Run the Rock team of HMCS St. John's. Run the Rock is an annual charity relay run in support of the NL chapter of the Children's

Wish Foundation, which is comprised of 10 to 15 sailors from the *St. John's*, our namesake frigate.

Since 1996, teams have run from Port aux Basques to St. John's raising funds and awareness for this worthy cause. In recent years, the team has expanded their outreach to include offshoots from the TCH, including adding a day in the District of Bonavista. To date, Run the Rock has raised over \$700,000, with last year's 20th anniversary team raising a record \$107,000. With each wish costing approximately \$10,000, that is 70 wishes granted to children with serious illnesses.

In recent years, two of my constituents have been granted a wish. Nicholas Pike of Portland, a proud animal lover, received a wheelchair accessible Little Red Barn. As well as Joshua Abbott of Princeton who received a trip to Disney, Sea World and Universal Studios.

This year's run will take place from June 15 to June 30. I ask all hon. Members to join with me in congratulating the team and wishing them continued success.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in this hon. House to offer congratulations to a group of individuals who have made a significant contribution to sport in my community. Once again, this year's Mount Pearl Athletic Awards was a tremendous success which highlighted the achievements and emphasized the important role that sport has played and continues to play in the development of youth and adults alike within our great city.

There were a number of very worthy nominees again this year, nominated in four categories. Congratulations to this year's winners: the Peter Halliday Executive of the Year award winner, Ms. Christine Young of Mount Pearl Synchro; Coach of the Year, Mr. Mark Miller of Pearlgate Track & Field Club; Female Athlete of the Year, Samantha Marsh, for her accomplishments in the sport of target shooting; and Male Athlete of the Year, swimming sensation Sam Leawood.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these individuals on this significant accomplishment and wish them all the best in their future sporting endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to salute a long-time community activist and constituent, a tireless advocate for the environment, an award-winning photographer and filmmaker, an art educator and a mother of three. Last January, Sheilagh O'Leary became Chair of the local Chapter of Equal Voice in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Equal Voice is a national, bilingual, multi-partisan organization dedicated to electing more women to all levels of political office in Canada. Nine chapters across the country promote the equal representation of women in Canada's legislatures and on municipal and band councils.

Sheilagh assumed the lead role locally in a year that saw both a federal and a provincial election here, and was extremely active in promoting women's involvement in the political process.

A few weeks ago, she practised what she preached and was elected for the second time to city council here in St. John's, becoming the only woman on what was previously an all-male council.

Today, a week after International Women's Day, I congratulate Sheilagh O'Leary for all her hard work and wish her a successful term on council.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in commending her and the work of Equal Voice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### The Commemoration of the First World War and the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today for Honour 100 we have the Member for the District of Baie Verte – Green Bay, followed by a moment of silence.

**MR. WARR:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will now read into the record the following 40 names of those who lost their lives in the First World War in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve or the Newfoundland Mercantile Marine. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: Edward Bryan, John Bryan, Aaron Bryant, Charles Bryant, James Buckley, Morgan Buffett, Thomas Buffett, Fred Bugden, John Stanley Bugden, Leighton Bugden, Augustus Bulgin, William Burbridge, Allen Burge, Rufus Burgess, Frank M. Burke, Garrett Burke, Leo Michael Burke, John Burrage, Sidney George Burry, Benjamin Bursey, George Bursey, Goliath Bursey, Uriah George Bursey, Charles Burt, Eric Burt, Andrew Burton, Charles Burton, George Lewis Burton, John A. Burton, Willis G. Burton, Jacob Bussey, David Butler, Edward William Butler, George A. Butler, Harry Butler, Harvey Ronald Butler, Ignatius Joseph Butler, James J. Butler, John Butler, Llewelyn Butler.

(Moment of silence.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to highlight the provincial government's participation at Seafood Expo North America, which took place in Boston from March 6 to 8.

Along with the Premier, I had the honour of participating in the largest seafood trade event in North America attracting over 20,000 buyers

and suppliers from over 100 countries. This is the first time a Newfoundland and Labrador Premier has attended this expo.

The expo provides a one-stop opportunity to meet a significant number of major industry players over a short period. The Premier and I had the opportunity to engage with fisheries and aquaculture counterparts from other provinces and various industry leaders on matters of mutual interest and importance. We also had the opportunity to meet with federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Hunter Tootoo, on a range of priority issues, including our opposition to the federal last in, first out policy relating to Northern shrimp and its devastating impacts on Newfoundland and Labrador communities.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015 our seafood industry was valued at over \$1.2 billion. The United States remains the province's largest export market representing 40 per cent of our total exports, further highlighting the importance of participation in this premiere seafood trade event.

Through the creation of the fisheries advisory council, our government will work to increase the overall viability and competitiveness of the Newfoundland and Labrador seafood sector, particularly as we prepare for opportunities arising from the return of groundfish.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Boston seafood show – it's very important that we be there and it's very important that our Premier be there, also.

Right now, in the economic turmoil that we are experiencing in this province, the fishery is the one industry that we need to make sure we maintain control of. It's the one industry that's been here from day one that's kept us going.

It's important that we do show our interest in the fishery and show that there are a lot of harvesters and processors that attend the show. It's important that we show them that we support them in this show also.

Over the years we've had some pretty good representation at the Boston seafood show. Ministers like John Efford, Gerry Reid, Trevor Taylor, Tom Rideout, Tom Osborne and Clyde Jackman have been there. I know the Premier met with Minister Tootoo at the time, but it's important that they, with the fisheries fund – okay, thank you.

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This was his first time as minister at the show in Boston. I trust he learned from his participation in the expo how important a provincial seafood marketing plan is for the provincial industry.

The world needs to be able to easily recognize seafood of the highest quality, the products that come from our shores. When will government create a fisheries marketing strategy and work with industry to ensure we get the best dollar for our product?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the House that the week of March 20 to 26 is Multiculturalism Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This week has special significance, as March 21 is designated by the United Nations as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year, we have the warmth and benefit of welcoming Syrian refugees to our province; individuals and families that have

been displaced by war. Celebrating multiculturalism is an appropriate opportunity to welcome these new residents to our province, and to demonstrate our openness to them as they begin new lives amongst us and with us.

In recognition of Multiculturalism Week, it has been suggested and we should encourage people displaying multicoloured lights outside their homes and businesses. Cultural diversity is strength, and by displaying these lights we demonstrate how diversity makes our communities more dynamic places to live.

I encourage all my hon. colleagues and everyone throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to take part in our week-long celebration of cultural diversity, and to seek out any number of events within their communities to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude by congratulating our many partners and volunteers who have organized events and activities to celebrate multiculturalism. Promoting respect and value for all cultures will help build a stronger Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We, too, from our caucus would like to acknowledge Multiculturalism Week this week. Mr. Speaker, we also want to welcome all new citizens to our great province.

We want to also acknowledge the great work being done by the volunteer organizations and the many agencies and individuals who promote diversity and multiculturalism in our society. I had the privilege a number of years ago of working for Advanced Education and Skills and working with a lot of these agencies. I saw the great work that's being done to promote diversity in our community and engage our own citizens here to be multicultural and be understanding of the different diverse cultures we have here.

I remember one conference I went to, Mr. Speaker, and the slogan was: Our differences are what make us similar. I think that speaks volumes here.

On behalf of our caucus, we, too, would like to encourage people to use multicoloured lights to encourage people here to understand multiculturalism and diversity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I'm happy to welcome our new Syrian families.

Diversity does make our communities, our province and our country stronger. Multiculturalism celebrates the richness and wealth of all cultures which make up our society.

We will need new families and new workers because of our aging population and low birth rate. Immigration will be the key to our future economic prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, March is National Social Work Month, and I rise today in this hon. House to pay tribute to our province's social workers. This year's theme is Social Work: A Profession of Choice, and highlights the diversity of the social work profession and the valuable role social workers play in our society.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have over 1,500 registered social workers who are

committed to improving the health, safety and social well-being of individuals, couples, families, groups and communities through direct service delivery, health promotion and social programs.

Today also marks World Social Work Day. It presents another opportunity for the social work profession to express international solidarity and echo the importance of their work in governments, organizations and communities around the world. The theme this year is Promoting the Dignity and Worth of Peoples, with a focus on how societies thrive when the dignity and rights of all peoples are respected.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing social workers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, the rest of Canada and indeed the world for their ongoing dedication and support in the delivery of professional social work services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I, along with the Official Opposition, would like to join with government in recognizing National Social Work Month. As the minister stated, we have over 1,500 registered social workers, professionals, committed and caring individuals who make positive impacts to so many of our province's residents.

They work in a variety of settings: Child, Youth and Family Services, general and psychiatric hospitals, school boards, correctional institutions, a number of federal and provincial departments as well as many who work in private practice. No matter where they work, they play a vital role in so many environments and circumstances.

In March of each year, social workers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and the

entire country celebrate and recognize the contributions of social workers to society.

The Official Opposition joins with the province's social workers in celebrating our social ideals and values. We wish to thank them for the invaluable service they provide to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. As a social worker, I am proud of my colleagues' work. Social workers do case work but also act as advocates and policy-makers pushing for systemic change so all people have equality and resources to live in dignity. They work on the front lines. They see the negative effects of government's cutbacks and austerity measures. As legislators we must listen to their expertise.

To all our social workers, thank you for your passion and compassion. Bravo!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

#### Oral Questions

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

When asked what savings had been achieved from discretionary spending and travel since December, the Minister of Finance indicated that they have achieved approximately \$100 million in savings since December. Last Thursday, as promised, the minister tabled a document to the House. However, the document lacks details.

As promised by this minister who represents an open and transparent government, I ask the minister: How can she identify savings while not providing the details to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the exact details that she promised to table?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to stand in this House and answer questions about saving money for the people of the province. This is a very difficult fiscal situation that our government has been left to deal with. I think it is very important for us to understand the context of why we are in this situation. The former administration opted to ignore the revenue line and let the peak oil production of 2007 go by without making adjustment to their spending.

I look forward to continuing to provide answers in this House of Assembly to the Member opposite on the specifics. I would say that discretionary spending certainly would include more than travel and furniture. Quite frankly, I suspect that is the reason people in the province chose this government.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

The question that I asked about was how much has been saved since December in discretionary spending and travel. When the minister was asked she provided three numbers to the House of Assembly, even though she had indicated here in the House that she would provide the exact details.

Maybe we can break it down and do it this way. I ask the minister: Will she provide an itemized account of the \$118 million, one of the three numbers listed in her document – will she provide a detailed account of the \$118 million identified in the heading savings identified in fiscal update?

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

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

As I said in the House last week, the savings that were included in the numbers that I presented to this House included savings ascertained by things like no reallocation of savings in department, the reduction of parliamentary secretaries, the reduction of political staff in ministerial offices, the reduction in salaries through the delaying of hiring of certain positions, placing restrictions on hiring, placing restrictions on consultants and the elimination of discretionary travel.

I will look forward to, as I said last Thursday, presenting a budget in this House that details that information and our plan for budget '16-'17 and into the future that will get our province back on a fiscal course that's sustainable.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It's clear that the member is reading from the list. So she has the list. Does she have the amounts that go with the list?

She promised that she would provide the exact details. Now she's reading from a list today, but I also remind the minister that it's not the budget that I'm asking about. I'm asking about the savings – the \$100 million in discretionary spending and travel, because that was what the question was and her answer was \$100 million – from December to March, the last three months, can she itemize the \$100 million in savings through discretionary spending and travel in the last three months? Will she provide those itemized details?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to continue to stand on my feet in this House and answer all the questions that the Member opposite wants to ask about the \$100 million.



I believe the people of the province, though, want to hear questions about the important situation that we're in. Quite frankly, I would remind the Member opposite that when they made decisions to increase the debt that the people of this province are carrying to the tune of 69 per cent since 2003 – I would argue that those are the questions that people at home and people in our districts throughout our province are asking.

I look forward to answering every question the Member opposite has in this House of Assembly.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the minister for agreeing to answer all the questions that we have in relation to this. It's not about the budget. It's not about the future. She stood here in her place in the House and indicated to the House of Assembly they've saved in the vicinity of \$100 million when asked what the savings have been in discretionary spending with travel since December. So in the no-information release that she put out on behalf of the open and transparent government, there's a line item here – \$97,562,800 under additional spending savings identified.

If she's willing to answer all questions in the House – which we decide what questions we ask – I'll ask her: Can you itemize the \$97 million as outlined in your very brief report that you tabled in the House?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

As I've already said, and I will continue to say, the savings that I presented in this House last week that valued about \$97 million, as I presented to the House, came from a variety of activities our government has undertaken since we were sworn in on the 14th of December.

Mr. Speaker, they include – and I would remind the Member opposite – things like reduction in political staff, reduction in salaries for jobs we're not going to fill currently, the reduction in the use of consultants, the reduction in discretionary travel. He'll be happy to see all the details of all of those numbers when he gets to see the budget with the people of the province later on in this session.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It's clear we're not going to get those numbers today. She said I can ask all the questions I want, and I will do that because that's our role, but she's not going to provide the details, so the people of the province are going to have to wait. This open and transparent government are not going to provide that.

I want to ask the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker – we all know Eastern Health has been challenged in sterilization issues for the past number of weeks, and we know staff have been working hard in Eastern Health to try and rectify this. Last week the CEO of Eastern Health said the issues have not gone away and will likely need another plan. Today we're hearing – thankfully hearing – reports of surgeries are getting back to normal.

I ask the minister if he can confirm what actually caused the staining for medical instruments, and can you also give the assurance to the people of the province today – and we'd just like to clarify this – that the sterilization issue has been resolved, or is it still ongoing?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, this is a concern for all of us here on this side of the House, and I'm sure all Members. It's impacted families around Newfoundland and Labrador, and especially those who use the services at Eastern Health.

The sterilization issue, the staining that was caused, is something that is as a result of many different things that occurred. So right now the staff have been working diligently to put a resolution in place. We are pleased today to say the elective surgeries and orthopaedic surgeries later on this week; they will be occurring again. But to pinpoint one specific issue as it occurs and what led to this sterilization issue, it's not as easy to say that. It is a very complicated approach, but we are very happy to be able to say things are coming back to normal.

This has happened in other jurisdictions and the staff at Eastern Health has done a great job in actually responding to this. There has been great communication with the minister and the staff. So we hope, like all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do, that this is behind us. But this is something that occurs from time to time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

As I said in my question, I agree the staff at Eastern Health have been working very, very hard. I'm not sure if the communication has been great because we know the minister stood in the House here last week and stated that handwashing is a time-tested technique and has been working.

Almost at the same time, the CEO of Eastern Health was saying that handwashing was not achieving the desired result. We've also heard that the expenditure right now is approximately \$3.3 million. Mr. Speaker, we're hearing that the cost is actually much higher than that.

I ask the minister if he could provide a detailed breakdown of the amount of the expenditure that's existed so far, how that estimate has been achieved. It's probably more detail than the Minister of Finance is prepared to table. Also, can he provide details around the plan for the future? Are we still making progress in moving forward?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the sterilization of equipment at Eastern Health, when it comes to surgeries, is a very complicated process. I would encourage Members opposite to actually go visit and take a look at the processes it goes through to make sure that we have patient safety.

The \$3.3 million – as we said to Eastern Health in the past, we were not going to compromise patient safety; therefore, it really wasn't about the \$3 million in this particular case. What we want is to get things back to normal as quickly as possible so there would be no disruptions at all in patient care at Eastern Health.

The staff, as I said, have worked very hard. This is not a one, single issue; this wasn't caused by anything specific. There's been new equipment put in place. They outsourced sterilization. They've used some at St. Clare's, some at the Health Sciences Centre, so it is a very complicated process as I say. There will be a review of what led to this once we get the place back and running and in normal circumstances.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week in Question Period in a question about equalization the Premier stated that the previous administration had not started to access the \$34.9 million Small Communities Fund, which is part of the Building Canada Fund, and we did not sign an agreement. However, a briefing note supplied by your government notes that there's a list of proposed projects that were received by Infrastructure Canada from our previous government. We asked for a copy of the list of the projects. It was redacted with the release of information.

I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Can he explain the contradiction?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question. Access to information was a policy put in place by your government. Who decides is the head of the department, which is the deputy minister. Because they feel there are negotiations with the federal and provincial governments, it would not be beneficial to release the dates.

For the Member to know – why are you still writing me and asking me about the Bay Bulls access road? You had a copy of the information, so why are you standing up in this House asking for it? You have spoken to me several times on it. You wrote me on it. You had a copy of it. If the former government doesn't feel the process they put in place for access to information – are you admitting fault now, when the minister has nothing to do with it, when the head of the department states, no, we shouldn't release this information.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, back to the comments made by the Premier. He said the previous administration had access to a \$34.9 million Small Communities Fund. In actual fact, there was a list of projects that were afforded. We were looking at leveraging about \$12 million of the overall fund over a ten-year period. Infrastructure Canada, in your own briefing notes, acknowledged that did exist. You said there was no agreement signed.

So I ask you again: Outside of freedom of information, how do you clarify the contradiction?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. JOYCE:** As the Member would know, there were two funds. The \$34.9 million they could have leveraged from the federal government was not signed. It was signed, Mr.

Speaker, probably about three weeks or a month ago. This government had \$34.9 million that they did not access, did not even take the time to sign.

Mr. Speaker, just for the record, he was the minister who wouldn't even sign it. He is over there now saying about the fund, about the copy of lists that he's writing me about projects that were supposedly on the list. They didn't sign the \$34.9 million. Now he's trying to say, where is the money? Where is the fund?

When we get the projects in place, when there is a commitment made, when there is an agreement with the federal government, we'll table the list of projects, Mr. Speaker. We'll table it so people will know. Please know the agreement is signed by this government.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member said he'd table a list of projects. So we are looking forward to a list of projects when he tables them.

I will ask the minister as well, the list of projects put forward to Infrastructure Canada, could you table that list and any changes in the current list, and what's moved forward to Infrastructure Canada since you've come to power and what those changes have been?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I just find this kind of ironic. Look at the Member for Mount Pearl North who set up access to information, the rules around it and the process. The process is that it goes to the head of the department. The head of the department is the deputy minister. Now he's asking me as minister to step in and say, oh, we should get involved with access to information. We should get involved with it all, Mr. Speaker. We should get involved with it. The minute I get involved, why am I now skirting the access to information that they put in place, Mr. Speaker?

Now, I'm glad that the minister finally admitted, which we said for a number of years, that Bill 29 failed and now the access to information that they put in place is a complete failure.

I ask him one question: Why are you still writing me about projects that are supposed to be on that list if you don't know what's on the list?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the minister says he has a list; all we're asking is to table the list and any subsequent changes he made since coming to power. Infrastructure Canada identified that the list exists, which was contrary to what the Premier indicated.

In the briefing note received we also asked for information of the projects submitted to Infrastructure Canada. Most of those projects were redacted, blacked out. The reason given is that it would affect federal-provincial relations.

I ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs: How would a list released negatively impact federal-provincial relations?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, three times during Question Period today the Member opposite has used the words: it's a contradiction to what the Premier said. I just want to clarify this for the people that are watching and listening and those that are in the gallery today, there is absolutely no contradiction.

One of the first meetings that I had with the minister responsible for infrastructure he said: Why is it that Newfoundland and Labrador is one province that has not signed a Small Communities Fund? We pulled it out. It wasn't signed by the previous administration. So we became very proactive on this, got it down here; we are now going to leverage this fund of \$34.9 million.

They sent up requests for funding without signing the agreement. Mr. Speaker, it just reminds me so much of the fisheries fund around CETA: had their party here in St. John's, Newfoundland, without having their federal colleagues on the line.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Minister of Fisheries stood in this House and said that the department was continuing to do its due diligence between Quin-Sea and Royal Greenland sale. Less than 24 hours later, he signed off on it and the sale was announced.

Mr. Speaker, fish harvesters are currently buying themselves out of trust agreements. The federal government put a program in place to buy out trust agreements to avoid fleet separation problems.

I ask the minister: In your due diligence, did you ensure with Minister Tootoo that there are no trust agreements in place with Quin-Sea that are transferred to Royal Greenland? If so, will you table that?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very confident that Members opposite were aware of the sale of Quin-Sea and Royal Greenland before they left office because it was a discussion that has been ongoing for quite some time. When we came in office and there was a request for a change of operator licence, it was made publicly known. There was a process that needed to be adhered to.

It was a process that started in December. It went through the Fish Processing Licensing Board just a few weeks ago. They made their recommendation. This is a board that was appointed by the previous administration. We weren't satisfied there, because our preference,

of course, would be to support Newfoundland and Labrador companies. There is no provision in legislation within Newfoundland and Labrador that prohibits that sale – they know that.

So what happened, we did our due diligence, our officials went through this, we took the legal look at it and there was no connection at all to agreements that would be prohibitive for this sale to go through. That's the reason why the minister made the recommendation for this to proceed.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

It's not the sale we're worried about; it's the processing licences that are controlled.

Mr. Speaker, the minister knows there is at least one other company interested in purchasing Quin-Sea, yet he refused to give them the opportunity to be heard.

I ask the minister: What opportunity did he give other companies to present in regard to this sale?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The role of government was to actually review the change of operator licence; it wasn't to be going out and see who was available to purchase Quin-Sea. Previous administrations – and I can tell you now that we will be promoting Newfoundland and Labrador, too. We've seen over the years on many occasions when we see in governments and administrations and, indeed, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians promote our province as a great place to invest. We do that.

Is the Member opposite suggesting when people from the outside want to come in, invest in Newfoundland and Labrador, we should put restrictions in place and turn them away?

What we have made sure of, though, is that there is no connection to the processing and the

harvesting side here. That's the fleet separation we're concerned about, and that is secure I say to the Member opposite.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for the District of Cape St. Francis.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I just want to go back to my first question. My first question was: Do you have any evidence to show there are no trust agreements in place?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Evidence to show there are no trust agreements in place? What we've done is we've done a review of the legal documents on the purchase of sale agreement that was put in place between Quin-Sea and Royal Greenland, and there was no evidence at all of any trust agreements and they are in compliance with legislation and policy around fleet separation.

So I say to the member opposite, if he is aware of such agreements being in place, well, the onus is on that Member or any other Member in this Chamber today to bring that evidence forward, then we will deal with that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, it's the federal government that regulates trust agreements.

I just asked the minister: Have you checked with Minister Tootoo to see if there are any of these trust agreements in place, and what happens then, Sir?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Not only would the federal government be checking there, what they will also be doing is random audits on those processors to make sure that there are no

agreements in place, like they will for processing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The fishery in our province is extremely important to people on this side of the House. I can tell you right now, we will make sure that we will do our role and our part in protecting the harvesting sector and the processing sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. PERRY:** The drop in commodity prices has had a negative effect all over the world. Mr. Speaker, having said that, the welfare of vulnerable children cannot come with a price tag.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: Will she stand today in this House and state unequivocally that she will not allow her government to reduce programs and services for the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services is the protection of children. We will protect children.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

**MS. PERRY:** Mr. Speaker, we asked if there would be any cuts.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will you do the right thing and commit today to having the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services taken off the table and made exempt from the sweeping 30 per cent cuts that you have mandated your departments to make?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand again and answer questions for the Members opposite. The situation that we're dealing with in our province is unprecedented.

We saw a former administration have peak oil in 2007, peak oil price in 2008. They increased the debt of this province in their Conservative run at government by 69 per cent.

I can assure the Member opposite that our government is going to make decisions that are in the best interests of the people of the province. I look forward to showing that in a budget coming up shortly.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. PERRY:** Mr. Speaker, during the fall election we saw the Liberals unveil a trove of promises that they have now gone back on. They stated in the fall that they would undertake a review of the Youth Services Program to ensure that it is responsive to the unique needs of our vulnerable youth.

I ask the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services: Has she instructed her department to act on that promise made to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** I thank the Member across for her question and, yes, we have. There will be a review completed by June of 2016 – it will be started in June of 2016.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, for a very quick question.

**MS. PERRY:** I ask the minister to provide the House with a status update, Mr. Speaker, on this review and when we can expect more details.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Child, Youth and Family Services, for a quick response.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Speaker, I just indicated that the review will start in June of 2016.

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

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

When asked to detail the \$100 million in savings that she claimed her government had found, the Minister of Finance tabled three numbers on a piece of paper on Thursday.

She has had a long weekend, so I ask the Premier: Have they been able yet to come up with more substantive numbers in detail during that time?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for noting the length of my weekend. I can assure you that our officials in the Department of Finance, those that work in Treasury Board and myself were working all weekend to make sure that we are ready for a budget coming in the next couple of weeks.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. C. BENNETT:** I can also assure the Member opposite that our government is working consistently on data and available information that we have to prepare a budget to correct and address the serious fiscal situation we have.

We are changing the culture of spending in government. We are going to stop the culture of spend, spend, spend that the other crowd had, which has been in place for 12 years, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

I wish they'd share, share, share the data.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has said everything is on the table in dealing with the province's financial situation, while the Minister of Natural Resources was quoted as saying the Muskrat Falls Project was too far along for government to consider shelving.

Given the impact on the province's budget of spending on Muskrat Falls, I ask the Premier: Will he table the analysis his government used to conclude that the project is too far along for shelving?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**PREMIER BALL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, on December 21 myself and the Minister for Natural Resources announced a review of the Muskrat Falls Project. It speaks to the cost schedule and associated critical risks. That process is currently ongoing right now. We will expect to have the results of that report in the upcoming weeks.

I will tell you right now that, there's no question about it, the Muskrat Falls Project does cost this province a lot of money. It takes a lot of the financial resources from our province right now. So it's important that we do the analysis of the Muskrat Falls Project. We will make sure that we get the schedule secure, get the costs secure, look at all the critical risks and do the due diligence that's required before we make any final decisions on what we should do with the project.

I will say this. Based on the agreements that are in place, based on the contracts that are in place with Nova Scotia, with the federal loan guarantee and so on, I would be more than

happy to share this with the Member opposite: There is a lot of information that would have to be reviewed before this project could be cancelled.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, I asked the Minister of Education to immediately stop the current school board process regarding possible closure of five schools because he said of the board, they are "Appointed trustees, hand-picked trustees, it removes accountability. They are accountable to those who appointed them as opposed to accountable to those people that elected them."

Mr. Speaker, he did not answer my question. I ask the minister again: Will he honour his word and stop this process immediately until a board of trustees is duly elected by the community?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** Thanks to the Member for her question again about this. Maybe I wasn't clear last week. The trustees of the English School District have legal responsibility for the administration of these schools under their supervision.

On January 23 of this year, the board of trustees met. They made a decision to conduct school reviews that are commonplace, that are done annually, I understand. That day there was a communication sent to the principals of all the schools in the five areas that are implicated in this. Later that month and in early February, there were meetings with school councils. Communication was sent out to parents. There was opportunity for online feedback.

I understand there will be public meetings next month where parents and interested community members will have an opportunity to provide

additional feedback. They can provide additional feedback online and so on, Mr. Speaker. So I hope that answers the question.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank these dedicated, long-serving board of trustees.

I ask the minister again: Why would he allow this appointed board to make these crucial decisions when he so vehemently opposed it himself? How can he ignore his own words and convictions?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KIRBY:** I'm glad the Member asked that question, Mr. Speaker. When I was asking questions about this for a couple of years across the way in Opposition, I wrote to the minister of the day, Minister Jackman, to ask him about the legal opinion he'd indicated that the department had sought after we spoke about it in Estimates that year. I was provided with a legal opinion.

After taking the oath and assuming office in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, I was again reminded that it's legal responsibility of the boards of trustees of the school districts to administrate and make decisions regarding the allocations that government provides to them. That's very clearly laid out in the Schools Act.

I was aware of that prior to the election and I was made aware of it again afterwards; they have a legal responsibility to do that job. That's not the Department of Education's job. That's not my job. That's not our job. That's the trustees' job.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The time for Question Period has ended.



Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009, Bill 7.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Change Of Name Act, 2009, Bill 8.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tabling of Documents.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay. Sorry, the hon. the Member for St. George's – Humber on notices of motion.

**MR. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move the following private Member's motion, seconded by the Member for Terra Nova.

WHEREAS other jurisdictions, such as Norway, have been more responsible and use sovereign wealth funds which create a long-term legacy from non-renewable resource development; and

WHEREAS the previous government failed to manage resource revenue in a responsible manner;

BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly supports the establishment of a legacy fund in this province which will result in long-term benefits from non-renewable resources.

Thank you.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 63, the private Member's resolution just entered by the Member for St. George's – Humber is the private Member's resolution to be debated tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**MR. SPEAKER:** Pursuant to section 18(9) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I am advising the House that the Members of the House of Assembly Management Commission are as follows: the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, the hon. the Minister of Natural Resources and Minister Responsible for the Office of Public Engagement, the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi, the Member for Topsail – Paradise, the Speaker and the Clerk.

Further, in accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings held on March 31, May 26 and June 8 of 2015.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

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

WHEREAS the English School Board trustees proposed to close down Holy Cross Junior High School and send students to a distant school; and

WHEREAS the board has arbitrarily and without consultation reduced the Holy Cross

Junior High School catchment area and students will have to be bused to a far more distant school; and

WHEREAS Holy Cross Junior High School is an important neighbourhood school with programs, community partnerships and extracurricular activities designed to meet the particular needs of the intercity students who attend it; and

WHEREAS the English School Board trustees are an appointed body and no longer accountable to the people who elected them;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that Holy Cross Junior High School remains open and to immediately arrange for a democratically elected English School Board.

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

Mr. Speaker, we all know how important school boards are. I would like to go on record to thank the trustees who have been on this particular school board for an extraordinarily long time in between what should be regulated elections.

They have done a good job. It's a hard job they do, and particularly right now when they are tasked with looking at and exploring the possibility of closing five schools across the province. That's very difficult work.

Mr. Speaker, the role of the school board and the trustees is to be responsible to the people of their community because they are to be elected by the people of their community. We know it has been a long time since we have had school board elections. Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's been since 2009. It's been almost seven years.

This flies in the face of everything that we hold dear in this province in terms of democratically elected representatives. Yes, they have the legal mandate; however, do they have the moral authority?

It's not about the trustees themselves because these are people who are dedicated, who are giving of their time and their expertise, and who

are committed to their communities and to the best possible education we can give to the children of Newfoundland and Labrador. Our precious valuable resources, our children are.

I believe that this government, by tasking this board who have not been re-elected since 2009 – a new election was supposed to be 2013, three years ago. That hasn't happened. To task them with this responsibility is unfair. It also is not in the best interests of the communities because we know that school board trustees are accountable and answerable to the people who elect them.

Mr. Speaker, in light of that, I ask the government, I ask the minister to do what he knows is the right thing, to stop this process and have elections.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. PETTEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I present the following petition:

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

WHEREAS policing is vital to the protection and service of our province's communities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to increase the presence of law enforcement in the Conception Bay South area.

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

Mr. Speaker, during the previous election and during the last number of years in Conception Bay South, policing has become a big issue to a lot of the citizens. Like I said, in the last election

I knocked on a lot of doors and a lot of people have a lot of concerns with the presence of policing in the community.

I met with the town council who have a committee formed to increase policing. I believe, to my last knowledge, they've increased the policing by one unit. In saying that, we still don't have a dedicated office for the District of CBS. A district with a population of 27,000 people, I think it does deserve that attention.

Whether it be extra policing by one unit, two units, three units, my argument has been when you have a community so spread out – if anyone ever travels to CBS, it's a large geographical area. The people are asking for it. I've heard it loud and clear, and I call upon the House to give serious consideration to doing just that.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the federal government promised to provide \$280 million for a CETA Innovation Fund to build our province's fishery into the future;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to be vigilant and vocal in demanding the federal government live up to their commitment of the \$280 million in the Fishery Innovation Fund.

Mr. Speaker, this is so important. Today, earlier the minister made a Ministerial Statement where he and the Premier attended the Boston seafood show, and it is important. We realize in Newfoundland and Labrador – I know in my community there are a lot of fishermen who put a lot back in our community, and the fishing industry is so important to all of us. This fund

that was promised to us – by the way, the prime minister of Canada in his election promised that this fund would become available and I hope that you're working hard to make sure the fund does become available because it's so important.

Mr. Speaker, we're seeing in the fishery today a cycle, and it's a cycle that happens in the fishery. The shell fishery, the shrimp, the crab, we're noticing in the last little while there is a decline in stocks. We're seeing it as it goes to the fishermen. I spoke to fishermen in my district this weekend and they tell me that their crab allocations are being decreased. It's important that we have a fund put in place so we're ready for the groundfish. I really do believe, as a person who was involved in the ground fishery all my life, the cod is coming back and we have to be ready.

The biggest thing with the Innovation Fund is for us to have our plants ready and our people ready to be able to do it because today – I can remember in my younger years you'd go to a fish plant and you would see so many people who could fillet fish and take care of cod and prepare the cod, but today I don't know if they're there.

We need to make sure the innovation and the funds are available to make our plants ready and our fish harvesters ready for this fund. So it's important that we emphasize how important this is to the federal government and this is given to the province.

Thank you – like promised.

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

**MS. PERRY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS our province's seniors deserve quality care and assistance when residing in long-term care facilities; and

WHEREAS our province is currently experiencing an escalating shortage of long-term care beds;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to explore all options, including partnerships, to create new long-term care beds in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have committed to a performance-based infrastructure and in our platform prior to November we had talked about last year building P3s, which in my view they are one and the same thing. Whatever model it is we explore, affordable housing is essential. Long-term care beds for seniors are absolutely essential.

Mr. Speaker, as a Member from rural Newfoundland, I often talk to seniors. No one wants to spend the last few years of their lives in an institution. The longer we can keep them at home, the better. For rural residents in particular, the longer we can keep them living in their communities with a view of the water, which most of us do have in our small, rural remote communities, is absolutely essential.

To me, when I, please God, live to be a senior, I don't want to be living in a cement building where all I can see are the city streets of St. John's or Grand Falls or Gander. We need affordable housing, Mr. Speaker, we need long-term care beds, and we need them to be in communities. So I certainly encourage government to explore every option possible to make sure rural Newfoundland and Labrador is provided the infrastructure it needs to look after its seniors.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS an extension is urgently needed at St. Peter's Primary school in Mount Pearl in order to accommodate full-day kindergarten and the growing school population;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to clarify its position and plan so that St. Peter's Primary and other schools in Newfoundland and Labrador can properly accommodate students when full-day kindergarten commences in September of 2016.

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

Mr. Speaker, for months now, but certainly more so in the last number of weeks, I've been receiving an increasing number of calls and emails from constituents in my district who are parents of children about to attend St. Peter's Primary or who are already attending St. Peter's Primary. I know the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands has been receiving similar inquiries and has been advocating on behalf of his constituents as well.

The parents of students who will be attending St. Peter's in the fall are looking for a clear plan on how full-day kindergarten will be accommodated and what the impact will be. So there are several questions that haven't been answered yet that parents are hoping will be answered in the weeks ahead.

I want to acknowledge that the Minister of Education has agreed to have a conversation with me about these issues. I hope we'll be able to get some clarity that we haven't been able to get from the school board in recent weeks, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker.

We need to know: How will modular classrooms be utilized? How many of them will there be? Are they ordered at this point? What's the impact going to be on class sizes? There are lots of rumors about that at this point. What's going to be the impact of team teaching? How many classes will be impacted by team teaching? What grade levels will be impacted? These are the

kinds of things that parents are asking about; but, unfortunately, to date, we haven't been able to get those answers.

Parents are also concerned about the proposed extension. Funding was approved for this extension. Parents are wondering is the extension, in fact, on track for 2017. The contract has not been awarded. The tender has not been called. It should have been by now. Parents are now wondering if there is still a commitment on behalf of school board and government to the extension that is, in fact, desperately needed.

Parents did ask me to bring this matter to the House of Assembly, which I'm doing through this petition today. I look forward to further discussions with both the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the English School District as well.

Thank you.

#### Orders of the Day

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, Bill 2, Interim Supply.

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

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

I wish to inform the House that I have received a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All rise.

A message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

As Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the province for the year ending 31 March 2017, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*,

I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: \_\_\_\_\_

Frank F. Fagan  
Lieutenant Governor

Please be seated.

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Conservation, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to the Committee of Supply.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

#### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Dempster):** Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 2, 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, 2017 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

#### Resolution

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service

for the financial year ending March 31, 2017, the sum of \$2,791,692,300.”

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Madam Chair, it's the first time I've had the opportunity to stand in this House and use the term, Madam, and I'm honoured to do it.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Madam Chair, I rise in this hon. House today to speak to the Interim Supply bill, Bill 2. Interim Supply is required to be passed by the House of Assembly to allow for the financial administration in support of ongoing operations of government departments during the interim period while budget 2016 is being introduced, debated and ultimately approved in this Legislature.

When we bring in the budget we will be seeking approval for funding to spend for the entire fiscal year, but it will take time to allow for debate and approval of the budget. During the interim period, it is necessary to provide funding to government departments so that they can continue to pay their staff, their suppliers of goods and services. In other words, it is important that the ongoing work of the core public service continue, which is the purpose of Interim Supply.

Madam Chair, we are seeking approval in Interim Supply for a sum of approximately \$2.8 billion. This represents approximately 36 per cent of the 2015-16 budgeted current and capital account gross expenditures.

While the 36 per cent is comparable to the 2015-16 Interim Supply, 2016-17 Interim Supply represents a 0.2 per cent increase of the approximate \$7.6 million from last year's Interim Supply. This increase primarily relates to the timing of capital project cash and their cash flows over the interim period.

The legislation will need to be passed and receive Royal Assent by March 23, 2016, in order to allow sufficient time to ensure payroll

and Income Support payments, particularly for those that have to be mailed to Labrador and available and due in early April, 2016.

Interim Supply provides departments and public bodies with the necessary cash flow dollars to manage expenditures for the period of April 1 to June 30 of 2016, which is the first quarter of the fiscal year. This includes ongoing housekeeping expenditures, including funding for upcoming pay periods and ongoing project and funding requirements applicable to the 2016-17 fiscal year.

This Interim Supply bill makes provisions for the transfer of funds from the Department of Finance to other departments for expenditures for compensation, benefits and other associated adjustments. Examples would include step adjustments relating to Job Evaluation System for General Service unionized employees.

Transfers from the Consolidated Fund Services accounts to other departments for special retirement and other payments should they be necessary, such as severance payments, and transfer of funds to and from various heads of expenditure to facilitate expenditures for financial assistance that may be approved from time to time by Treasury Board.

Interim Supply is an important bill that is intended to provide the continuation of ongoing government programs, services and projects. As I said, this bill needs to be passed to continue routine and ongoing operations while budget 2016 is going through the Legislature for debate and approval.

Going into budget 2016, our province is facing a difficult fiscal situation that continues to change with the price of oil, the volume of production, the value of the US dollar and other economic pressures. The average oil price for 2015-16 is now expected to be \$47, which is \$15 lower than the Budget 2015 estimate of \$62.

During this fiscal year we have seen Brent crude trade from a high of \$66 in May 2015 to a low of \$26 in January 2016. Although there has been a general upward trend since latter January with Brent reaching approximately \$40, we continue to see volatility and uncertainty, such as the

price that was recorded today, which is around \$38.

The previous administration would have you believe the fiscal problems are beyond our control due to the decline in oil price. Madam Chair, that is not the full story.

In 2013-14, with an assumption of \$105 oil, the previous administration was prepared to run a deficit of \$564 million. In 2014-15, again, with an assumption of \$105 oil, the previous government budgeted for a \$538 million deficit. The actual recorded deficit for 2014-15 turned out to be much higher at \$986 million, primarily due to lower-than-anticipated revenues during the year.

As I said, in 2015-16 with a budgeted base on \$62 oil, the government was prepared to run a deficit of \$1.1 billion. So for three years in a row, when the oil price was much higher than it is today, the previous government planned to spend a three-year total of \$2.2 billion more than it forecasted to take in.

Madam Chair, furthermore, the rapid drop in oil prices and production levels this year will likely add another \$695 million to the projected deficit for 2015-2016. But clearly, the fact that the previous government planned to spend more than it forecasted to take in at a time when oil prices were two to three times where they were today and peak oil – which was achieved in 2007 – had long past, speaks to the real challenge.

Given the seriousness and scope of the current and forecasted fiscal situation, a new approach was required that moved beyond past, single-year, pre-budget consultation efforts. Our Government Renewal Initiative overlays that process with public engagement feeding into the roll up of actions in the short, the medium and the long term. It is our responsibility as a government to consider all the ideas that are put forward in that process, including those from the public and within government departments to achieve cost savings and increase revenue. A meaningful engagement process will help provide the information that government can use to address our fiscal realities and lay a strong foundation for the future.

Throughout this initiative, as we move towards reshaping our fiscal future, we have been working with all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as well as business, labour and community groups to tackle this together. Reshaping our fiscal future will require that we embrace engagement, consider our investments and look at revenue opportunities as well as how we spend and borrow; but make no mistake, without action, Newfoundland and Labrador will face mounting debt, increasing interest and borrowing costs, and further credit rating downgrade that could restrict our ability to support critical government programs and services, and we cannot have that. Therefore, this government will take measures rooted in definitive actions beginning with budget 2016-17.

But before we can move toward the stronger tomorrow, it is vital that each and every Newfoundlander and Labradorian understand where we are right now. Today we have a deficit of almost \$2 billion, and we expect the 2015-16 deficit to be \$870 million higher than the \$1.1 billion forecast last April by the previous government. This is unprecedented and corrective action must be taken. Simply put, right now we don't have enough money coming into the province's Treasury to pay for everything we currently fund. That means the next step is borrowing. Our current reality is that if nothing changes this government will have to borrow at least a billion dollars for each of the next five years just for operations, which includes debt servicing expenses and interest on what was borrowed.

As government announced in our '15-'16 fiscal economic update in December, the total required borrowing including borrowing for interest and debt repayment will be \$15.4 billion to '20-'21. Budget '16 will provide an update for the '15-'16 results, and the \$1.1 billion deficit budgeted should be noticed that it's the highest ever budgeted by any administration and it is unprecedented. The previous administration did not plan for this eventuality and they did not put money aside to address this type of issue.

Our net debt has increased by over \$900 million this year compared to what was budgeted by the previous administration. In our current situation, if we do nothing it would be, as we've talked

about, like maxing out your credit card \$5,000 every minute of every day for the next six years. We cannot have that; things must change.

The current fiscal reality, if left unchecked will worsen. Newfoundland and Labrador is at a critical juncture and it is important that we all work together to address our fiscal challenges.

Our government continues to be encouraged by the level of quality of engagement thus far with the Government Renewal Initiative. Far surpassing previous budget engagement activities, over 1,000 people have attended engagement sessions. In addition to the public sessions, we are encouraging Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to continue to share their ideas and suggestions through our online Dialogue App, which has almost 1,800 unique ideas being received. That kind of response illustrates to me that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians understand the gravity of the situation that we find ourselves in right now and are fully engaged in helping find meaningful solutions.

Madam Chair, as I conclude my remarks – I have to say it's exciting to say that, Madam Chair. As I conclude my remarks, I would like to say it has been an honour to have the opportunity to speak on this important piece of legislation. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues who will also speak to this Interim Supply bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's really nice to say it also on this side of the House. Madam Chair, we're debating Interim Supply right now. As most people know in the House, Interim Supply is an opportunity for us to be able to make sure there are finances in place so that government can continue. That's basically what we're doing here today.

It's important that we pass this bill and I'm sure it will be passed. The things that it does are to make sure that our payroll is in place so our public servants are assured their pay will be there from the 1st of April to the end of June. It's a lot of money and it needs to be allocated so that government can continue to do its work.

I think the minister gave a great example of what Interim Supply is all about, so I'm not going to go on to say what she said about Interim Supply and the need for it. Today, it gives me my first opportunity here in the House to get up and basically talk about – well, we can talk about anything when we want to get up because it's a money bill.

It's my first opportunity to get up. I look across the House at so many new faces. I just want to say to everyone and to my colleague here next to me for CBS, congratulations on winning your election. I'm sure the people in the province and your districts have put great confidence in you.

I always can remember my first time coming into the House of Assembly when I was a young boy. I watched my father down over the rail and could see him there. I thought about how proud I am. I'm sure that most of you guys and girls that are here today, your families are very proud of what you're doing.

We have a big responsibility. It's a responsibility, I'm sure, that both sides of the House – we all feel it's something we have to do. I do believe everybody is here for the best reasons. The reason we're here is to make sure our constituencies are taken care of, our communities are taken care of, but most of all, the people in those communities have a voice and we're the voice for them. It's important.

I have to start off by saying in the election I was so fortunate to have so many people come forward and volunteer – as I'm sure all you did. At this time I'd really like to say a big thank you to the people who did come out and help me.

As new MHAs, you'll find in the House of Assembly the little things you do for people are the big things. It may be helping somebody get a roof shingled, it may be helping somebody with a medical appointment, it may be helping somebody by just hearing their concerns. It's so



important we do that. That's what we are as MHAs.

I heard that time and time again at the door. People said to me, Kevin, b'y, listen, I called you and you called me back. That's what we are. We're here for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. To everybody, I just hope you realize who put us here and who can take us out of here. It is very, very important.

I'm looking forward to most of you guys and girls getting up here and doing your maiden speeches. If you're nervous or anything – none of you will be as nervous as I was on my first one, okay, because I was so nervous on the first one I never slept the night before or anything at all. Now today I'm getting up here with hardly any notes in front of me at all. It will all come.

I'm sure there are ministers along the front row with vast experience who will tell you, listen, you'll be okay; you'll get it done after a while. You have lots of experience there on your front row, so listen to them. I was told the same thing, that you'll be okay, too.

I'm looking forward to these maiden speeches. It's an opportunity for us to see who you are and it's an opportunity to be able to thank people, and it's an opportunity for your constituents to see what you're going to focus on over the next four years. It's important we do it, and I really do look forward.

I want to congratulate the Premier, and I want to congratulate the ministers in his Cabinet. You guys and girls got a big job to do. As the Minister of Finance just spoke that time, the economic turmoil the province is in, not only our province, when you look at provinces like – I could be wrong, but I'm sure I read somewhere this morning Alberta's deficit this year is going to be an extra \$10.4 billion, Saskatchewan are finding a long of difficulties. It is a difficult time. It is a difficult time for this province.

I know as an MHA I have a responsibility to do – as the Opposition, I have a responsibility to question ministers and hopefully get the proper answers. I also have a responsibility to the people in my district, to make sure the best possible job is done for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I will support;

when ministers do great things and get up and make good announcements and we work together, I think it's great for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that's what we should be all about.

Mr. Speaker, as Opposition we have a job to do. I want to ensure the constituents of Cape St. Francis – and Madam Speaker, I made a mistake. The first time up, I always said the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis when I first started. So it is a beautiful district. I really want to assure the people in my district that no matter in Opposition or in government I will be there to listen to what they have to say and listen to their concerns. I will bring their concerns to the House of Assembly. It's important.

Over the last eight years I've had the opportunity to, again, stand in the House and represent government and do my things in my district. Today, I take pride that in my district we have a lot of co-operation. I attend a regular meeting where all the mayors – we call it a mayors' meeting. Actually the Portugal Cove-St. Philip's mayor comes along also and the MHA for Conception Bay East – Bell Island comes along. It's a joint thing.

I know that in a lot of parts of the province people are doing it today, municipalities are working together. So it's important that we show them our leadership and make sure they do this because it's a way we can save money. When we do things together, whether it's through municipalities, it could be through dog collection, it could be through animal control, it could be through garbage collections, whatever. Working together, it's important that we do those things.

We'll hear from the other side when they get up. They'll say you squandered money and you did this, you had a lot of money; but I'm very proud of the investments that were made in my district over the last eight years. Actually, I'm very proud of the investments made over a number of years because the late Jack Byrne before me was a great member and he did a great job. There were a lot of good investments in my district. Also before Jack, it was my father. So I'm not going to say anything bad about him, I'll tell you that right now. He did a good job, too.

Over the last number of years, my district – since the boundaries got changed – is basic communities. It's Logy Bay-Middle Cover-Outer Cove, Torbay, Flatrock, Pouch Cove and Bauline. Some of the investments that were made over the last number of years are important to this district. Our area has grown 20 per cent in the last number of years, which is a lot of growth. On the Northeast Avalon we saw that growth. We saw it in CBS. We saw it in Mount Pearl, but down our way there was huge growth. The Town of Flatrock, I think, grew by almost 30 per cent. That's good for municipalities because it gives them some money. The only bit of money they have coming in is residential taxes. So it's great for municipalities because it gives them a chance to do things.

The big thing we have to be able to do and to make sure and it's huge – I was the Mayor of Flatrock back in 2005 and the cost ratios were like 50-50. We changed them to 90-10 and 70-30 in cases of Torbay. This is so important to communities in rural Newfoundland, too, because it gave them a chance to invest in fire trucks. It gave them a chance to invest in water and sewer. It gave them a chance to invest in the roads. That's what we have to continue to do.

I understand the government has fiscal responsibilities, no doubt about it, and I know you are looking at all departments and seeing where it is to and whatever, but the investments that were made over the years – and not only in PC districts, in Liberal districts all over this province, there were great investments.

I look at 14 new schools getting built in the province; it is huge. In my own district I look at Holy Trinity Elementary. I can remember going up to Holy Trinity Elementary. It was an old school. Every time you walked the floor you could hear it squeak. The corridors were narrow and everything else. But now I go down to Holy Trinity Elementary, what a beautiful school and what a great opportunity for our children to be able to go to a school. With the top everything, from the whiteboards to technologies like we've seen before. Technology I know nothing about. You look at everybody today and they are so technical, especially the younger people. But we give them the opportunity and we still have to do that.

There is a new school getting built in my district right now. It is on the way and I know that there are some delays there. I am still hoping that the contractor, the Department of Education, and the Department of Transportation will be able to do their due diligence and we get that school open on time. But I also have been speaking to the school board. They have contingency plans in place in case it's a little bit delayed. Hopefully it will open this year and we're really looking forward to it. That's another great investment that government has made because it's an investment in our children.

Again, in my district, like I explained a little while ago, it grew so fast that the infrastructure needs in education was just unbelievable. We started off in Cape St. Francis in Pouch Cove where there were 125 or 126 children. Today, there are 309 in the school. So it's huge. The music room is getting used now by children doing different things. So the new school, what it is going to do, it will go K-4 and it will take the fives and sixes out of that school; it is an important investment.

I was just looking at different investments all over my district. I look at the Town of Bauline, the smallest community in my district, but one of the fastest growing ones – a beautiful town, an absolutely beautiful town. They had an old school that was there and that's what they used for their centre for any activities for anything at all, their council chambers, everything. It got condemned because there was mould in the building and they had to shut the building down. Actually, they knocked it down completely. They rented an apartment and that's where they had their town council meetings every week and that's where they went and did things for the town.

If they had to have a public meeting they went down and used the United Church, sat in the church, and did their meetings. But today, we were down just before the election and we opened a brand new town hall. What it's done for the community is unbelievable. It's brought the community together. It's unbelievable.

Right now, they're starting a seniors' group. They have – I think it's either yoga or the newest fad or whatever it is with the yoga. I'm

not sure even what it's called, but they have that there. The building is getting used.

Even right now they're looking at people coming because it's such a beautiful spot and it's a little bit outside St. John's. They're marketing and they're getting people, different companies from St. John's, to come down and do little retreats there for a couple of days. It's huge.

What it's done, the investment that was made – and it was a huge investment. There are 400 people now – I'd say about 500 now, the place is after growing. The investment that we made as a government to a new town hall, what a difference it's made for the community, and that's what we're here for. Those are the reasons we work and do what we can for our constituents. That's one of the great things that I really feel proud of, the investments that we've made.

Right now, my district has a lot of issues. The biggest issue in my district probably is the water supply in Pouch Cove. Right now, government, over two years ago, did a pilot project where they had three different companies come in. The Department of Environment were the ones that came up. They said you have to give us three solutions and then come back with us. They've been very helpful to the Town of Pouch Cove. I have to say the people at the Department of Environment have been excellent. They've been there all the way with the town council.

Right now they've had three different pilot projects go in where they show the different filtering of the water system. The problem is their water supply is a shallow pond and it picks up all the sediments off the side. The colour of the water gets changed every now and then. It's a huge problem. The water needs to be filtered.

Like I said, there are three different companies after coming down. Each one does a presentation. They're there for two weeks. The council comes up and has a look. They found solutions to this, but we're going to need to get some funding to get this done. We have to look to the federal government also to make sure that they play their part in helping with all this funding that we do need in our towns.

Over the last number of years – over the last eight years since I've been here in the House of Assembly – I'm proud of the investments we've made in my district. I can look at some really big ones. I can look at the Jack Byrne Arena, which right now is one of the nicest arenas. There are some beautiful arenas around.

For anyone listening, tonight is the final game of the Avalon East championships. We're tied with St. John's 3-3. So anybody who wants to come down, I'll be there at 7:30. I'll see you down there. Come on down. If we have to play the Cataracts, that could be scary, but listen, we'll go there.

Anyway, it's a great place. We started off, actually, with minor hockey in the area. Just to give you an example of what an arena does to your population, our minor hockey system in 2005 had 167 children involved in it. Today, we have over 800 children involved in minor hockey because there was an arena put in the area. It's a huge investment, I know, but it's a good investment. I'm sure everyone will agree with me in the House any time we can have our children more active and doing sports and whatnot, it's a healthier child. That's what we all have to be promoting here. These are great investments, again, like I said, in my district.

Madam Chair, I see my time is up. I know I'm going to get lots of opportunities, so there'll be a few stories I'll be able to tell you down the road about other things in my district that I'll gladly pass on to you.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Let me say, first of all, what a pleasure it is to speak in the House of Assembly. Of course, this will be my first opportunity since the new session and since the election, so I do also just

want to take the opportunity to welcome all hon. Members and congratulate them on their success in the last provincial election.

As has been said, I'm sure regardless of what party we represent, what stripe we represent, the bottom line is that it was the people's will that we're here. We have a mandate from the people of our districts, and I'm sure that everybody is here to do what's best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Madam Chair, I had planned actually on starting off – I wanted to talk a little about the budget, but there is an issue that has sort of arisen this afternoon. So I do want to at least make note of that first. Madam Chair, I refer to the petition which was presented by the Member for Mount Pearl North on St. Peter's Primary.

I just want to say that there have been issues at St. Peter's Primary, as we know, for quite a number of years in terms of space. I can remember sitting on the other side of the House of Assembly and presenting petitions at that time about spatial issues, about the fact that there were kids doing gym class in the cafeteria and so on. Unfortunately, that's an issue that's been ongoing for quite some time.

I'm very pleased to see that there are going to be some modulars added now, which was actually something which I had advocated for at the time. As opposed to changing the grade configurations, I had advocated that we should be looking at some modular spaces so that we could keep what was then St. Peter's Elementary intact, but the minister of the day, of course, saw fit not to go down that road.

With that being said, my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl North, does make some valid points. We do have some issues at St. Peter's Primary. Certainly, as he indicated, I also have been contacted by parents of kids who go to that school, but also parents of children who will be going to that school next year in terms of full-day kindergarten. Of course, St. Peter's Primary would have children from both Mount Pearl North and Mount Pearl – Southlands who will be attending. As a matter of fact, there will probably be more from Mount Pearl – Southlands than there will actually be from Mount Pearl North – a lot more.

I just wanted to say that I am glad that the Member is raising this issue. It's certainly an issue which I've had discussions now with parents – some parents. I've had discussion with the administration of the school. I've had numerous conversations with the school board, and I've had conversations with the minister. I'm very pleased the minister is taking this issue very seriously and he has his officials looking into the matter. We're actually planning on going to visit the school so we can see first-hand exactly what the issues are.

When it comes to issues around education or health care, whatever the case might be, I would say, Madam Chair, we have to put our political differences aside. While we may be on one side of the House or the other – and I'm sure the Member for Mount Pearl North will be taking jabs on this side and we'll be taking jabs back on the other side about what they did or they didn't do and so on. I just want to say for the record that when it comes to all issues surrounding the City of Mount Pearl, the schools we have in Mount Pearl, health care issues for the citizens of Mount Pearl, roads and infrastructure for Mount Pearl, whether it comes to recreation for Mount Pearl, funding for seniors in Mount Pearl, then I don't view the Member for Mount Pearl North as my adversary in that regard. He's my ally and we will work together for the people of Mount Pearl.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** I would certainly encourage all Members to take that same approach with your neighbouring districts when it comes to issues around your districts, because it's the people who put you there to work for you and we have to put petty partisanship aside when it comes to important issues.

Madam Chair, I did want to make that point, and I think it's an important one. I also want to make the point that in terms of my district it's changed, like a lot of districts did change. My district was once called Mount Pearl South, but since the boundary change, it's now Mount Pearl – Southlands. So I'm going to say about 25 per cent of my district is now made up of Southlands, South Brook, Ruby Line area, which is in the City of St. John's.

I certainly just want to reiterate my commitment to the people of that area, that while I may have been a strong proponent for the City of Mount Pearl – and I still am and always will be – that part of the district will get the same attention as Mount Pearl gets, and I will continue to advocate for them on the issues they have in Southlands.

Certainly, when we look at Southlands there's going to be a lot of common issues anyway because the kids are all going to school in the City of Mount Pearl primarily. They're going to be availing of services in Mount Pearl, recreation, sports teams, all of that stuff, so a lot of it is common anyway. When you sort of address one issue, you're addressing for all. But when it comes to specific issues around Southlands and so on, my commitment is to work for the people in that district, to work with the St. John's City Council who I have a good relationship with a number of their council members to ensure that their issues are dealt with and addressed in the same manner.

Madam Chair, I'm not sure how much time I am going to have to get through this because, of course, in Interim Supply debate, with the exception of the first two speakers, we have 10 minutes. Ten minutes is not a lot of time to get into many issues, unfortunately. But I do just want to say in terms of the budget – and if I get another opportunity to speak on Interim Supply or whether we get into the actual budget itself I will be, obviously, wanting to reiterate some of the points which I've made in the last couple of years, in the last couple of budgets, when I was sitting on that side of the House.

I reference back to the 2013-2014 budget. I can remember speaking at that particular budget. Minister Johnson was the minister of Finance at the time. I can remember talking about the billion-dollar shopping spree, was the terminology that I had used at the time: the billion-dollar shopping spree. That was back two budgets ago, long before the price of oil hit rock bottom where it's hit now.

Even at that time, we were running huge deficits and we were continuing to spend. Not only were we continuing to spend, we were actually increasing spending. There were pavement and fire trucks going out the door like nothing else.

All of those budgets were increased. I guess one could argue it's because we were leading up to a provincial election, or at least what would have felt to have been a provincial election coming up, had we not seen the whole leadership issue with the governing party, all the constant delays to try to drag out the election as long as we possibly could. But even at that time, we were increasing all of this spending and at the same time we were borrowing

Of course, in the last budget we saw another situation where we were projecting huge deficits and we were borrowing billions of dollars again. Even though it was pointed out by us in the Opposition at the time, everything still went through and we continued down the road. Now that the price of oil has really plummeted, we find ourselves in a much worse situation than anybody had anticipated.

I think it's fair to say that nobody on either side of the House would have anticipated oil prices going where they've gone. No one would have seen them going that low. It's important to remind people that even when oil prices were high, we were still projecting huge deficits and we were still borrowing huge amounts of money. So when we hear the now Opposition say it's all about the oil, we couldn't control oil, they're absolutely right, but it wasn't all about the oil prices. It was about unsustainable spending even before oil prices dropped.

That will be some of the points, some of the issues I know I'll be raising, I know some of our colleagues will be raising, is about how we got here. More importantly, as we get into the budget and so on, it's important that we not just focus on how we got here but we focus on what we're going to do now that we're here. There's no doubt, there's going to be some tough decisions that are going to have to be made. It's going to be coming forward in the budget. I'm sure there's going to be lots of spirited debate, no doubt, but at the end of the day I think we all realize where we are and we all realize we're going to have to take some drastic action. So I look forward to participating in that debate when it happens.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** I remind the Member his time has expired.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. PERRY:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to add my voice to those here today who are quite pleased that we do have a Madam Chair in the House today and certainly delighted to be working with you in this capacity.

This is my first opportunity to rise to my feet in debate since the House has reconvened for this session. I would like to start out today by thanking my constituents profusely for their overwhelming support in the recent election and assure them I will continue to work with the same vigour and the same relentlessness I have always shown as their Member. I will advocate strongly on behalf of not only the constituents of my district, but on behalf of the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole. I, for one, do believe I'm going to thoroughly enjoy the role in Opposition. It certainly adds a new perspective to government and how government functions. I really look forward to the role and to representing the people of this fine province.

I'm going to speak very briefly here today. We only have 10 minutes, as we said, in committee, but I want to talk about revenue sources as has been talked about in this House of Assembly since we reconvened. As many people in this province know, and some will say probably the deciding factor as to what happened with the election, was in our budget last year we did recognize that revenue sources had to be increased. That was why Budget 2015 introduced the return of 15 per cent HST.

Madam Chair, the party opposite – and I certainly wish them well. As a resident of this province, I want nothing more than for Newfoundland and Labrador to be as strong as it possibly can be and for people to feel like they can continue living here and continue building this great province, making this their home for their families and the place they want to raise children.

There was a campaign against us to squash the HST. Many people didn't want to see a rise in HST. I think what we are going to clearly hear from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in the coming months, they do not want to see an increase in taxes. Any expert in the financial field, and certainly Wall Street will tell you as well, if you're going to increase taxes the one that will have the least impact on people and the least impact on the economy is HST.

I'm really hoping we're not in a situation here today in the province where we were lead to believe a new government would not increase taxes but they subtly probably had intentions of looking at corporate income tax and personal income tax. We certainly know today that everything is on the table, Madam Chair, and I, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, stand here in this House today and advocate that if there must be a tax increase we should look at the one with the least implications, which is HST. I am certain no one in this province wants to see an increase in corporate income tax, no one in this province wants to see an increase in personal income tax. We as a party would never have done that, Madam Chair.

When I think sometimes about politics – and I've been very political ever since I was a young child. I remember when the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was first developed. I was in high school. I sent away and I got a copy. It's framed and in my office now. I always had a passion for policy and a concern, in recent years, that perhaps we don't pay as much attention to policy as we should. The rhetoric, the drama and the theatre outweighs the amount of time and attention we pay on policy, which is very disturbing to me, Madam Chair.

I've read a lot of books about what the Left is all about and what the Right is all about. I have predominantly been a Conservative most of my life. I have voted always. Sometimes I do believe it's the people and not the party, and sometimes the party may be more in line with my Conservative views, even though it's a Left-leaning party.

When it comes to running deficits, in really layman terms, that's generally a Left-leaning policy, and when it comes to tightening the belt

that's generally a Conservative-leaning or Right-leaning policy. It seems to be all upside down these days in the province.

I will admit that as a government we have delivered some budgets that were leaning Left in terms of running deficits, but the philosophy that I think we've seen coming from this government in the last few months is, in my mind, extreme far Right. Preston Manning must be thoroughly overjoyed with the direction he sees this government going. To me, it doesn't really feel like a Left at all because when all cuts are on the table to the tune of 30 per cent, I, as a Right-leaning Conservative, cannot even support that.

I will take my seat now, Madam Chair, and implore to the government in your budget deliberations, please do not raise corporate or personal income tax. The people of this province have already endured enough cuts.

Thank you so much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

May I remark, as well as my hon. colleagues, how delighted we are to have you in the Chair and to recognize you as such.

Madam Chair, I also note today is the 15th of March, known otherwise as the ides of March. It marks the death of Caesar. My hon. colleagues would know that when Caesar was dying his last words were: "Et tu, Brute?"

When I reflect on the financial situation of this province it certainly is an "Et tu, Brute?" because it speaks to a betrayal by a number of people and by persons. It is certainly concerning, I'm sure, to the people of this province. That is a strict definition of what Caesar said.

I was also reminded on this date of Nero, who was an hon. senator at the time, who said something along the lines of: He watched while Rome burned.

When we're speaking about the financial situation in this province, I think we're all concerned about the financial situation and perhaps that we didn't put the attention that we needed to, to the financial situation of the province, when we really had the opportunity with so much in oil revenues and so much in the commodities market coming into the province. So when you look at this, it certainly is of importance, I think, to the people of this province.

It's my first opportunity to rise and thank the great people of St. John's West who elected me to represent them. I note, it is an honourable and long-standing district in our great province, represented by people like Joseph R. Smallwood, people like John Crosbie who have had the opportunity to stand in this House before me. If I could be one-tenth the orator and one-tenth the parliamentarian of both those gentlemen, I will be able to do the work that the people of this province needs. So I thank the people of St. John's West.

I stand today to talk about the Interim Supply bill, which I think is very important for people to remember that it is an important part of our parliamentary democracy that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador cannot spend money until such monies are approved and appropriated by the elected Members of this House. I think it's a very important premise of our democracy that we all must debate and discuss and decide before money can be spent by this province.

As you know, within days of becoming government we presented the mid-year economic forecast. It was distressing to learn of the serious and difficult financial situation the province is facing: almost \$2 billion in deficit this year and growing. We have mounting debt. We have increased borrowing costs and interest. We have restricted ability to really support the essential programming that is required by the people of this province.

You will hear a number of people stand up in the next number of days talking about their districts and the requirements in their districts and the requirements of the people of this province. It's difficult when you're faced with a problem that we don't have enough money to ensure that the

programs and services that the people of this province want can be delivered.

If you look at our total debt in 2003-2004, it was \$6.79 billion. In 2015-16, it rose to \$12.36 billion, an increase of \$5.57 billion or 82 per cent – difficult, Madam Chair, very, very difficult. If left unchecked, our net debt is projected to grow to \$23 billion by '20-'21, and understanding debt carried by an organization like the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is key to gaining insight into its financial health.

The current financial situation is against a backdrop of reaping in upwards to \$20 billion, plus then, in addition to that, the Atlantic Accord monies in offshore oil revenues in the past decade. As my hon. colleague earlier spoke about, when oil prices were over \$100 per barrel, we were still having a very significant deficit – very concerning.

The unprecedented magnitude of the fiscal deficits and the mounting debt facing the province has led the new Liberal government to begin a Government Renewal Initiative and a meaningful public engagement process that will help provide information that government can use to address our fiscal realities in laying a strong foundation for the future.

We don't have enough money coming to the province's Treasury to pay for everything we currently fund. What's our next step? Well, the next step would be borrowing. That's an easy concept for most of us to really understand. It's in our own households. If you're not bringing in enough money to cover our expenses, we have to borrow. And that is what this province is faced with.

Our current reality is if nothing changes, government will have to borrow at least \$1 billion for the next five years just for operations alone. That includes debt servicing expenses and interest on what is borrowed. A total required borrowing, including borrowing for interest and debt payments, would be \$15.4 billion to '20-'21.

It will continue to worsen if we don't address the situation. It will be like borrowing \$7 billion a day every day for six years. It's like putting

\$5,000 on your credit card every minute of every day. It's clear; we have to modernize government and improve service delivery.

Since forming government we have sought people's thoughts, ideas and direction on how we can reduce expenditures, eliminate waste, generate revenue and modernize government. We are in uncharted financial waters and it is indeed all hands on deck. We're being asked to balance our wants against our needs.

Clearly, to serve Newfoundlanders and Labradorians well and fully understand the things they want for themselves, their families and their future, we have an obligation to seek their advice. In that regard, thousands of Newfoundlander and Labradorian residents have been sharing their thoughts, ideas and their solutions as part of the Government Renewal Initiative. Over 1,000 people have attended public sessions so far. We've had 16 different public engagement sessions, a number of public servant sessions where we've asked the public servants to come in and give us their ideas on how we can improve, modernize and ensure we have the services that people need in this province.

We've had multitudes of engagement with different types of stakeholders. Madam Chair, we've asked them to come in and give ideas and suggestions on how we can improve things. We've had overwhelming interest in our Dialogue App as another way for people to reach out and talk to us and make sure that they have an opportunity to contribute to the ideas and suggestions on how to improve not just our financial situation, but how to improve services, how to modernize what we're doing, how to ensure that they have the services that they need and how to ensure that we're doing it in the best way possible.

We've received over 1,800 unique ideas and suggestions on the Dialogue App, which is a wonderful opportunity for people to be able to liaise and to contribute their concepts and ideas.

It's important to note that decisive actions informed by these ideas are being gathered in the Government Renewal Initiative. Some will be implemented in budget 2016 this spring, followed by some others that will have medium-



term actions that require a bit more due diligence, more research, before we can implement and then there will be some longer term actions that will take to the next budget.

As the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has said, this is a multi-year plan to ensure that we reach the kind of fiscal security that we all desire in this province. We didn't get in this situation in the short period of time, so it's going to take us a little bit of time to ensure that we can make sure we have a plan going forward that really works for everyone.

As conversations with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians continue, we're going to release the results of our dialogue, release the results of these conversations. They are going to inform budget 2016 and onwards to 2017 and beyond. It's important for everyone to understand the seriousness and complexity of the situation we are facing as a government, as a people and as a province. We're going to continue to examine ways government can be more responsive, more modern, more effective, more efficient and I have tremendous confidence in the resourcefulness of our citizens to provide innovative solutions.

I know on this side of the House we have a team that is dedicated to ensuring that we have the ideas and suggestions that we need to move forward to ensure that we have the fiscal certainty and security in this province.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to Interim Supply. I look forward to the budget in the spring.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am pleased to stand this afternoon and sort of have the first kick at the can when it comes to speaking about the financial situation in which we are. The Interim Supply, as maybe some of our watchers and listeners may not understand,

is simply approving expenditures after March 31 when the fiscal year ends.

The budget for a government goes from April 1 of one year to March 31 of the other and if we don't approve the Interim Supply, then after March 31, because there will be no budget in place, the government will not be able to spend money, and we can't have that, obviously. A normal procedure is until a budget for a new year is approved, that government will approve an Interim Supply. In other words, approval for spending that happens before the budget is approved.

I'm pleased to be able to speak to some of the fiscal issues that are facing us and some of the concerns I have and our caucus has in the situation we're in. I've been aware of some of the language government has been using. It was already used just now by my colleague for St. John's West: We have to balance our wants against our needs. I find that a very interesting phrase, Madam Chair, especially in light of the situation of our province right now with regard to needs.

When the government held its consultation process earlier on, I understand when people went to those consultations the question that was put to them was: What can we cut? Because we are in such a mess, we have such a serious fiscal problem, we have such a serious problem with regard to deficit, help us decide what to cut. I find it very disconcerting that government didn't go to people in the province and say: What are needs that we have that we must keep? What are needs that have to be met? And then government go and say: Okay, what are we going to do to keep these needs in place?

The people of this province did not create the fiscal mess we are in, so they should not be expected to solve that problem. I found it interesting in the Speech from the Throne the government talked about its 500,000 advisors. Well, those 500,000 advisors are looking for leadership from the government, are looking for ideas from this government about how basic needs are going to be met in this province.

Government should be the ones who are coming out with the ideas. These people asked to be elected as government – we all did, but these

were the ones who were elected and they should be the ones who are giving leadership, giving answers and showing the direction in which we can go to make sure that the needs of people are met.

We have needs in our health care system that are not being met. We have a good health care system and we have good people in that health care system. There are times that we have crisis, for sure. However, we also have some things that are not crisis, some situations that are more systemic. When we have that kind of a thing, like the care of our seniors – seniors care is probably one of the biggest issues that we're facing in our province today. Certainly over the last two months the numbers of phone calls that I'm getting from families and individuals around seniors care is unbelievable.

I can honestly say, as I stand in this House, it is daily. I'm having meetings on the phone. I'm having people in my office. Almost every week I've had people in the office wanting to meet and talk. So what we have to figure out is how are we going to take care of that, not what can we cut in the health care system. We may need to be looking at a reassignment of money, but I'll tell you the needs are outweighing the wants when it comes to the care of our senior citizens. Needs are outweighing wants.

When we use that phrase we have to balance the wants against the needs, you'd think that we were going around flush in this province with people with all kinds of services that are frills. We don't have frills in this province when it comes to services. We don't have frills in our educational system.

On paper, we have a policy with regard to inclusion in our provinces. I went to a public meeting a couple of weeks ago and a supporter came with me so that I wouldn't be there at the meeting by myself, and some supporters from the area where the meeting was taking place, and the person who came with me, though, said: My goodness, is inclusion that big of an issue? It just kept being talked about and talked about and talked about because, yes, it is that big of an issue.

Inclusion, the policy, has not been given the resources since the policy was put in place. It

has not been given the resources. We have children in classrooms with special needs without adequate supports – definitely without adequate supports. It's not good for the children with the special needs and it's not good for the children with whom that student is sitting in the classroom. It's really a serious issue. That's not a want; that's a need. We are not meeting that need.

So how is this government going to start showing that it knows how to meet the needs of the people in this province, the needs of seniors, the needs of children with special needs? How are we going to do that? This government didn't go out and say tell us how we can raise more money. It went out and said tell us how to cut. Well, that's not the way to go.

Why, for example, won't this government – I look at the whole issue of revenue, revenue that was lost in this province thanks to the other party that's in this House, revenue that was lost, for example, in corporate taxation. Even if we did nothing but bring our corporate taxation up to what exists in Atlantic Canada – for example, in Nova Scotia and PEI it's 16 per cent. Even if we were to bring our corporate taxation up to 15.5 per cent, we would not be up to where Nova Scotia and PEI is. If we did, in 2016-2017, bring our corporate taxation up to 1.5 per cent, we could get \$40 million more dollars in this province. This is the kind of thing this government needs to be talking about.

It does have to look at the unthought-out promise, I think, just to get themselves elected, of not going ahead with the rise in the HST. It was unthought of. They just said this is a way to get votes and they didn't care whether or not they can do it. Now they're stuck and they're saying to themselves, can we break a promise? Well, you've broken a few others already, so you might as well break that one. At least in breaking that one, we'll be getting some income in the province.

We have a serious issue here that this government doesn't seem to be facing. I heard the Member for St. John's West talk about a plan. I hope there is going to be a plan. Not a plan in how we're going to cut, cut, cut, but a plan in how do we see that not only do we maintain services we have in the province, but

how we improve our services. We are still far behind other places in Canada when it comes to services.

A child care plan is out the window in this province with this government – completely out the window. Yet if they did real planning, a real, public child care program would improve our economy. They are running so scared, Madam Chair, of the deficit that they are making knee-jerk comments in the public, and the public are afraid. To talk about cuts in the public service sector, for example, when we already have schools and hospitals and long-term care facilities that are understaffed is unconscionable; it's irresponsible.

So I'm asking government, as we stand here now and approve the Interim Supply, to think about what you're doing to the workers in this province as well and to their families in this province. Yes, we will approve Interim Supply, obviously, so we can go on paying our workers, but we also want to know that after a budget finally gets approved here, whenever we get to do that, that we also have jobs that will be maintained for the people who are going to supply those services which are meeting the needs of our people, not the wants of our people.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MS. MICHAEL:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** I remind the Member her time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LETTO:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I, too, would echo the remarks from our other hon. Members about you being in the Speaker's Chair. It's especially proud for us, I think, as we – certainly for my three other colleagues from Labrador, that you are also sitting there as a true Labradorian and we certainly appreciate that.

Madam Chair, it gives me great pleasure today to stand here and speak for the first time, I guess, other than a Member's statement, on this

bill, Interim Supply. I could talk about a lot of issues around Labrador West because there are lots of them. There is another commodity in this world that has taken a significant hit in prices other than oil and that's the iron ore. The impact that has had on the District of Labrador West in particular is certainly very troubling and has had a tremendous impact.

I could talk about Cain's Quest that happened this weekend. It was such a great event and I was very pleased to have the MP for Labrador and my other three colleagues from around Labrador with me this weekend to spend time with me and to celebrate the Cain's Quest and the success of the event.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MR. LETTO:** Thank you, thank you.

In my brief time that I have today, we could talk about a lot of things and we could talk forever on Cain's Quest but I want to talk about the impacts the downturn in the iron ore industry has had on the region. I want to specifically talk about Wabush Mines and the impact that has had on many of our people, and certainly the Town of Wabush, and indeed Labrador West in general.

I guess the closure of Wabush Mines has affected many people, Madam Chair, but I think the people who mostly feel the hit today are the retirees and the pensioners, the 2,400 pensioners of Wabush Mines who have seen a significant hit in not only their pension reductions, but also in the loss of their health benefits, their retirements benefits and what it has done to their lives and their futures.

They're not all in Labrador West; I said 2,400. They're from all over this world. They've moved to the Island. They've moved to the rest of Canada. They've moved to the United States of America. They've moved elsewhere. I would suggest that every member who is sitting in this House today would have somebody living in their district who has been impacted by this cut.

Certainly, the Member for Conception Bay South would have them in his because there are a lot of people living in his district who have lived in Wabush and have worked with Wabush

Mines. I can go on and on with the different Members, because everybody has been impacted and have members in their district. They are people who, in many cases, dedicated their entire working careers to a company, to Wabush Mines, only to see their pensions cut by 25 per cent.

Just imagine, if your paycheque was cut tomorrow by 25 per cent, the impact that would have on your household and your family; 25 per cent for the non-unionized people and 21 per cent for the unionized. Now, that's on top of the loss of their medical benefits. So they have to go out now and buy a medical plan. So it's a double whammy. This is happening to everybody right around our country. It is indeed a sad situation that they find themselves in.

The day after we got sworn in the House here, myself and the Minister of Service NL, our first task was to go to Wabush on the next day and announce to those pensioners and retirees that we have terminated your pension. In the best interest of all pensioners, we have terminated your pension with Cliffs and you will see, more than likely, a 21 or 25 per cent cut by March 1. This was exactly one week before Christmas Day.

Just put yourselves in their shoes and how they felt, and how we felt as a new government coming in, but we had to do it. We had to do it to protect the plan. It's unfortunate that we had to do it, but it was in the best interests of the people.

This Friday night past, we had our third meeting with them when they have seen the cut. The cut did happen on March 1. Myself and the Superintendent of Pensions, along with the MP for Labrador, Ms. Jones, along with my two colleagues, the MHA for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and the MHA for Torngat Mountains, were in there as well. We met with two law firms that are taking this through the legal matters.

We answered a lot of questions. They have a lot of questions, but do you know what? This past Friday, we gave them a lot of answers. They appreciated the answers. It's not the answers they wanted to hear, but we certainly gave them

answers. That in itself, I think, was very, very helpful for them.

Not only have these people met, but the Premier has also met with these people as well, and shown our concern and our interest in helping them forward. We have certainly not made any decisions on what we can do or will do at this point; nevertheless, we are there to support them.

I guess you've heard a lot about the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*, better known as the CCAA. Cliffs have gone into that bankruptcy protection and, because of that, it's why the pension is so underfunded. The CCAA allowed Cliffs to stop their payments, their special payments as well as their ongoing payments. That's why the fund is in the situation it's in and that's why we had to terminate the plan.

We need to change legislation. It may not help the people of Wabush; it may. Certainly, we have other companies, many companies in this country who are in the same situation. We have to change the rules of the CCAA as the federal legislation, so that pensioners will get priority on the creditors list. So if and when they do come out of bankruptcy and the list of creditors are there, that the pensioners are the first people to be compensated for their loss.

Not only have the people of Wabush suffered, the town itself – as you know, when Cliffs Natural Resources decided to close Wabush Mines, the town lost their grant in lieu of taxes. The previous administration did put in a three-year bridging program to allow them to absorb some of that loss until another mining company got up and running. Guess what? That mining company is still nowhere to be seen. We are now in our third year and there are no funds on the horizon to compensate for that loss of grant in lieu. So guess what they do? And they had no choice; they have to maintain the same services. The people are still living there. They have to maintain their services, so they have to get it through taxation.

Not only are these pensioners now losing 21 or 25 per cent of their pension, they've lost their health benefits and retirement benefits, but they also see an increase in the municipal taxes. So

they're hit again. How much more can these people take? It's really a difficult situation.

I've heard from so many people that on March 1, they went to the post office – and there's no mail delivery in Wabush; they go to a post office, to a post office box. They open the box and there's two letters in there. There are two letters in the box: one from Cliffs Natural Resources with their pension; they open it up and they see that, gee, I got less than I got last month. I'm getting 21 or 25 per cent less, but I knew that was coming. They take out the other envelope and open it up and it's from the Town of Wabush with the municipal taxes. They see probably a 20 or 25 per cent increase in taxes.

How do you think these people felt on that particular day? I'd never go back to the post office again. So it's where we are, unfortunately, and we as a government and certainly our four MHAs from Labrador, along with the Premier as the Minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, will continue to work with those people to see what we can do to alleviate this very, very serious position that they find themselves in.

Madam Chair, my time is up. I'd love to go on because there's so much more to say, but thank you and maybe I'll get another opportunity.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**MR. HUTCHINGS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is certainly a pleasure to get up today to speak to Bill 2, Interim Supply. Obviously, as was addressed by the Minister of Finance, this is a procedural process we need to go through in light of the fact that we're coming close to the end of the fiscal year. Government is in the process of having a new budget, and certainly to keep the operations of government flowing we need to go through the process of approving

Interim Supply, interim funding, to keep government proceeding and moving forward until we get to the actual budget and it's voted on here in the House by all Members.

It is my first time getting up to speak to particular legislation in the House. I'd like to take a moment to thank the people of Ferryland District for the opportunity to come back to the House of Assembly and serve them here in this capacity as the Member. I was first elected in 2007 and, again, it is always a privilege to serve the people of your district and serve in a variety of capacities, whether it's very important day-to-day issues that are important to people of your district, helping them out.

A lot of work is done and it's not known publicly, but it's those individual things you do for people, work hard for them, whether seeing them through a program in government or assisting them in some way. It's very important work, what we do as MHAs, and it has been a pleasure to do that and other capacities you serve in the legislature as you move through your career. It was a privilege for me to serve as a minister of the Crown in various portfolios as well to serve the people of the province in innovation, business and rural development; Fisheries and Aquaculture; and municipal and intergovernmental affairs.

My district stretches from Petty Harbour – Maddox Cove south to St. Shotts. It takes in a portion of the City of St. John's as well as various rural communities. There are various challenges and various groups we work with in terms of representing that district in the City of St. John's as well as a whole array of municipalities and some local service districts. The district encompasses a wide scope of industrial activity. As I said, all that's encompassed in the City of St. John's.

The fishery, the crab industry, is huge along the Southern Shore. There are four processing plants, very important; as well as industrial development, various number of fabrication facilities, all doing good work, some in the offshore, some in manufacturing, and some shipping of those products around the world. It is very vast in terms of the district and the activities and what we need to do the work on.

Obviously, the southern end of the Avalon over the past number of years, the inshore fishery for centuries was the keystone to the livelihood of those communities. It was hit hard with the downturn in the ground fishery. Communities like Trepassey had big processing facilities, draggers, and have seen challenges over the past number of years. Working with them and building infrastructure as a government and investing where we need to invest, we've been able to continue to grow and continue to build. Hats off to those volunteers in those communities and all the great work they do because without them, we wouldn't have great communities in the great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I always said we can put money into infrastructure, bricks and mortar, but without those people on the ground serving on municipal councils, serving in certain fire brigades, the Kinsmen Club, Knights of Columbus, all of those organizations that provide so much service we wouldn't have the great province we have.

Very exciting time coming up for the Southern Avalon with the UNESCO designation coming up – hopefully coming up in regard to Mistaken Point Ecological Reserve in Portugal Cove South. It is a very exciting project. I have the pleasure to work on that since 2007, to see it through – fossils of well over 600 million years old. It is certainly unique to the world; a lot of work gone into that dossier that was presented a number of months ago. I think it was delivered to France. We are looking at that process coming to conclusion in the months ahead.

I want to recognize the minister who had the opportunity to bring in the Ambassadors Inc. organization which oversees that process. I had a great chat with the minister, and I thank him for that and a discussion to bring him up to date on where we're to and the importance of continuing to fund that to make sure that we can get to a big celebration, I believe, in July in regard to getting that World Heritage designation.

It is twofold: to protect those fossils and the culture and identity of that, but certainly a huge opportunity in terms of economic development for that area. We've seen some of that already. We are seeing visitations up to probably about 6,000 to 8,000 people. We have people coming

through. Along the Southern Shore you've got several days of activity where people could come and stay. We're starting to see some infrastructure developed again. So that's very exciting. I'm certainly looking forward to a successful conclusion to that.

I want to recognize the staff at the Parks Division for the work they've done and those at the interpretation site in Portugal Cove South, which also serves as Cape Race and the Myrick communication centre out there as well. For those who don't know, that was the first area that received the first SOS from the *Titanic*.

Over the past number of years, when we were in government, we invested heavily in that, upgrades to it. We invested heavily in Mistaken Point and, hopefully, that will come to a conclusion with World Heritage designation in the months to come. Again, I recognize the minister and thank him for his help on that.

Overall, I said in my area the fishery is still quite significant. We've seen some challenges with the Northern shrimp in terms of a reduction in the biomass. We saw that a couple of years ago. I know we struck the all-party committee on fisheries in 2014. At that time, as minister of Fisheries, we went to Ottawa, collectively as a group, and made representation to the House of Commons Standing Committee, as well as to the senate committee with four recommendations, which amazingly today are the four things that we're still looking for. Unfortunately, it hasn't been accomplished.

Some of the things we looked at were that every year there would be a full-stock assessment done. There would be a reinvestment in science and look at LIFO. Collectively, the point was how do we develop a new allocation of that resource, bearing in mind what the biomass is, bearing in mind what the future looks like.

Two industries that are very important, the offshore and the inshore fishers as well, both play huge roles in terms of economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador, the offshore with full-time jobs, very high-paying jobs, certainly off-loading facilities and all those other things that go with it that supports that industry. Obviously on the inshore, whether it's plants or harvesters, that activity drives those

communities, rural communities, coastal communities. It makes a huge difference. We need to have the federal government step up. The information is there in regard to LIFO. We've talked about it for years.

The science is in from the assessment that was done. They need to move forward, make an informed decision and lay out a plan of how we move forward with the shrimp industry, obviously recognizing that biomass is declining. There was some news the other day in regard to the crab and where that may be going.

On the upside, we certainly have a groundfish industry that, for all intents and purposes, is improving and going in the right direction. The significant investment we made as a government in regard to research has helped in terms of getting a good understanding of that. The *Celtic Explorer* from Ireland that every year we put money into – very well spent – to get information on our ground stocks and be able to be at the table with DFO and the federal government and be well informed.

Right now, at the Marine Institute, we probably have some of the best and brightest scientists in regard to groundfish in Canada. That's based on the contribution we made on building that inventory of knowledge and expertise. That's here right now in Newfoundland and Labrador. It can be used very well, as we move forward in terms of our ground fishery and having that expertise and knowledge that we can bring to the table with the federal government in terms of driving a sound, sustainable plan for all of our fisheries.

I think we need to start talking about the ecosystem, not just about one off, one species. It's all about the ecosystem, how that functions and interaction between all those species, how we can continue to grow our economy, which is so important.

The aquaculture industry, we've invested heavily in that. It's a growing industry, a lot of opportunity. If you look at the South Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador and what it's done down there, I know there are proposals in for a second major project. I think it will be huge for Placentia Bay and the Burin Peninsula. There are great opportunities for growth in that. I know

the current government is having a look. Hopefully, there will be further growth that we can see as we move forward.

Madam Chair – or, Mr. Chair, sorry about that. I don't know if there was a change when I was looking in the other direction, but I certainly apologize for that, Mr. Chair. I've certainly appreciated my 10 minutes and I'm looking forward to an opportunity to come back again and speak to issues important to my district and important overall to public policy and to the government as they move forward and develop their budget over the weeks ahead.

Thank you again.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR (Lane):** The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. EDMUNDS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 2, 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, 2017 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Mr. Chair, we had an interesting weekend this past weekend. As my hon. colleague, the Member for Lab West said, we did join him in Lab West. Myself and the Minister of Tourism, the Member for Labrador West and my colleague from Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, we did attend the meeting with pensioners, Mr. Chair. It certainly was a very moving experience to hear the hardships they face. It was also good to see what plans are being made to address the issue.

Mr. Chair, we were also over there for another reason, which was probably on a more positive note, and that was the end of the Cain's Quest snowmobile race. I'd like to talk a little bit about the Cain's Quest snowmobile race because it's becoming a very popular race and it's taken on international overtones. This race happens every two years in our province.

Mr. Chair, at the starting point a little over a week ago, we had 37 teams of two that entered in Cain's Quest. Each team had 3,500 kilometres to go; 19 of those 37 teams actually finished the race. Mother Nature and Labrador's harsh environment took its toll on many teams through mechanical breakdown.

We've had teams entered from all districts in Labrador, including 11 from my district alone. We had teams from across the province, from across the country and we even had a team from Finland entered in the race in 2016.

Mr. Chair, I had the opportunity of meeting Team Wild Nordic Finland and they proved to be great ambassadors to the snowmobile race that happened. They indicated they are coming back. I did indicate to them, Mr. Chair, that they bring their friends.

Cain's Quest grows in popularity every year and the publicity it receives grows with it. This year, the Cain's Quest website had over a million visits – I think it was 1.3 or 1.13 million visits – in a very short time. It had a staggering 79,000 visits from 79 countries, making Cain's Quest an international event. As my hon. colleague, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair declared, this puts Cain's Quest up to par with the Tour de France and the Alaskan Iditarod.

In these struggling times, I think Cain's Quest proves to be a shining light. It has expanded Labrador's hospitality, its goodwill and its ability to host an event that's capturing the world's attention, promoting our province as a world-class destination.

Mr. Chair, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my hon. colleague, the Minister of Tourism, for his involvement and his input into making this a reality. I do thank him for that.

The investment, the organizing teams and the volunteers – and there were hundreds of volunteers – and the racers themselves all play a role in shaping and growing Cain's Quest to make it such a huge event. I would like to commend all those groups and volunteers for the great work they've done to ensure this is and will continue to be a success story for our province.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to share with this hon. House something that will at least give some kind of an idea of what it's like to compete in the world's toughest snowmobile ride. It wouldn't happen if it weren't for hospitality, for goodwill and for unbelievable sportsmanship. The respect from the racers themselves was put in the highest value of sportsmanship and goodwill.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to share some examples of this goodwill towards others and sportsmanship. Team 72 from my hometown of Makkovik came upon another team, Team 17, that had gotten into deep water in the river on the first night – a dangerous situation in the cold temperatures. Roy Martin and Errol Andersen, Team 72, didn't even hesitate, they stopped and helped them out. In doing so, one of the racers was injured and they were forced to discontinue the race, but the respect shown to them for their assistance of Team 17 I'm sure will be talked about for a long time, Mr. Chair. At the end of the day, Team 72 was recognized for their efforts and for their sportsmanship by winning the Sportsmanship Award.

Mr. Chair, Team 01, Team Bernice from Natuashish, led by Chief Gregory Rich, raced in the memory of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. Along the coast of Labrador, the residents opened their homes and their hearts to competitors of Cain's Quest. I would like to recognize two teams: Team 5 and Team 9 that assisted community members that were caught out in the night experiencing troubles. These teams brought these young people home to their communities, ensuring they were safe before they continued on Cain's Quest.

Team Cartwright, Mr. Chair, Team 24, pulled into Makkovik with a severely damaged track. Although there are no dealerships and no supply stores on the North Coast of Labrador, the community searched. They didn't find the track for the team. They continued on with the race and actually finished. These are just some of the examples of the goodwill and sportsmanship to prove that this race is not all about winning.

We all look forward to tuning in to Cain's Quest 2018, Mr. Chair. Some of us are even considering entering Cain's Quest 2018.

Thank you.



**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have a chance to get up in the House once again today and talk about issues that are important to my district and to my constituents as well, and to people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'd like to take a moment just to join with other Members in congratulating all those Members of the House of Assembly who were elected or re-elected in the recent general election. It is a big deal to stand in this House for the first time. I look forward to the many maiden speeches that we'll hear in the days and weeks ahead, as one of my colleagues alluded to earlier today.

I want to thank my constituents for their continued support, and the many volunteers and supporters who helped me in my bid to be re-elected as the MHA for Mount Pearl North in the provincial election as well.

Mr. Chair, earlier today I had an opportunity to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens in your district and in my district about a school situation. I'd just like to touch on that again while we're taking part in this Interim Supply debate today. The petition is a result of parents bringing forward concerns about plans to accommodate full-day kindergarten this fall, and also an extension that was proposed and approved for St. Peter's Primary on Ashford Drive in Mount Pearl.

Parents have been asking me to raise this issue in the House of Assembly, with the department, with the school board and so on. I've received numerous emails and phone calls, as I know you have as well, Mr. Chair. Essentially, parents are just looking for some information. I'm confident that the government and the school board will follow through on the commitment for an extension. I understand that it's still in the works.

There's a need for more information now, especially with full-day kindergarten commencing in September, which I'm on record as saying I'm pleased to see. Parents are wondering how modular classrooms will be utilized at St. Peter's Primary. How many of them will there be? Are they ordered? Will they be ready in time? Will they be in place for September when school starts? What kind of impact will we see on class sizes in the upcoming school year?

We understand that team teaching is going to be used at a number of schools, including St. Peter's Primary. Parents are wondering how many classes will be affected by this, what will the size of those classes be and what grade levels will be impacted. I'm sure that people are working on those answers, but I think it would do a lot to alleviate the concerns of parents if we could get more information out there to address those concerns.

Regarding the extension, funding was approved for the extension by the previous administration. There hasn't been a contract called. There hasn't been a tender put out so there's no contract awarded. That is causing people to wonder whether the extension is, in fact, on track for 2017, the concern being that there will be all these accommodations made to try and make the best of a tough situation in the 2016-2017 school year. If that was only a one-year problem, then I think people can make the best of it and live with some of the challenges that will be in place in the fall. If the extension is going to be delayed, then that causes major concern for families and I would imagine for students and staff as well.

I just wanted to take a moment to bring those issues to the floor of the House of Assembly once again. I look forward to working with the school board and also with the Department of Education to try and get parents some of the answers that they need which will hopefully put some of those concerns to rest.

Mr. Chair, during this Interim Supply debate I hope to have a number of opportunities to speak. One of the things I would like to talk about are some concerns that I have, and I know others have, about one of our regional health authorities, Central Health. We've heard in

recent days in Question Period and in the media about some safety concerns at Eastern Health. I'd like to talk about an issue that was in the media a number of weeks ago, an issue that's not resolved, about the management and senior administration at Central Health and concerns some physicians have, particularly in Gander.

There were a number of weeks earlier this year where our new Minister of Health and Community Services avoided media interviews on the subject, wouldn't answer questions. Eventually he did. That kind of approach is rather concerning, given the seriousness of the concerns that some of the medical staff have in Gander specifically.

I was contacted about some of those issues when I was the Minister of Health and Community Services last year. I did go to Gander. I did meet with several members of the medical staff, and followed up with officials in Health and Community Services about those concerns and called on Central Health to take action. I did my best to be hands on and to try to make the situation better, knowing that some of those concerns have been going on for a while. HR matters sometimes take time to resolve. They can be complex. It was clear to me action was needed.

Recently, Health and Community Services issued a statement about this being a human resources issue with very little to say. Mr. Chair, it's fine as a minister to say you're not going to interfere with minor day-to-day human resource issues. That's quite a reasonable stance for any minister to take. The reason I'm rising in debate today to talk about this issue is we're not talking about minor issues here. We're talking about issues where the public interest is affected, and the lack of action on the part of Central Health, and now the Minister of Health and Community Services, is rather concerning. It's unfortunate that I find myself in a position where I feel compelled to stand and raise these issues once again.

I don't believe Central Health can continue to ignore major conflict between physicians and management within Central Health. As we know, the minister has first-hand knowledge of the situation. He's an experienced and accomplished surgeon who's spent a great deal

of his career working in Gander with many of the individuals that are continuing to make complaints and who feel their concerns are not being addressed. They had high hopes, of course, that with a minister who had the first-hand experience with these issues, those concerns would, indeed, be addressed.

What's really ironic about the situation, Mr. Chair, is the minister himself had concerns as recently as late September. I believe it was on September 22 he sent an email to virtually everybody on the medical staff in Gander where he described the Machiavellian way of management style of Central Health. He talked about the ostrich style of management at Central Health. He talked about how Central Health had created a poisoned well for doctors in Gander.

So those are some pretty strong statements. The minister said, well, that had to do with another issue. But those are some pretty broad sweeping, strong statements about the state of senior management and administration at Central Health.

I hope to have multiple opportunities in debate to speak to this and other issues, but on that broad issue of concerns from physicians and from medical staff in Central Health, the right thing to do is to order a full review of senior management and administration at Central Health. That is what's required. I was prepared to do that. Staff at Health and Community Services would be well aware of that. I think that is what's absolutely critical and essential at this point in time. The minister wouldn't even comment on these issues until he was forced out recently by reporters after denying multiple requests.

What's even more concerning is the recent review that was conducted of radiology at Central Health. While the minister will say, well, there are no patient safety concerns, I think when we delve into the contents of that report that was prepared by Dr. Rick Bhatia, there are 18 recommendations, the vast majority of which have not been implemented or addressed at this point in time. Several months have passed. I think when you look at those recommendations you will see we are talking about matters that could affect patient safety, and for that reason they need to be addressed and they need to be

raised. Some of those recommendations I think are quick and easy to address. Others are definitely complex and more complicated and will take time to address.

As a starting point, given the ongoing concerns about the state of affairs with management and administration in Central Health, the dysfunctional relationships, the ongoing conflict between physicians and management, perceived conflicts or perhaps real conflicts between Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor, all of that needs to be brought to a head and a full review is absolutely required at this point. So today I'm calling on the minister to do the right thing, to order that review and to force Central Health to take action.

I hope to have more time to speak about some of those recommendations in Dr. Bhatia's report and the concerns with the radiology department specifically at Central Health. There are numerous examples that point to the overriding concern around the management and leadership at Central Health. It's not good enough to take an ostrich-style approach and put your head in the sand. These issues must be addressed and they must be addressed quickly, Mr. Chair.

So today I'm rising in the House of Assembly to call on our Minister of Health and Community Services, who has first-hand knowledge of the situation, to do the right thing and show some leadership in addressing those concerns.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for the District of St. John's Centre.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

I'm very happy to stand today to speak to Interim Supply. First off, I would like to congratulate my colleagues. There are many new faces here in the House. Also, I would like to thank them on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – and I'm sure the people in their own districts have done so – for

taking the time. It takes a generous heart to put yourself up for election. It takes a certain amount of passion and compassion.

How wonderful it is that there are so many people here in this House who are bringing their particular area of expertise to the table. This is what's so wonderful about our democracy. We have a collection of people from all walks of life from all over the province who are saying, I want to be part of making our province better. Bravo and welcome to all the new faces. It's so great to see some other faces returning.

I look forward to working together with all of my colleagues here in the House. I do believe, in spite of all the dire warnings we have heard from government, that with our 520,000 people – souls scattered all over our Island and Labrador – together we can weather this storm and together we can make our way through this.

It's wonderful. I want to thank the good people of St. John's Centre who have chosen to re-elect me again. I assume they have done so because I have been able to work well with them. The District of St. John's Centre has changed a bit, as for all of us, because the representation here in the House has shrunk from 48 representatives to 40, although it was my hope and my party's hope that there would continue to be 48 Members until the official scheduled time of review for representation in the House.

Other Members in the House decided not to go that route. I particularly thought it would be important to have 48 Members because of the very difficult time that we find ourselves in, a time when people need more representation to weather this storm rather than less representation. But so be it; that's, again, how our democracy has worked. We are down now to 40 Members. Most of our districts are now larger. I have many more constituents in St. John's Centre.

It's interesting; my father grew up in St. John's Centre. The streets where he grew up are now encompassed by St. John's Centre. My grandmother did as well. So I have a large part of downtown, which I'm a downtown dweller myself. I'm very happy for the new people who are part of St. John's Centre. St. John's Centre also has gone out a little bit further west. So we

have a varied group of people, constituents in St. John's Centre.

The wonderful thing about being an MHA is not that you simply represent people, but you get to work with them. One of the examples of that is the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions actually came from the people of St. John's Centre. I have a wonderful group of people I consult with, that I meet with on a regular basis. I often say, so, what's keeping people awake at night? They all talked, and there were older people, and younger people, and straight people, and gay people, people with physical disabilities, people with a lot of money, people with no money at all, and we get together and we talk.

I said, what's keeping people awake at night these days? They said mental health and addictions. So I said, okay, how about if we do a town hall on mental health and addictions? And that's what we did. We thought maybe 60 or so people would come to our town hall; there were over 350. They actually had to lock the doors because there were so many people and we would have been over fire code. In that town hall, people had the opportunity to speak to one another.

We didn't do just a panel where we talked at people. People got together at tables and they talked about their own experiences. They talked not only about the difficulties, they also talked about the possibilities, which is what I think we all want to be doing here. We want to talk about the possibilities, the real possibilities. We want to talk about solutions to the problems we're facing right now.

Out of that I heard people saying they wanted to get together again. So we had a great big launch and we formed the Community Coalition for Mental Health. Out of that came a petition asking government to strike an All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and that's what we did.

So, Mr. Chair, that's how we can work as MHAs, not simply being a voice for the people but working directly with the people, because the people in our communities are the experts of their communities and when we work together we end up actually moving forward. That's what

the honour of being an MHA is all about, to be able to effect change with and on behalf of the people we represent.

Government keeps telling us this is the worst it has ever been, that it's unprecedented. Government keeps sharing and echoing that bad news again and again and again. It's reverberating and bouncing off walls in this House. We're hearing it in the media.

And what's even more disappointing, Mr. Chair, is that our own people are living in fear. Our own people are afraid. I get calls saying I've heard that Income Support is going to be cut in half or I've heard – this is what people are telling me. The rumors are abounding because government is fear mongering. I don't think that's their intent. I don't think that their intent is to make our own people so afraid that they are afraid that they're not going to be able to put food on their table. I don't think that's the intent but that's what's happening, and I'm sure all of us in this House are hearing from our constituents about their fears.

They're afraid they're going to lose their jobs. What does that mean? If you work in the public service and you're afraid you're going to lose your job, then you're afraid you're going to lose your house. Then you're afraid you're not going to be able to save money for your child to go to university or college. The fear just compounds.

I don't think that's what we all want to see happening right now. We don't want to be paralyzed by fear. What we do know from examples all over the world is that austerity doesn't work and that we cannot cut our way to prosperity.

We have to be careful. As Bernie Sanders said – I love this quote from him. Bernie Sanders said when we have to be careful – you know we have a war on poverty; there has been a war on poverty. We've had a Poverty Reduction Strategy, but we have to make sure right now that our war on poverty does not become a war on the poor.

With our current financial situation, we need to look at: what do the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, our brothers, our sisters, our mothers, our neighbours, our family, our

colleagues, what do we need in order to weather the storm? Now is not the time, as our leader said, to lose nerve. What do we need in order to make sure we can all weather this storm?

Mr. Chair, I'm very lucky, in St. John's Centre there are an incredible amount of community groups. I'm concerned about them, community groups who do a lot of really important work. Sometimes the work that they do is actually life-saving work. We are not talking about doing little charitable things; these are groups that are doing the work of helping to keep people afloat. We have been told there is going to be a freeze on their funding for the next two years. It's good they're not getting cut back, but we're told they're going to get a freeze.

Mr. Chair, I see my time is starting to run out, but I want to pay homage to the community groups in my district and in all of our districts, because we know that often it is the most vulnerable people, the people who have the greatest socioeconomic challenges, who are really hurt in times of economic downturns. We must take the leadership to ensure that all that is going to be downloaded onto to these community groups, that in fact they have the support and resources they need in order to help people stay afloat. We don't want to just survive

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is expired.

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

I look forward to speaking again.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you very much.

This is actually my very first time to rise in this hon. House. Not my maiden speech, obviously, but my first time, nonetheless. I would like to congratulate each and every one of you. I have admired you all for a long time, because as you

know this takes a lot of dedication and determination and, of course, we're working for the people. Thank you very much for that, and I'm glad to be among each and every one of you and I look forward to working with you all, and the Members on the opposite side of the House as well.

Also, I want to extend thanks now to the people of my District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, formerly known as the Port de Grave District, but due to the abrupt boundary changes we've endured in the past year we've become Harbour Grace – Port de Grave. I have about 15,000 constituents.

It's ironic, too, that Harbour Grace should be grouped in with Port de Grave, because I have a big history in the Town of Harbour Grace. I went to school there in what was the old St. Columba's Catholic school in Harbour Grace. So I have a lot of great connections, a lot of wonderful friends, and of course it is geographically located – we're all under that same umbrella.

Also at this time I can't help but reflect on the time I was a candidate. And there are people here in this room who can also attest to that. Some of us have been candidates since 2014 and had to go through the process again. Again, congratulations to everybody who is here.

It's hard to be up here and not reflect upon our fiscal situation, obviously. I'm not a believer in a blame game or finger pointing and whatnot, but there was an awful lot of money that was mismanaged to the tune of billions, as we know.

Back to my journalism days, I remember that infamous Bill 29. Do you guys all remember Bill 29? I remember watching the longest filibuster in the history, I think, of Newfoundland and Labrador for that one, Bill 29. I stand to be corrected. Fortunately, that bill was revoked, which cost taxpayers about a million bucks again from what I understand.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Right, and then, of course, we can't not talk about the Humber Valley Paving contract forgiveness either.

Ultimately, I want to talk about something closer to home, near and dear to my heart and to many constituents in my district. The District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave consists of Port de Grave, Bareneed, Coley's Point, Bay Roberts, Shearstown, Butlerville, Country Road, Bay Roberts east end, Spaniard's Bay, Tilton, Upper Island Cove, Bishop's Cove, Bryant's Cove –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Yes, Bryant's Cove, Southside, Harbour Grace, Harbour Grace, Riverhead.

In particular, there is a very aging infrastructure, which I'm sure my colleagues on the other side of the House are quite aware of, the Coley's Point Primary school. I know that's been an ongoing issue for some time. As a matter of fact, in the three past provincial budgets – and I've been paying close attention to this as it hits home to me – there were monies allocated for the replacement of Coley's Point Primary school.

A bit of a history lesson on the building itself: it is 60 years-plus. There are just under 400 students attending from K to three. This school services kids and families from the Port de Grave community, Bareneed, Coley's Point, Bay Roberts, Shearstown and Butlerville. There's some from Clarke's Beach, in the neighbouring District of Harbour Main, even coming down to this school.

Unfortunately, this has been ongoing – I can remember back in the time of the hon. Roland Butler, this was something that was important to him. That was quite some time ago when Roland served here in the House. Back then Coley's Point Primary was an issue and today, unfortunately, it is still a big issue in my district.

On the campaign trail it's definitely a number-one priority. Parents are concerned about the aging infrastructure. I've spent time over in the school myself for Family Literacy Day. I've had the pleasure of going and spending time with my young friends reading to them, so I've been around. I've been down those corridors. I've been to the gym.

Unfortunately, this school doesn't have a cafeteria so they're using makeshift classrooms, multi-purpose rooms for different tasks and whatnot. That student population is bursting at about 400. As we know, Bay Roberts-Harbour Grace area, we have an actual expanding population there. Just down the road we have the Long Harbour project, the Bull Arm project, Come By Chance, and of course –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MS. P. PARSONS:** That's right, the neighbouring strong districts of Placentia – Bellevue. That's right.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible).

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Right, perfect. We're all working together, that's right. I believe in teamwork and I see my district as a team.

Having said that, I also want to reflect on the budget consultation. We've been criticized for that, for going to the people; but, ultimately, we cannot lead if we don't listen.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MS. P. PARSONS:** That's what it's all about. My job as a journalist was to listen to people and to report the facts. In that regard, I believe politics is no different. We are accountable to tell the truth, to report the facts and whatnot, and to work with people and to communicate.

I will say that I had representation from every community in my district that came to that budget consultation. I didn't get any negative feedback on why we were taking the time to do it or whatnot. It's certainly not an expensive process. As a matter of fact, I was efficient enough to, of course, have the space for free, rent-free, in the district. It was held at the Spaniard's Bay Legion. Of course, they're good citizens.

As I said, there was a lot of representation there with wonderful ideas, which I know this government, our Finance Minister and our Premier will take into consideration and hear the concerns and the suggestions that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador took the time to

come out and give these suggestions. They cared enough to come out.

How we did it, too, we did it kind of like in a school group type of thing where we broke off into groups. There were group discussions and answers. Following, toward the end of the session, I invited them to come up and express their concerns to the group as a whole. I certainly applaud that.

I believe in town hall meetings. Again, it's important to listen to our people. I'm honoured to be the representative here for the District of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave and I'm actually the very first female MHA to represent the district. It is a first time for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

Having said that, again, I look forward to standing up again and talking about issues in my district. But Coley's Point Primary certainly is a big one. It's located there on Sod Lane as you make your way over by the causeway, the Klondyke there. You are probably familiar with the area. Bay Roberts is one of the largest towns on the Avalon Peninsula. I am very proud of Bay Roberts, as I am Harbour Grace.

A wonderful project to talk about as well in Harbour Grace is what's known as the marine industrial park that they want to expand. They have a really ambitious group: Harbour Grace Ocean Enterprise. It's going to be companies like these which we're going to be looking to, to help diversify our economy and get our economy back on track.

Harbour Grace Ocean Enterprise, what they do, they're a shipbuilding and repairing company and whatnot. They have vessels they're working on from overseas, from the United States, from Europe. Some of my hon. colleagues have been out and had a tour of the facility. Some Members of the Opposition I understand also made a tour.

I might add, too, Harbour Grace is famous for a couple of reasons. Amelia Earhart landed in Harbour Grace. Of course, the very first Newfoundlander to bring home the Stanley Cup, Danny Cleary, comes from Riverhead, Harbour Grace. I know Danny personally. His sister was a good friend of mine growing up. Also we

cannot forget Jamie Korab who is our Olympic Gold Medalist. I'm very proud of this district.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** What about the *Kyle*?

**MS. P. PARSONS:** The *Kyle*, when you're coming in, it's one of the first things you see as you fly in to land in St. John's is you do see the *Kyle*. You can see the *Kyle* when you're flying into St. John's.

Again, I'm very proud of the people of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District. There are a lot of wonderful things happening. A lot of great, strong community spirit throughout the entire district. Upper Island Cove as well, a beautiful community with a lot of community spirit.

Coley's Point Primary, I cannot stress enough that this is something that should have been done a long time before now. It's very important to the constituents of my district. I'm going to continue working with them, of course the school councils, the local staff and whatnot.

This is my time winding down. It was an honour to stand here. I look forward to doing it again, and congratulations to each and every one of you. I look forward to working with each and every one of you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MR. KENT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I did, when I was on my feet previously, say I would like to get another opportunity to speak to some of these issues. I didn't think it would come that quickly, but here I am. That's the beauty of the Interim Supply debate and similar bills and motions in the House that are of a financial nature, it gives Members the opportunity to speak about issues they may not otherwise get a chance to address.

The one that I was speaking to earlier relates to some very serious concerns at one of our regional health authorities, Central Health. In my previous remarks, I highlighted the need to

do a full, independent review of senior administration and management at Central Health. That can't wait. There are enough concerns the minister is aware of himself that need to be addressed. They're important issues and they're urgent issues. It was only in September that the minister himself – within a couple months of the general election – highlighted the concerns that he himself had with management and administration and leadership at Central Health.

What I would like to delve a little bit more into now, Mr. Chair, is the review that was conducted of radiology within Gander and within Central Health overall. As a result of some of the concerns that were brought forward by physicians last year, an independent investigator was brought in to review some harassment complaints that had been brought forward by several doctors. The gentleman's name is Wayne Thistle. He completed a report which was submitted to Central Health. It recommended that Central Health engage a consultant to do a further review of diagnostic imaging of radiology at Central Health. Dr. Rick Bhatia, who is the regional chief of diagnostic imaging for Eastern Health, who is well respected in his field and has a great deal of experience and qualifications, it was agreed by all parties that he would do that further in-depth review of radiology.

I was concerned at the time that Central Health had to be pushed to take the appropriate action on these issues, but the report was done. Dr. Bhatia was eventually engaged. He provided a report to Central Health, I believe, on September 22. It actually may have been a little bit before that. It was provided to the doctors affected, who had been interviewed and who had expressed concerns on September 22. They received it on that day, which, interestingly enough, is the same day that the now Minister of Health wrote an email to all the physicians in Gander describing Central Health's Machiavellian ways and ostrich style of management and the poisoned well that Central Health had created for doctors in Gander.

Six months have passed. The reason I'm so concerned and the reason I'm on my feet once again today to address this issue in the House is that six months have passed and we still can't

get any clear answers on what recommendations have actually been implemented.

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** I say to the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, this is not a laughing matter, Mr. Chair. We're talking about serious issues where the public interest is affected.

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**MR. CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** Thank you for your protection, Mr. Chair.

**MR. JOYCE:** (Inaudible).

**MR. KENT:** Mr. Chair, he just continues to rant and ramble. I guess making Cabinet didn't result in a change of demeanour or behaviour for the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**MR. KENT:** Back to the matter at hand, Central Health was directed in October to implement these recommendations. We cannot get any information about whether any of them have been implemented at all. Central Health was directed to implement and act upon the recommendations. I was shocked to learn recently, Mr. Chair, that for the most part, these recommendations haven't been touched.

So now six months have passed. The Health Minister is silent on these issues. The department is issuing statements saying that these are HR matters and for that reason he's not going to get involved. He's on record himself as having major concerns with management and leadership at Central Health. Now there's no follow-through on clear direction that had been given to Central Health to act upon the recommendations in Dr. Bhatia's report.

As I said earlier, Mr. Chair, some of the recommendations are relatively quick, relatively easy to act upon. Others are definitely more complicated and will take time, but at the very



least, for those that are more complex, there should be a clear implementation plan.

Let me just give you an example of the kinds of recommendations we're talking about that the minister considers to be minor HR matters that he's not prepared to get involved in. It's the Review of Central Health Department of Diagnostic Imaging. It was completed on September 11. It was provided to some of the doctors involved on September 22, the same day as the minister's email ranting about the leadership of Central Health.

"Recommendation 1: The services of a conflict resolution expert and counsellor who can help individuals deal with their stress/anger and help individuals understand how their attitudes affect the people around them be acquired." That is relatively simple to implement.

I understand that the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association is engaged and will be involved in delivering some workshops. That's really quick to address to some degree, but it does raise a lot of questions and concerns about the severity of the issues that are going on, particularly in Gander, if that kind of intervention is required.

"Recommendation 5: Central Health should develop an MRI priority classification based on medical need and book according to this and not based on other factors including the geographic origin of the patient."

So MRI priority classification sounds like something that is a matter of public interest and sounds like something that's not a minor issue that can be swept under the rug after six months of sitting on a report.

"Recommendation 10: The code team be trained to deal with contrast reactions and MRI safety and would be called in cases of severe anaphylactic reactions."

So for the minister or his officials to repeatedly suggest that this has nothing to do with patient safety, I find that rather questionable when I read some of these recommendations, Mr. Chair.

"Recommendation 17: Suspend the position of regional chief temporarily for twelve to eighteen

months and return to a two site chief format with the site chiefs working with the Program Director as a leadership team with the eventual goal of re-establishing the program management system with a single regional chief in twelve to eighteen months. If executive feels this is not an option, then at the very least have a site chief appointed at each site who can manage the departments and work with the regional chief to help with global issues." The recommendation continues from there.

A recommendation that Central Health was directed to act upon that involves temporary suspension of officials within the hospital in Gander is very concerning, Mr. Chair. The fact that months have passed without action on these recommendations, or without a clear commitment from the new minister that any action will be taken, is rather concerning. It speaks to the broader issue of management and administration concerns within Central Health.

"Recommendation 18: A policy be developed regarding physician conduct which specifies expected behavior and defines inappropriate behavior."

Developing that kind of policy should not be something that requires months of research. All one would need to do is look at best practices in other health centres or in other health authorities. There are some recommendations that can easily be implemented. Some will take more time.

When you read through the report it's clear that patient safety could be affected if these concerns are not addressed, which is why I'm raising them here in this House this afternoon, Mr. Chair. These matters cannot be ignored. It's not appropriate for a minister of the Crown to take a hands-off approach when the public interest is affected and when we're talking about major concerns that could lead to the compromising of patient safety.

In his summary, Mr. Chair, Dr. Bhatia acknowledges there are good "professional individuals who are passionate, highly skilled and highly motivated with valuable ideas of how to optimize patient care." However, he goes on to say, "... several of these ideas are shared by many but do not move forward in a cooperative

productive manner because of feelings of mistrust, defensiveness and anger. In an attempt to provide management structure to help improve the situation, the reverse occurred making things worse indicating a slower change management process with predefined goals and objectives is required.”

If that kind of outside advice is required, then it speaks to the seriousness of the issues that are going on within Central Health and the need for leadership and the need for action.

I’m calling on the Minister of Health, once again today, to direct Central Health to take action, to provide us with an update on the 18 recommendations in Bhatia’s report and do a full review of senior management and administration at Central Health so that the ongoing concerns can be addressed once and for all. The hands-off approach of this new administration is affecting patient safety. All one has to do is read Dr. Bhatia’s report to get a sense of why that is.

The minister has been hands off with the recent issues in Eastern Health that have now cost millions of dollars. He’s refusing to talk about issues that he’s very familiar with, intimately familiar with, in Gander and in Central Health. That raises a lot of questions, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Member’s time has now expired.

**MR. KENT:** I hope to speak further in debate at another time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It’s certainly an opportunity to stand on my feet for the first time as the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development and respond to my colleague opposite who’s talking about taking a hands-off approach. He’s well aware of what a hands-off approach means, being the former minister of Health and Community Services responsible for making announcement after announcement.

The people on the West Coast, and you look at the Corner Brook hospital –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** – that former administration and that government made promises to the people for over a decade. It’s certainly a hands-off approach that’s gotten no steel in the ground for that piece of structure. It gives no satisfaction to the people on the West Coast who would utilize that facility.

One thing that we’re here today – when we’re talking about the Interim Supply bill, we’re talking about making sure there’s enough revenue in the provincial government to continue flowing to pay for bills, and pay for employees and staff to get us through until a budget Supply bill is passed.

My responsibilities as the minister for this particular portfolio as well as the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency, one big thing that we talk about – and it’s been talked about quite clearly – is around our expenses and around our revenues. I’m going to focus much of my conversation around revenue. Beyond having a spending problem, we also have a revenue-generation problem. That’s where we need to find innovative and creative ways to create more revenue to build a stronger economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I’m working with the business community, working with those in cultural industries, in the arts community and in all fields, in tourism and agriculture, farming, in mining, and having that ability to have those conversations in which we can increase productivity and generate new revenues for the people of the province, new jobs and new opportunities.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** That's really exciting to see the optimism that exists in Newfoundland and Labrador when we talk about having these meetings. There are people who want to invest in our economy and that's pretty exciting.

If we look at one sector of the economy, since I've been minister, we look at our new tourism ads that have been launched; they're fantastic ads that continue to win awards. Just looking at the launch that was held, within 24 hours, within 48 hours, there's been over 35,000 views on YouTube. Looking at the power of social media when it comes to getting our message out there, there are 90,000 views on our ad that we have put forward right now. It's the 11th most popular ad on the YouTube channel.

We have ways of which we can target and do outreach now that we didn't have previously. So we're engaged in how we do access and how we provide and enhance the customer service and experience, whether it be through airports or through other avenues to get into the province. So we're engaged in that process.

We're also looking at the American marketplace and working with our federal counterparts to target specific cities in which we can make sure that we have a connection there, and that we can pull in those residents from the US and those larger New England states so they can help drive tourism. We're eager to work with our partners.

In my own district, on the Great Northern Peninsula, we have L'Anse aux Meadows, a UNESCO World Heritage site. We have national historic sites. Just to the south we have Gros Morne National Park, a UNESCO heritage site. To the north in Labrador, the Member for Cartwright – L'Anse Clair, we have a new UNESCO site in Red Bay, so three UNESCO sites creating this great circle route, tremendous opportunity to improve the experience.

As the Member for Ferryland talked about, let's hope we'll add a fourth when we talk about Portugal Cove South and Mistaken Point. I was there during that launch and that bid as an MHA when that was happening during the summer.

We also want to continue to enhance telecommunications and services. I've had the ability to work with entities in the Green Bay

area where we've made an announcement to enhance broadband there. And we're going to continue to do so. We're going to continue to reach out to players so that we can have advanced telecommunications. It's something that when I was elected in 2011 – and we see the need to move forward to expand those type of services.

As well as looking at our natural renewable resource sectors, forestry has been underutilized and we're engaging our stakeholders. I've been at sawmills. I've been talking to operators. I've been talking to value-added, talking to our research facilities, doing tours, really getting a better handle and getting hands-on understanding, and talking to the stakeholders as to how we can generate revenue and add more value in our forest sector because there's tremendous opportunity there.

The same thing goes for our agricultural sector. The mandate has been very clear when it comes to looking at making access to Crown land available, working with farmers. I had the pleasure with my parliamentary secretary, the MHA for Terra Nova, to engage with the agricultural federation, 22 stakeholder groups. We were talking to the commodity boards, talking to the Restaurant Association, really engaging people. And that's what's so different, I think, right now is that people really truly want to be engaged. They understand the severity of the problem in our province when it comes to revenue and when it comes to expenditure that they want to be part of the solution.

They see a government where we're listening; we're putting ourselves out there in a way that we want them to be part of the solution. I think that is really important as we move forward and as we look at the Interim Supply bill and we also look at how we advance our economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We talk about trade and the potential for trade. We have the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA, when we look at entering the European marketplace. We have TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We have the Agreement on Internal Trade. We have so much potential to help our business community to really scale up and also get into more export

markets. It's tremendous the potential that we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have a lot of knowledge; we have a lot of expertise. We have a lot of great world-class centres of excellence right now, and we can continue to grow that to be a hallmark where more jobs and inward investment is coming in but also we're exporting so that we can continue to drive – in terms of shrinking markets, if you are seeing in a commodity sector, if oil is going down, if mining is going down and there is turbulence, well, we're actually planning for those cyclical events as a government. We're planning for the long term; we have long-term vision.

It is something I think that the previous administration really missed out on when they had the tremendous wealth when it comes to oil revenues and Atlantic Accord. They didn't plan for a rainy day. They actually, as the Minister of Finance said earlier, increased debt 69 per cent. I mean, that's a tumultuous legacy that you want to leave in your former administration. But that's the reality, the facts are there, is that past administration has left the state of the province in dire, unprecedented fiscal realities that it will be our administration that will get us out of this mess and move forward because we're going to work with people and we're going to continue to advance new opportunities.

The Member for Torngat Mountains talked about how we're bringing in international investment when it comes to those who participated from Finland or from Maine who won Cain's Quest. Labrador is really on the map in a big way because of that event with over a million page views, as was noted on one of the news media outlets. There was a lot of engagement in that process.

Where can we as well plan, through our destination development planning, strategic sectors where we can grow? I think we have a lot of clusters that we can deal with. When it comes to ocean technology and when it comes to the opportunity that's there, it's just absolutely tremendous. With our MOU with Nunavut and our ability to work with our partners in the North, we're really going to connect and engage to see new developments happen.

I'm really pleased to be working with all Members in the House of Assembly, having meetings with MHAs from all sides of the House. I certainly continue to welcome that dialogue and that partnership.

I've had the ability to travel to Labrador and to many parts of the province in many districts being engaged, being part of that process and being tasked with an economic file in government. I'm very willing to listen and to move forward.

So I really hope that we'll pass the Interim Supply bill. It's really critical to continue the work of government, and to ensure that our public sector workers continue to get paid for the good work they do. I would hope that nobody would be wanting to slow down that particular process so we can continue the tasks that need to be done here today.

It's important about being efficient and about putting a great effort in, and actually rolling up our sleeves and getting the job done. That's what our government is prepared to do.

I thank you for the opportunity, Madam Chair, for the ability to speak to Bill 2.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR (Dempster):** Order, please!

The hon. Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. KIRBY:** Thanks, Madam Chairperson.

It's an honour and a privilege for me to stand here for the first time in debate as the first Member for the District of Mount Scio, at least the first one for a long time, and Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. I've got a newly configured district that I represent, a lot of the same constituents, but a lot of new people who I've met along the way. It's an exciting time.

I want to talk about some of the positive things on the horizon because there are a lot of positives on the horizon. There are many great things coming our way. There's no question we're in a difficult situation right now, but it's nothing we can't work our way out of.

I went out to a number of the Government Renewal Initiative consultation sessions in Labrador and here on the Island and spoke to a lot of people. I took the occasion to mention to people that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have faced adversity and difficult situations many times in the past.

I would like to tell a story – although it isn't a very positive one – about my own family. My grandfather, Richard Kirby, his brother and his sister were all orphaned around the same time. Within 14 months, his mother, his father and three of his siblings all died within 14 months of one another of tuberculous decades back. It really speaks to how far Newfoundland and Labrador has come in such a short space of time. Back then we were dealing with Third World diseases. Now we're very much involved in the world economy and integrated in the world economy. We have great things happening.

One of the things I'm quite proud of is our commitment to full-day kindergarten. They said it couldn't be done, but it's going to happen. I don't mind saying at all; I give credit to the previous administration for listening to the desire of people in the province to have this program to catch up with the rest of North America, with the rest of the country, by having an optional program for full-day kindergarten. We are going to have that for September. We're going to follow through on the previous administration's commitment to do that.

After all, we've already spent tens of millions of dollars on the investment in school infrastructure. There are a number of schools that have had or are going to have major extensions done. There are a number of schools that have modular classrooms that are going to be added. There have been somewhere in the order of 100 different renovations that have been done to classrooms in schools across the province.

There is much work underway when it comes to teacher professional development for full-day kindergarten. We'll be ready to go in September. It's something I think all Members of the House of Assembly can be quite proud of because I feel that it's something we all did together, regardless of our party affiliations here in the House of Assembly. That's very good news.

Everything we know about child development and neuroplasticity, the stages of child development, we really need to have this program. This is not a program where we say, well, this is it; we have full-day kindergarten. In the long-term we need much more than full-day kindergarten. We need to grow child care downwards. That needs additional investment as the years go by in child care. It's something we're committed to, but obviously we have a difficult fiscal situation right now.

We have to do things as we are able to afford to do them, but I don't think we can ever lose sight of the fact that investment in our little ones, investment in our smallest children, is one of the best investments we can make. If we look at all the literature on child development we know that investments in child care and early learning give a return of somewhere between \$2.50 up to \$7 for every dollar we invest. So this is a very good investment of public money. I can't say that enough.

One of the other things we're going to be doing, and you'll be hearing more details about as the months go on – hopefully it won't take a whole long time, but again, we want to make sure things are done right. Our Premier, when he was in Opposition, committed to a task force on improving educational outcomes. Our educational system, the K-12 educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador, hasn't really gotten a thorough review of this sort in a generation.

There have been a number of them over the years. Probably one of the ones many educators in the province will know is the Royal Commission on Education and Youth that Dr. Phil Warren presided over and reported on in 1967 and 1968. It was interesting because Dr. Warren recommended back then that we have a kindergarten program, that that level be added to our educational system.

There have been additional reports along the way. I remember there was a significant one when Charlie Power was Minister of Education. We had the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, which did a major review called Education for Self-Reliance. There was another task force on education and skills.

We've had since then sort of piecemeal reports. We had one on the Pathways and ISSP Commission, which was relative to special education. Then we also had the review of the teacher allocation formula that happened around the same time, I believe it was 2007, but we haven't had a holistic review and examination system of the education system in a generation. We're about to have one. It's exciting. We want to make sure it's done right. We want to make sure, as the Premier mentioned when he was talking about the Independent Appointments Commission, that the individuals who follow this up, who do the work, are appointed based on an open, transparent, public, merit-based-appointments approach. That's going to happen this year.

Also, we've been talking about here in the House – we're laying the groundwork now to have an election for both of the school districts, the English and the French school districts, to have them side by side, basically. Many people probably don't know that the trustees for the French system are elected differently than the English ones. We believe it's something that ought to be changed if, indeed, the trustees in the Francophone system are interested in doing that. It looks like we're going to go in that direction. So we're going to have a legislative change in order to make sure we harmonize the elections for the trustees in French and English districts.

I'm also working with officials to try and see if we can do things differently when it comes to the process of having the election itself. Frankly, the turnout for school trustee elections, the last few times the turnout has just been dismal. I have to say it. We've had turnouts that are less than 5 per cent, less than 3 per cent, and that's simply not acceptable. If we believe democratically elected trustees are important, then I think we need to have a system that enables the greatest number of people possible participate.

We're exploring different options this time than just having one day where between 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. people can go to a school and do the election. We live in a different age now. We have all sorts of tools at the ready. How can we use different tools, maybe even technology, to do this differently to ensure that the turnout is more reflective of Newfoundland and Labrador's society?

In the interest of doing that, I've met with the chairs of both of the districts. I've met with the CEOs, the directors of education of those districts. I had quite a good meeting with the board of trustees of the English district. I've discussed this with the federation of school councils. I've met with the Chief Electoral Officer to try and find out what it is that that office has done in the past to help facilitate the board of trustee's election, and we'll be doing more work as time goes on.

In the middle of the election we were asked by the CBC would we commit to having the school trustee election. We committed to it. The Premier has made a commitment through the mandate letter that was sent to me. We said we would do it in 12 months. It's going to be done in 12 months, and we hope it's going to be done in a way that will facilitate a greater participation by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians than we've seen in the past.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I remind the Member his time has expired.

**MR. KIRBY:** Thank you Madam Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

**MR. JOYCE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just have a few minutes, and I know we're cutting it short, but I just heard the Member for Mount Pearl North talk about the Member for Gander, the Minister of Health, about how he feels it's inappropriate and almost dishonest the way he's handling things. I find that insulting. I find it actually insulting to the people of the West Coast.

Madam Chair, we're at the hospital for seven, eight years. This is the same Member under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition who committed on two occasions to start construction, and he has the audacity to stand up here and talk about the Minister of Health. He's the same one, Madam Chair, he's the same person, same one, who said the design is ready. We're ready to go. Madam Chair, completely false.

He's the same one who said construction is supposed to start in 2016 for the long-term care facility – completely false. He has the audacity to stand up here, to actually stand up here and criticize the Minister of Health because he's making these fabrications about what's – he's trying to be the great hero and he let some many people down as the minister of Health – so many people down. He's was a complete, absolute failure as the minister of Health – a complete and absolute failure.

I'll tell you what else, Madam Chair, what I find kind of deceitful. I understand the bantering going around here. I understand the bantering, and I accept it sometimes, Madam Chair. When the Member for Mount Pearl North was minister of Municipal Affairs he turned around and put out capital works: \$20 million a year for three years. Do you know what he did? The first year, he spent \$30 million of it – \$30 million. The next minister came in, he wasn't so bad. He spent \$24 million of it in the second year with the cost overrun, but here's the part: he has the audacity to criticize the Minister of Health.

This year there's no money in capital works. Do you know what they did? They sent out letters to all the municipalities asking them to put in the application for capital works, knowing there was no money there. They spent every cent and then he stands up here as the great, big hero all of a sudden, trying to criticize somebody.

Madam Chair, you were in this House; how many times did we have a fight over radiation? I see the Leader of the Opposition over there laughing. The Leader of the Opposition, do you know what he did with the Stantec report? Do you know what he did? It took me an embarrassment by him to stand here – to get the Stantec report it took me almost four months to get it.

In Estimates, when I asked him if we could have it, he said, sure, no problem. When I asked him a question in the House: Is he going to release it? How do we know you said that? The minutes aren't done up in the Estimates. Do you know what I did? For the Leader of the Opposition, I went down to the Hansard office. I got an audio and I got it transcribed. I tabled it in the House of Assembly his exact words that he said in Estimates – exact words. That's how we had to get the Stantec report for the hospital in Corner Brook. Now all of a sudden we have to be lectured instead of trying to put something positive.

The Minister of Health here is working like he can, like anybody would, and all the Member for Mount Pearl North wants to do is criticize, trying to batter him down. It's just shocking. It's just absolutely shocking.

Madam Chair, I can tell you one thing – there's one thing about it and I was over on that side, I was there. I was also on this side. When you move from government to Opposition, you have a history. I tell you what their history was: spending like drunken sailors, taking money and just spending it freely and sending everybody out with the impression that, yes, there's money for capital works. Not one cent, I say, to the towns in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for capital works – not one penny.

Have a \$34.9 million fund from Ottawa, not even take the time to put a signature on it to use it and then stand up and start criticizing everybody. That's the problem of being in history. That's the problem of having a history, Madam Chair, when they move across.

Talk about the hospital in Corner Brook; ask the Leader of the Opposition how many times when you were minister of Health you were going to go out and the construction was going to start. How many times? How many times did we stand up in this House and had to fight for radiation?

That's what I give the former premier, Tom Marshall, after he found out the information myself and the Premier gave him, guess what? The Member for Mount Pearl North fought us tooth and nail. He stood in this House – we didn't know what we were talking about. There

were even times that we were saying the information was out there and that it was false information we're putting out in the public.

Today we hear him standing up, holier than thou, criticizing the Minister of Health and Member for Gander. They have a history. Do you know what their history is? Spend, spend, spend. Stand up here and fabricate everything you can possibly come up with and hopefully some of it is going to stick. I can remember the Member for Mount Pearl North going to go out and start the construction of the hospital. I remember the Leader of the Opposition standing up and saying, oh yes, we have this work done; we have the design done.

Madam Chair, do you know something? There wasn't one time was there ever, ever a design done for the hospital in Corner Brook. We're trying to put the pieces back together, but there's one thing I won't do – and I know the Minister of Health, he's onside, and he said it to me also, what we will do, we will be honest to the people. We will be honest, and here are the facts. You may not like the facts, but here are the facts.

When I stand up and say right now – and the Member for Corner Brook got up and said it – that there was no design ready that we can go and start construction, he was absolutely right. All the information that was given out about the design being ready, we're ready to start to construction is absolutely false –absolutely false, Madam Chair. What are we supposed to do now? Stand up and be lectured.

I can see my time is getting short here, Madam Chair, but I just can't sit down here and listen to this type of rhetoric here when I know the facts.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** You've got lots of time.

**MR. JOYCE:** Here's the Leader of the Opposition – you want to know the time? You want me to say how many more times you committed to present the reports from the Stantec report? Do you want me to tell you how many more times? You think it's a big joke about the hospital in Corner Brook that you promised and you wouldn't release it. Do you really want it? Do you want to know how many more times you wouldn't release it, hiding the reports here, and all of a sudden now, you over

there, you know all the answers? You got all the answers all of a sudden.

You want to ask the Member for Mount Pearl North. Talk about the \$30 million now all the towns in the province with no capital works. Why don't we talk about that? Oh no, no, that's the truth. We can't do that; that's the truth. We can't go out and tell the truth. We can't do that, because people might like us if you go out and tell the truth.

So this is what I say to Dr. Haggie – the Member for Gander, I'm sorry, the Minister of Health. There is one thing he said when we go to the people in Western Newfoundland about the hospital – and I have to stand up and I have to give the Member for Gander, the Minister of Health, credit. He said: We'll be honest with them. You may not like it, they may not like it because we can't start it ASAP, but at least we'll be honest. We'll set a timetable we can follow, we can live with and if we say something, we're going to commit to it. We're just not going to make promises like the Members opposite when they were on this side just to try to get out and try to get a few brownie points, try to win a few seats.

That's where I have to give the Minister of Health credit because he told me, to my face, we have to speak it as it is. We have to tell the truth. We have to be honest. They may not like the truth, but they'll respect the truth. And that's where I respect the Member for Gander, the Minister of Health, and I take quite exception from the Member for Mount Pearl North who had plenty of opportunity over here, Madam Chair, and he didn't deliver one thing he committed to.

I see my time is short, Madam Chair; I'll take my seat.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Madam Chair.



I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Osborne):** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Prior to that, I'll recognize the hon. the Deputy Speaker.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee has report that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

Now?

Tomorrow?

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I will try again.

I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista, that the House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The House now stands adjourned until 2 o'clock tomorrow, Wednesday, being Private Members' Day.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2 p.m.