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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.

**Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today for Members' statements we have the Members for the Districts of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Conception Bay South, Placentia West – Bellevue, Virginia Waters – Pleasantville and Topsail – Paradise.

I recognize the hon. the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave.

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

It is with great pride that I stand to recognize the seniors of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District.

There are several volunteer organizations throughout our communities such as the Fifty-Plus Club of Bay Roberts, the Goodwill Seniors Club of Spaniard's Bay-Tilton, the New Horizons 50-Plus Club of Bishop's Cove, St. Peter's Seniors of Upper Island Cove, St. Paul's Fun and Fitness in Harbour Grace and St. Luke's group of Port de Grave.

Each of these volunteer organizations promotes healthy living, vitality, community spirit and camaraderie. These clubs maintain active programs that serve the needs of the membership and surrounding communities. Our fun-loving seniors participate in activities from bowling, water aerobics, afternoon tea parties to keeping fit with vigorous workouts and much more.

Seniors are role models, our first teachers and pioneers. They are to be commended on their dedication to community, their health and each other. They are special residents who are respected and loved by all.

Please join me in thanking all seniors of Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, and across our province, for building a strong Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels.

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

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the achievements of a high school drama troupe and a high school drama teacher from my district.

At the Regional Theatre Festival in Gander, which was held on April 5 and 6, Pearson Academy performed *Van Gogh's Ear*. This play, written by Craig Loder and Michael Rogers, captivated audiences at the festival. Craig Loder is a triple threat, also serving as Pearson's drama teacher and director of the play.

The adjudicator of the competition was well-known actress Berni Stapleton, who had strong words of encouragement for all participants in the regional competition. She also had high praise for Pearson Academy.

The school's drama team ended up receiving 12 awards at the festival, including Best Overall Performance. For winning the competition, Pearson Academy will perform *Van Gogh's Ear* on behalf of the Central Region at the provincial drama competition which will be held in Gander later this week.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in celebrating the accomplishments of Pearson Academy's drama team and the multiple talents of their teacher, Craig Loder.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Town of Conception Bay South is home to many of this province's finest athletes. On February 25, my colleague, the MHA for Topsail – Paradise, and I attended the 2015 Athletic Awards Ceremony to recognize the achievements of the town's athletes.

During the evening, all nominees for the five award categories were honoured, and the

following athletes were recipients of the 2015 awards: Coach of the Year, Mr. Robin Brown; Junior Male Athlete of the Year, Alex Wiscombe; Junior Female Athlete of the Year, Jessica Davis; Senior Male Athlete of the Year, Tony Pomroy; and Senior Female Athlete of the Year, Keira Eavis.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate Sports Hall of Fame inductees Ms. Colleen Wade Noseworthy, Ms. Linda Lane Olden (Greeley), Mr. Ron Smith and Mr. Carl Morgan who have all contributed tremendously to our sporting community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating all recipients and nominees of the 2015 Conception Bay South Athletic Awards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

**MR. BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize an act of kindness from a stranger that touched the lives of a team of young soccer players from Newfoundland and Labrador.

While en route to Montreal, our province's Canada Summer Games boys' soccer team experienced a four-hour delay at Pearson Airport in Toronto. During this prolonged layover, the team's manager chatted with another traveller who was also awaiting departure.

As it turns out, that traveller was Mark Smith, a resident of Montreal who is well known in that city's financial community. He was so impressed by our soccer players that he asked if he could do something special for them. In Montreal, he surprised them with tickets to a game at the Bell Centre between the Canadiens and the Detroit Red Wings.

The boys were also treated to a meet and greet with hockey superstar P.K. Subban. This unforgettable experience, provided to the team by a complete stranger, is a testament to the soccer players' good conduct as ambassadors of

our province. I'm proud to say the roster of players included 16-year-old Ryan Dunphy of Marystown.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Mark Smith for his incredible generosity and congratulations to our athletes on continued success.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

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

I rise in this hon. House to recognize an outstanding student and volunteer from the District of Virginia Waters – Pleasantville. Gabrielle Murphy, who lives in Virginia Park, was the recipient of the Harrison McCain Scholarship at Memorial University. The scholarship, open to students from across the country, is valued at \$16,000 and is awarded for high academic achievement, financial need, leadership ability and recognized initiative in funding their own education.

As a volunteer, Gabrielle participates in the Best Buddies program, which promotes friendship between university students and individuals in the community with intellectual disabilities. She also is an avid baseball coach for young members in her community and she is an avid basketball and baseball player as well. She is currently studying police studies and psychology at Memorial University and one day hopes to become an officer with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and continue to serve the people of this province and act as an example for all to follow.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

Mr. Speaker, recently I had the pleasure of attending the Newfoundland and Labrador Law Enforcement Torch Run's Meet & Greet, held at

the Rotary Paradise Youth and Community Centre which is located in Paradise, as they hosted the National Final Leg here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Now the Final Leg is a long-standing tradition where law enforcement officers carry the Flame of Hope to the opening ceremonies in the Special Olympic Games. The Flame of Hope is used to light the cauldron signalling the start of the games competition.

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the largest grassroots fundraiser and public awareness vehicle for Special Olympics in the world. Now past its 25th year here in Newfoundland and Labrador, law enforcement is responsible for making a tremendous impact on Special Olympics and more importantly Special Olympians throughout our province.

Over 400 officers, civilian employees, their families and friends raise funds in their local communities. It is managed by volunteer group of committed law enforcement individuals, many of whom have been members since its inception. The mission of the committee is simple: to raise funds to help sustain Special Olympics programs and their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to extend their appreciation to the Law Enforcement Torch Run on their dedication and commitment to Special Olympics and Special Olympians here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** For Honour 100 today, we have the Member for the District of Corner Brook.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, it would be an honour to 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: Clarence Valentine Harris, Eugene Harris, George William Harris, Harvey Newman Harris, William George Harris, Charles Hart, John Hart, Jonas Hart, Sidney Harttree, Henry Harvey, Nathaniel Harvey, Henry Thomas Hatcher, John Hatcher, George Bernard Hatfield, Mortimer Leopold Hawker, Eli Hawkins, George Hawkins, Patrick Joseph Hayes, Arthur Hayward, Robert William Heale, John Joseph Healey, William James Healey, James Patrick Heaney, Augustine Hearn, James Hearn, Patrick Hearn, Adolphus Garrett Heath, Thomas Burkley Hefford, Patrick Joseph Hennessey, Arthur J. Herder, Hubert Clinton Herder, Wallace Herder, Armenius Hewlett, John Hibbs, John Leslie Hibbs, Edward Hickey, Robert Hickey, William Hickey, Chester Hickman, Philip Seymour Hicks.

We will remember them.

(Moment of silence.)

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

Statements by Ministers.

### **Statements by Ministers**

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of two exceptional educators who were recently taken from us much too soon.

Principal Randy Ralph and teacher Shannon Pittman were commuting together from the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Centre on April 19 when they were involved in a tragic automobile accident that claimed both their lives. Another teacher is still in hospital in serious condition and we wish him the best during his recovery.

Randy and Shannon loved teaching and working with youth and the outpouring of support that has been displayed since their passing has been remarkable. Randy was well known for the extracurricular time he spent as a coach for a variety of sports and was also quite active with

the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. Shannon had a passion for music, body building and motorcycles. Both were husbands and fathers.

Mr. Speaker, Randy and Shannon were respected and adored by their colleagues and their students. Their loss is a significant blow to the education and justice systems in this province.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I offer my deepest condolences to Randy and Shannon's loved ones as they deal with this terrible ordeal. I hope they find some solace in the fact that both men had such positive impacts on the lives of those they came into contact with over the years.

Thank you.

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

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

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

First of all, I'd like to thank the minister for providing me with a copy of his statement before coming to the House today. We, in the Official Opposition, share with all Members in the House I'm sure in our heartfelt condolences to families, friends and loved ones that have been impacted by this terrible tragedy. Our thoughts go out to all of them and also our thoughts with those who continue to be impacted, including the hospitalized teacher that the minister referenced.

I know that these things cause great hardship and difficulty for families. Families go beyond your immediate family and your loved ones and, quite often, your family in your workplace. These were dedicated public servants as well, Mr. Speaker.

I happened to be at the hospital last Tuesday night when this unfolded. I know some of the family, met with them there. I can speak first-hand on the impact that it's had on all of them. Our thoughts remain with the families and friends.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, offer our condolences to the unimaginable loss of Randy Ralph and Shannon Pittman, to their families, friends and colleagues. Randy Ralph had a deep commitment to the young people who found themselves in this Youth Centre, especially to Aboriginal youth. He and I spoke about this several times as he so courageously advocated on their behalf. The strength and beauty Randy and Shannon brought into our world lives on in the young people they empowered, and we carry them in our hearts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This week, April 24 to 30, is National Immunization Awareness Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

National Immunization Awareness Week is an opportunity to raise awareness of the value of being immunized. Getting vaccinated not only prevents us and our children from getting sick; it also reduces the risk to those with weaker immune systems, such as infants or individuals with chronic diseases.

The CD Howe Institute has recognized Newfoundland and Labrador as a national leader for childhood vaccinations with a rate of 95 per cent. Provincial statistics also indicate that we continue to excel in our childhood immunization programs. As an example of this, the provincial average coverage for all recommended immunizations for children at two years of age is between 98 and 99 per cent. These numbers have a very real positive influence in terms of prevention of communicable diseases into adulthood.

Residents can call the Newfoundland and Labrador HealthLine at 811 to speak with a registered nurse about the immunization opportunities that may be available to them, or consult with their primary care provider or public health nurse.

Further information is also available at Immunize Canada's website at [www.immunize.ca](http://www.immunize.ca).

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I again thank the Minister of Health and Community Services for a copy of his statement before coming to the House today. It's great to hear that Newfoundland and Labrador has been recognized as a national leader as it relates to childhood vaccinations.

As the minister has suggested, we also encourage parents and families to reach out to their family doctor or their primary caregiver, or also to contact 811 which we know has been a huge success in Newfoundland and Labrador in providing assistance, support and information to families on a number of health-related issues.

We do encourage this, we do support this, and we're glad to see the recognition has come.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. We should be proud to be nationally recognized as a leader in childhood immunization. I thank the many health professionals who make this exemplary record possible for our children's sake.

Immunization saves more lives than any other health measure. The World Health Organization states that it averts up to 3 million deaths every year, but that one in five children still don't have access to immunization. It is important that we continue the education and support around immunization here and abroad.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform the Members of this House that Professional Municipal Administrators held their 44th annual AGM, convention and trade show in St. John's last week and took the opportunity to hand out a number of long service awards.

I was unable to personally attend the awards banquet Friday night, but my colleague, the MHA for Labrador West, was there to congratulate the long service honourees, and to thank the approximately 200 professional administrators who attended the convention for the work they do each day.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that services delivered at the local level can have the greatest impact on residents' day-to-day lives. And I know many municipalities were pleased to see that despite our financial challenges, Budget 2016 sees no reduction in Municipal Operating Grants; and no change to provincial/municipal cost-sharing ratios for municipal projects. Initiatives announced as part of the Community Sustainability Partnership will also be maintained.

Municipal administrators will be busy over the next four years, Mr. Speaker, with about approximately \$625 million available for municipal infrastructure from federal, provincial and municipal sources. But we know they are up to the challenge.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the five recipients of the Department of Municipal Affairs long service awards who were honoured Friday night: Cynthia Davis, Chief Administrative Officer in Carbonear; Dianne

Hudson, the Town Clerk in Norman's Cove-Long Cove; Shelly Butt, the Town Clerk-Manager in Victoria; Melda Hann; the Town Clerk-Manager in Daniel's Harbour; and Shelly Abbott, the Town Clerk in Cottlesville.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to note my colleague, the MHA for Fogo Island – Cape Freels was a former president of this association, and he's well aware of the work they do.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues in this House to join me in congratulating and thanking these individuals – and all the professional municipal administrators – for the contributions they make to municipal governments and to their communities.

Thank you.

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We in the Opposition, too, recognize the professional municipal administrators and the work they do for assisting the residents and assisting their town councils.

Many communities in the province are very small and have a very small staff. When it comes to organizing events such as Santa Claus parades, seniors' dinners or whatever, they're always there to do it – even services that are out there, they're out there on the roads and everything else.

Mr. Speaker, as a former mayor, I really do realize how important it is when councils are not there all the time. These are the people who answer to the constituents and they're there day in and day out, and they do a great job for everybody in this province. It's so important that our councils and mayors – and I know – do recognize who does the hard work in their towns. So this is a great award.

I'd like to extend congratulations to Cynthia Davis, Dianne Hudson, Shelly Butt, Melda Hann, and Shelly Abbott. I too, as the minister already announced, said the municipal grants

and the sustainability program that this government brought in place is still in place, because we as a government did realize how important municipal – and how important these people are to run our towns because they are on the ground doing most of the work.

Thank you very, very much.

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

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I commend these women, this year's recipients of the long service awards. Around the province people benefit from their dedicated service and their ability to work for them with very tight budgets indeed. So I would point out to the minister that although Budget 2016 sees no reduction in Municipal Operating Grants, the current amount is too low, and the lack of a multi-year provision leaves municipalities still wondering about their revenue future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the new CEO of Nalcor has stated he never agreed with Muskrat Falls and is not against stopping it. The Minister of Natural Resources has stated it's too far along to stop.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Can you clarify if your government remains committed to the development of Muskrat Falls. Are you considering stopping that project?

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

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

The new CEO, of course, which we announced last week is currently now, as he mentioned in the press conference, reviewing the facts. When you put a new CEO in place, I think in the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, you give the new person in the job a chance to review the facts, review the information that's available on the Muskrat Falls Project. That's what the CEO is doing. He's doing what any new person in the position would do.

He then said that he would give an opinion on where he thinks things are with this. We'll certainly look to him and to expertise and the experience that he has in these megaprojects to give his opinion when it's due.

I appreciate and look forward to his opinion. The work is continuing on the site right now employing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. To restrict a new person on the job, restrict his opinion would not be the proper due diligence of anyone that you're appointing to that position.

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

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

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

It's no doubt that the new CEO has a long career in development and in major projects in electricity. We know that, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Premier for what his position was, not what the CEO's position was. I want to know what his position is.

Mr. Speaker, the new CEO of Nalcor is a public office holder as defined by the *Conflict of Interest Act*. He's also a significant shareholder of Fortis which is the main customer of Newfoundland Hydro.

I ask the Premier: Can you provide assurances to the people of the province that this does not constitute a conflict of interest under the *Conflict of Interest Act*.

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

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

The new CEO of Nalcor has made it quite clear, and it's obvious that he is a shareholder like many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians I would suggest, and probably many people that work within the Nalcor company themselves right now would hold shares. He has vast experience building a company out of Newfoundland and Labrador, a company like Fortis. I think it's world renowned, it's a world-class project. We look to the new CEO of Nalcor to bring that experience.

When you look at the reasons why he said he is doing this, he is concerned about his own Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; he wants to bring that experience back. I can assure you that conflict of interest – he will disclose as he said he would. Disclosure would be on where any potential conflicts will be.

I can assure you this; in speaking to the new CEO, he is concerned about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is exactly why he accepted this job in the beginning.

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

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

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

I'd remind the Premier, he might want to have a look because the act goes a little bit further than disclosing when it talks about conflicts of interest.

Mr. Speaker, while the Alberta and Saskatchewan premiers are strongly pursuing federal action to assist with their province's financial crises, our Premier has remained silent in stating and I quote: It is what it is, when it comes to federal help for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, Premier Notley, the premier of Alberta, met this past weekend with the prime minister. Premier Wall is meeting with the prime minister today.

I ask our Premier: When will you get active? When will you become more engaged with the federal government? When will you pursue opportunities for Newfoundlanders and



Labradorians to assist with this budget rather than something like a levy which burdens many, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

Well, I can tell you there is hardly a day that goes by without contact with the federal government on a number of issues affecting Newfoundland and Labrador. This particular weekend, the Cabinet happened to be meeting in Alberta. I think if the former premier was paying attention, just a few weeks ago there was a scheduled trip to the West Coast which Prime Minister Trudeau and I were supposed to meet. Unfortunately, due to weather conditions of the day, that meeting had to be postponed.

I will say there is an agenda of things that we are reaching out for, and I would say Newfoundland and Labrador will get its fair share. Right now, the former premier keeps talking about Alberta, keeps talking about Saskatchewan, but there have been no initiatives by the federal government into Alberta or Saskatchewan.

I can assure you that our colleagues in Ottawa right now, they are fighting for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and so are we. Our office is very busy actively engaged with our MPs, as we said, and there is a current list of things that we would see in the future that would be of benefit to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

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

Well, at least the premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan are speaking up and making efforts. Mr. Speaker, we know that the people of our province are dismayed and are outraged by this Liberal budget that has been recently introduced. This budget is simply mean spirited.

When the Liberals went to the people in the fall last year, the then leader, now Premier, stated, and I quote: What we've decided to do is not put

our hands in the pockets of taxpayers from day one. He went on to say: stay out of the pockets, leave the money in their pockets where it belongs.

Mr. Speaker, in less than six months this Liberal government has reached deeper into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians than has ever happened in the history of our province.

I ask the Premier: How can the people of the province trust you when you promised one thing and a short time after do completely the opposite?

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

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

When the Leader of the Opposition talks about putting their hands in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians I just want to remind him, we would not be in the position, we would not be in this situation if it wasn't for the poor management and the poor planning of the prior administration.

Just last year at budget 2015-2016 they had predicted or they were forecasting a deficit this year of just under \$900 million; that projected deficit would have been \$2.7 billion if no action was taken. When you look at management, when you look at planning for the future of our province, all you need to do is look back at your budget, which was your five-year plan, which failed in year one.

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

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

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

Well, on the budget, the Premier has stated people don't understand, and it's simply not the way it's been portrayed. Now, we know the Finance Minister has said there is nothing good in the budget, but we also know Liberal MHAs have remained quiet. No one's explained to the people about their budget; no one's even laying out the facts or talking to people or listening to their concerns.

I ask the Premier: What is your government's plan to communicate this budget and let people hear from your government about budget number one that was recently introduced, and also budget number two that's going to come this fall?

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

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

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

When you talk about making a plan to communicate this budget, I want to go back to a communication that was done somewhere around mid-April 2007. The announcement in 2007 by the prior administration when it announced nearly a \$200 million per year tax decrease for the people of our province – it was unsustainable; they knew it at the time. It was based around an election, I would say, Mr. Speaker.

That accumulated today to around \$4 billion. So when you talk about planning for the future, poor planning, that's an example right there back in April 2007 when you did not prepare this province and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. You could have done a better job preparing for where we are today, and as a result of that mismanagement, this is the tough decisions we had to make. No one on this side of the House, I would say – backbenchers, Cabinet included – we do not like the decisions that had to be made either, I say to the former premier, but we were left with no other choice.

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

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

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

The question was simply when is he going to begin to communicate what it is people don't understand. What the Premier said to reach back to 2007, that's a pretty far reach.

Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, one of the many planned throughout the province, a rally was organized by a local group of concerned citizens in Gambo in protest of this budget and it has

negative impacts on their town and surrounding communities.

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

**MR. P. DAVIS:** At least I went there, I say to the Member opposite.

All three local MHAs for Gander, Terra Nova and Fogo – Cape Freels were invited to attend and address the people concerning the budget, but not a single one showed up.

Now, the Premier has been quoted as saying Newfoundlanders and Labradorians simply don't understand the budget.

So I'll ask the Premier again: When are you going to begin to communicate the budget? When are you going to allow your MHAs to also communicate the budget?

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

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

Well, there have been a number of communiques that have been done. As a matter of fact, the Minister of Finance spoke to the Board of Trade just last week in Corner Brook, and I have been certainly very busy engaged with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. All our MHAs have been engaged.

As a matter of fact, this Thursday morning we'll be doing an open line show in our province when people around the province will be asking questions, I would suggest. So there are a number of initiatives that have been planned to communicate this budget. It is an \$8.48 billion budget that will be used to benefit Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Unfortunately, I would say, like most people in our province, these are tough, tough times. There were tough decisions that had to be made, all to protect the future of our province. The path that we were going on, based on your poor planning, was really unsustainable.

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

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

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

It doesn't seem to matter what questions we ask, we're going to get the same answer anyway. Mr. Speaker, the citizens of our province are left reeling from these very mean-spirited choices that the Liberal government has made. The public is crying out to their Liberal representatives to halt the direction that the government is taking our province.

We know from her own words that the Minister of Finance will not make decisions based on who cries the loudest, but I'll ask the Premier: Will you allow the Members of your party to address the concerns and to fight for the people that they serve? Will you listen to the people and your own caucus? Will you sit back down with your Cabinet, have a second look at your budget and deliver one that's more responsible and responsive, that the people are looking for?

People are looking for a better budget, I say to the Premier. It doesn't have to be this way.

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

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

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

We're engaged with all MHAs and even the Members of the Opposition, if you should see fit to come and ask the questions around technical briefings. As I said, this is an \$8.48 billion budget. There are certainly many budget lines in this.

All Members of Cabinet and all Members of this caucus speak on a regular basis about the issues that affect Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Over the summer months and in the weeks leading into that, there will be certainly lots more engagement with the people of this province.

We understand the difficult decisions and the impacts on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We are not happy about that, I would say to you, Mr. Speaker. They are tough decisions. Without making those decisions today, it would have led to debt servicing, which now surpasses education in our system. In just five, six years we would have seen that number over \$2 billion.

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

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

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

We understand the impacts on the province by the decisions you make. I'm really concerned as well about the impacts on the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have increased HST which has an impact to people of the province. They've increased personal income taxes, insurance on vehicles, increased the gas tax, about 300 or more fee increases, just to name a few.

I know the Premier and his government likes to use an evidence-based approach so I ask the Premier: When you did your evidence-based approach can you tell us what the full implications are of all those increases on items that people buy every day, for example, groceries? What will be the impact on the cost of groceries for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

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

We all know that in Newfoundland and Labrador these budget decisions that we had to make are tough and they will impact Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We are not distancing ourselves from that. We understand that, but what we also understand is if you look at – we've had 66 years, as I said last week, in Confederation where we got to a net debt of somewhere around \$12 billion.

In the next five years, if no action had been taken, this would have doubled to an astounding number, over \$24 billion. Just think about that, I say to the former premier of this province. That as a result of the poor planning – and let's not forget, there was over \$25 billion in oil royalties and money that you had access to, to plan for this. There was another \$4 billion in tax decreases that were given that were

unsustainable at the time. This is why we are in the difficult situation that we're in today.

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

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

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

As I said earlier, it doesn't matter sometimes the questions we ask, the answer we'll get.

I am going to ask the Premier once again. You've always said you're using an evidence-based approach, so I'm sure you've done the analysis. When you include all the increases and cost to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to businesses, to transportation of goods and so on, HST, personal income taxes, insurance on vehicles, gas tax and so on and all the 300 fee increases, what will be the impact for food? The purchase of food that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian purchases, what will be the impact on the cost of food for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

The majority of food products in our province really does not have HST. I think most people know that. That is not to say other things will not impact that but it certainly would not be from the increase in HST.

What I do know, though, the evidence-base tells me this, if this situation had remained unchecked, debt servicing would have replaced critical services in our province. Financial institutions would have reaped the benefit of the mountains and the burden of debt that would have been placed on this province. That is what we are trying to avoid here. That's the evidence. Deal with it now because if not, it will deal with you.

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

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

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

The Premier won't tell us what the impact will be on food. He does know that HST costs go on repairs to vehicles and maintenance and equipment and buildings and all the things that happen to create the delivery of food. There is HST that goes on that and that will drive the cost of food up. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they don't have the evidence base, decision-making analysis done to tell us what the impacts will be or I'm sure the Premier would have already told us.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province have clearly stated that they can't afford many aspects of this budget. Of course the Liberal levy is one that's discussed on a regular basis. Liberal insiders, even their former leader, former Premier Roger Grimes has criticized this very tax that the levy will cause hardship to people.

I ask the Premier: Will you listen to your own insiders, your own people? Will you scrap this budget? Will you go back to the drawing board and create a new budget that is responsible and reasonable for the people of the province?

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

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

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

We recognize the impact of all the taxes, including the levy, that it would have on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That is the very reason why we said this had to be a temporary measure. Plans are in place, it is temporary. It is important for us that gets removed as quickly as possible.

Related to the advice of a former Liberal premier, as the former premier just mentioned, that same former premier also gave advice to your administration at the time, back in 2012, about the Muskrat Falls Project. As a matter of fact, one of your own former premiers, Premier Peckford, spoke out loudly against the project at the time.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**PREMIER BALL:** These are people that have a role to play in all this. We appreciate the work they've done in the past. The temporary levy that was mentioned is, indeed, temporary and one that will be removed as quickly as possible.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we know that this levy is going to hit people hard, but they're really not sure how. The Minister of Finance on NTV's *Issues and Answers* has stated that at the end of the year when you file your income tax, they're going to collect the levy at that point in time. Now we're hearing media reports that it's going to be taken out of people's paycheques starting in July.

I ask the Premier: Can you end the confusion on this, when and how will people be impacted by this Liberal levy?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the amount we're asking people in the province to pay as part of the Deficit Reduction Levy – which is certainly something, as the Premier has already indicated and we've been consistently indicating since the budget was announced – is a temporary measure to ensure that we are able to afford and invest in the critical services and infrastructures that we need to invest in.

The process for paying that is driven based on the taxable income an individual makes. Filing taxes provides an opportunity to do that. Also, employers who update their tax tables based on taxes would also have an opportunity to provide information to their employees around that.

There are a variety of ways that people can influence when they pay this tax. We look forward to providing information to all the MHAs so that they can continue to answer questions on this.

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

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

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

I ask the minister to clarify that because we haven't heard how this is going to be. We've heard a couple of different versions.

Are you saying that employers are now being directed to change the tax tables to collect this from their employees? When will that start? When should employees expect to see that coming out of their paycheques? When can they start to plan for this impact that it's going to have on them? Can you explain that to us?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, as is normal when there are any tax changes, new tax tables will be provided to employers as part of those tax changes which will be implemented July 1. Employers then have the responsibility and employees have the choice as to how they want their remittances and their tax withholdings to be held. Those are discussions that would happen between employees and employers once employers have the tax tables.

For those individuals who are not employees who are receiving income through other sources, if they're applicable to the levy – and certainly it's important to note anybody making less than \$20,000 is not applicable to the levy, and certainly anybody who is making less than \$40,000 is eligible for the Newfoundland Income Supplement. I look forward to the Member asking me more questions so I can provide more details.

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

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

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

I've got to ask the Minister of Finance once again, because she was quite clear on *Issues & Answers* when she said it will be collected at tax time next year. She also said if employees want to, they can submit the form to ask their

employers to collect a higher level of tax. Now she's giving a different piece of information.

I ask the Premier: Was there a plan on how this levy will be collected, or is this something you're making up as you go along?

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, as is the practice with all taxes that are collected by government, there are administrative functions that happen through the normal tax process. I certainly welcome the Member opposite and I can certainly brief him on what a TD1 form looks like. I can brief him on what a tax table looks like. If he would like to sit, we can certainly provide that information to himself and the Members opposite.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** One of the most important messages I certainly want to get out is for those individuals in our province who are making less than \$40,000 –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** – they would qualify for the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, and many of those would qualify for amounts between \$200 and \$300, and I look forward to providing that information to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

The coalition of pensioners', retirees', and seniors' organizations are speaking out against the health care cuts. They see it as a devastating effect on seniors and pensioners. In particular,

they're troubled with cuts to the long-term care beds, such as those eliminated in Masonic Park.

I ask the Minister of Seniors and Wellness: Do you too simply brush off their concerns as nonsense, as your colleague did, the Minister of Education, or are you willing to listen to their concerns and recognize these actions are devastating to seniors in our province?

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

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

I think long-term beds falls under Health and Community Services rather than my colleague's mandate.

There is a plan for long-term care beds in the province being worked on. We do have pressure points for long-term care demand; Central being the most acute, followed by Western. The situation in Lab-Grenfell and on the Avalon is different.

We have allocated in the budget money for Central and Western to assist in long-term care planning that is integrated with placement issues throughout the spectrum of care and not just as an ad hoc arrangement as has been the case in the past. I look forward to being able to present those over the course of the next year.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, because of the decisions of this Liberal budget a senior citizen who currently lives alone and at a low fixed income will now have to pay higher taxes. Their Home Heating Rebate removed, the fees increased, and because of a high fuel tax there will be a higher cost to groceries. In addition, they will have to pay the Liberal levy.

I've been speaking to seniors all over this province and in my district. I ask the Minister of Seniors and Wellness: The Minister of Finance may not listen to those who cry the loudest, but how can you justify putting this level of hardship on our seniors?

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Finance works with her colleagues to make sure that we put programs in place that protect the most vulnerable. For people in our province on low income, those people that are most impacted by this budget, our government is investing \$76.4 million to enhance the seniors' program that the former administration had by some \$13 million.

We're investing new money in the form of the Newfoundland Income Supplement to ensure that those individuals who are impacted by this budget, those impacts are mitigated. There are seniors on low income in this province that are going to receive cheques four times a year in order to help them with the cash management in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, this government has taken action to make sure that those low-income individuals –

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** – particularly seniors are taken care of. If the Opposition would like to support sharing those facts, I'll be happy to provide even more detail to them.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I, along with all Members in this House of Assembly, over the last couple of weeks has received calls from seniors. They are very concerned what effect this will have, whether they'll have heat in their homes, whether they'll have groceries on their table.

I ask the minister: Seventy-six million dollars, how much did you cut and what will be the cost to our seniors? That's the question.

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, the amount of money that low-income seniors would be eligible for under this program is substantially higher than what was available to those low-income seniors before –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** – including all of the consumption taxes those individuals would have to take.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** That's one of the reasons why – and I'm so glad he's asking this question today in the House, so we can get the facts out that including the consumption tax, this program, the Newfoundland Income Supplement program is designed to offset and mitigate those most vulnerable in our society.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, women, especially sole-support mothers, are more negatively affected in downturns of the economy. Yet the minister took away the Parental Support Benefit; applied a levy to low-income earners, most of whom are women; raised the HST; did nothing for child care; no additional rent supplements; and fewer home care hours. We already know the income supplement does not cover the extra expenses of this budget.

I ask the minister: Did she actually apply a gender analysis to her budget? If so, how did she

not see how her budget was going to affect the women of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank the Member opposite for the opportunity to speak again to the program that this government announced as part of the budget last week, which is the Newfoundland Income Supplement program, which not only provides mitigation for the most vulnerable in our community – as the impacts of the budget, whether it's consumption tax or other taxes.

This program is designed specifically – not only for seniors, it's designed for those people with disabilities and it's designed for single parents. The program we've implemented is also supported by an additional \$3 million that we're putting into the Department of Advanced Education and Skills to offset any issues related to those vulnerable families, vulnerable women who are trying to raise children on income support, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, obviously the Minister of Finance and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women did not apply a gender analysis to this budget as she is legislated to do.

I ask the Minister of Finance: As the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, how could she develop a budget without applying a gender assessment lens?

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, I just explained in the previous question that as part of the analysis we did on the impacts of the revenue actions that we undertook, we also

undertook an exhaustive exercise to make sure we were implementing a program that allowed us to mitigate the impacts of the tax increases collectively on those that are most vulnerable, including and most importantly, women.

Quite frankly, I resent the insinuation from the Member opposite that my dual roles and responsibilities of Minister of Finance and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women are somehow separated. I don't consider them separated. I consider them a great privilege to be able to serve both of those portfolios simultaneously, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I ask the minister to table the results of the actual tool of the gender analysis process that she applied to the budget. Mr. Speaker, the majority of public sector workers is women.

I ask the minister: How many of the 600 direct government job losses are women, and will she table that analysis?

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

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

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, as we discussed as part of the budget process, the 600 number that the Member opposite refers to is made up of two numbers. It is made up of the number from core government and it is also made up of the number of individuals who will be impacted by the changes in the agencies, boards and commissions.

At this stage, because as the Member opposite would know, through regular bumping and regular processes, retirements and others that would impact, it is almost impossible to determine whether it would be a male or a female that would be impacted by these positions. Certainly, as we get clarity in that information and we know for certain, I'll be happy to share that with the Member opposite.



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

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

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, I am seeing less and less evidence of any kind of specific gender assessment, any kind of specific tool used for gender analysis on this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: How many jobs will be lost in the regional health authorities and how many of those will be women? Could she please table this analysis?

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

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

To pursue a theme that has already been developed, the positions that we know about in the health authorities are summed as full-time equivalent, these could be part-timers. It is difficult, if not impossible, once the process is started to know quite where it will lead because of the issues that my colleague has just mentioned around bumping and seniority and priority and those kinds of issues from the union process.

Again, until the process is unfolded and the union bargaining units have worked through, we don't know actually how many heads, how many individuals will be affected and whether they'll be men or women.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Member has about 10 seconds for a question.

**MS. ROGERS:** Mr. Speaker, people are asking me why government is already enacting many of the cuts and extra fees before the budget debate has been finished and before it has been voted on. We know government can do so.

I ask the minister: Please explain to the people of the province why she has already chosen to enact these measures?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for a quick response.

**MS. C. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, we are faced with unprecedented circumstances. The decisions that were made in this budget were very difficult, not only for Members of this government, but most importantly, people of the province understand the difficult situation we are in.

Implementing these changes as they need to be is an operational decision. Certainly, we'll continue to do that in the best interest of the operations of government, and more importantly, the fiscal situation in respect of the people of the province and what their expectations are.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

#### Tabling of Documents

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, and the Chicken Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador Regulations under the Newfoundland and Labrador Chicken Marketing Scheme, it is my pleasure to table the 2015 annual performance report for the chicken farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

I'll have to be kind someday to the Member for Mount Pearl North, or he's going to have to learn how to move more quickly.

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 Deficit Reduction Levy is an extremely regressive surtax placing a higher tax burden on low- and middle-income taxpayers; and

WHEREAS surtaxes are typically levied on the highest income earners only, as currently demonstrated in other provinces, as well as Australia, Norway and other countries; and

WHEREAS government states in the 2016 provincial budget the personal income tax schedule needs to be revised and promises to do so;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that the Deficit Reduction Levy be eliminated and any replacement measure be based on progressive taxation principles and that an independent review of the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial income tax system begin immediately to make it fairer to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

I jump up quickly all the time, Mr. Speaker, when I have a petition like this because of my concern for what is being presented by the many people who have signed this petition.

We've been listening to the Minister of Finance and the Premier talking about the budget and talking about presenting facts. Well the people

who signed this petition, the facts they're presenting are the facts we need to listen to. They understand, apparently more than the government does, that the Deficit Reduction Levy is an extra burden among many other burdens that have been laid on them. That if they are going to be able to make it economically, they have to have a complete change in what's been done.

They want the levy gone. They want to see it taken off the books and they want to see government really do a complete analysis of what a fair, progressive taxation system would look like. Tacking on a surtax and saying it's interim and implying this is going to be one of the ways in which we're going to get to a balanced budget in this province, actually getting to surplus is because you are going to be paying extra tax, along with all the other taxes and burdens they're going to have to carry.

This is what the government will not do. It will not present the facts of when you add on the change to HST, when you add on the fact the Home Heating Rebate is gone, when you add on for seniors that they no longer will get dental care, when you add all these things together, this levy is immoral and unethical.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise and present a petition in the House of Assembly today.

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 seniors of our province deserve the greatest level of respect and care; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has a responsibility to act in the best interest of our seniors; and

WHEREAS the government has decided to shut down Masonic Park Nursing Home and reduce long-term care beds in the region;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reverse its decision and not bring undue hardship upon the residents of Masonic Park and find alternative measures that will allow them to continue to stay at the place they call home.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken a number of times in this House about government and Eastern Health's planned closure of Masonic Park Nursing Home, and I will continue to raise the issue. It's one that's affecting 40 families in my community, in my district, and the impacts go much further than that, Mr. Speaker. There have been several statements made in this House of Assembly that are simply not true, and can't be supported by any evidence whatsoever.

The minister has stood in this House and said the long-term care facility at Masonic Park is in a state of disrepair. That is simply not true, and there's no evidence to support that.

Mr. Speaker, the minister certainly said in response to my questions in this House that all residents would be moved down to the Veterans Pavilion at the Miller Centre and all would be well. That's also not true. In fact, there aren't a sufficient number of beds at the Veterans Pavilion to accommodate all of the residents at the Masonic Park Nursing Home.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has also said that there are no reductions in long-term care beds as a result of these budget decisions, both at Masonic Park and the Waterford. Again, it's simply not true.

The minister said today that there's a higher need and demand for long-term care in the Central Region and Western Region. I would acknowledge that to be true; however, what he didn't say is that there are over 60 families today in the Eastern Region – 60 individuals who are in need of long-term care beds, in need of placement in long-term care homes. So how can

you possibly justify removing 50 beds from the system when there are 60 people today waiting, and the numbers show that there's going to be increased demand for the next 20 years?

These people are waiting. As a result of people waiting for long-term care beds, they're occupying hospital beds that they shouldn't be. That's resulting in people lying on stretchers in hallways. It's resulting in people sitting in emergency rooms for longer hours. It's resulting in cancelled surgeries. It's just not right. Closing long-term care beds and closing the Masonic Park Nursing Home –

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

**MR. KENT:** – is just not right, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** 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 the Deficit Reduction Levy, as introduced in Budget 2016, unfairly targets middle class; and

WHEREAS the Deficit Reduction Levy asks low-income earners to pay more than their fair share instead of increasing taxes to the high-income earners;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to immediately stop the introduction of this temporary Deficit Reduction Levy.

Mr. Speaker, as all MHAs go across this province, I'm sure every district because I – this weekend the talk of my whole district is the budget. People are looking at this levy as being so unfair, especially the lower income and the middle class. It's unfair because it's not done in

proportion. It's not done to what they make versus a person with a high income.

If a person is making \$60,000 a year they have to pay this much, probably 1 per cent of what they're making, while somebody who's making \$300,000 or \$400,000 has to pay a less percentage of what they're making. So they're looking at it as really unfair.

Mr. Speaker, every organization – even the former premier, as was said today, is looking and saying this levy is just unfair. A lot of people are looking at it as too much too fast.

I ask this government to reconsider this. It's too much of a burden on our people. It's too much of a burden on the low- and middle-class income earners, the hard-working people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Reconsider this levy. It's just unfair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS the Deficit Reduction Levy is an extremely regressive surtax placing a higher tax burden on low- and middle-income taxpayers; and

WHEREAS surtaxes are typically levied on the highest income earners, as currently demonstrated in other provinces, as well as Australia, Norway and other countries; and

WHEREAS government states in the 2016 provincial budget that the personal income tax schedule needs to be revised and promises to do so;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that the Deficit Reduction Levy be eliminated and any replacement measure be

based on progressive taxation principles and that an independent review of the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial income tax system begin immediately to make it fairer to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

Mr. Speaker, earlier today in the House during Question Period the Premier said they really had no choices, that the situation was so dire. The financial situation of the province was so difficult.

Mr. Speaker, we know that every bit of the budget is about choice. It is all about choices, and the choices they made are not choices that propel our province forward. As a matter of fact, what it does – I see the Liberals already starting their P3 program, and it's: Pick People's Pockets. That's their P3 program.

What they're doing, they haven't generated a cent of new revenue. There's no new revenue here. There's no new diversification here. All it is, is reaching deeply into the pockets of people. Some people have deeper pockets than others and some people have more money in their pockets, but there are a lot of people right now in the province who don't.

We're not even talking about people who we traditionally see as way below the poverty line. We're talking about young working families. Young working families who have a mortgage, who have a car payment, who have a student loan, who are maybe making \$50,000 a year. So, Mr. Speaker, if we have two income earners of \$50,000 a year in one household, the levy will be \$1,200 from that one small household. Maybe they have a child in child care. That's \$1,200 a month alone. There is no fat, there is no give there. These are already people who are living paycheque to paycheque.

We talk about how important it is to save for your retirement, to save for your children's education, there's hardly enough at this point with the cost of housing, the cost of child care, with the extra levies, with the extra fees. What I find interesting are the number of families who've actually sat down and looked at it.

They're going to be out about \$7,000 per family. That's very interesting, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much. I look forward to standing and speaking to this issue again.

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

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

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

From the Order Paper, I call Motion 1, the Budget Speech.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Conservation.

**MR. TRIMPER:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, it is, indeed, an honour to stand and speak. This is my first time speaking to the budget. I look forward to sharing my own perspective as a new MHA, a new minister as to what I've seen witnessed, and witnessing right now in terms of how this budget is rolling out.

I've just returned from my district just last weekend. Unfortunately, I was not able to get there the weekend after the budget was announced. Departmental demands are such that it's very difficult. You wish you could clone yourself because, frankly, we need to be in each kitchen of this entire province right now to make sure that we can be there to reassure people that we do have their best interests in mind, that those most vulnerable in our society are indeed being looked at.

Before I go on – I'm going to talk about two themes – I do want to just acknowledge the team around me in the various departments, the five that I'm responsible for, how diligently they worked. There were a lot of late nights, long days. Wasted weekends in terms of leisure time, not wasted in terms of the decisions that we had to make. Everybody pulled up their sleeves and we did what we had to do.

I'd also like to compliment the Minister of Finance and the amazing team in that department. I have to say, there was time and again when several of us in the Cabinet would listen to some of the presentations. The calibre and the corporate memory that is possessed in that department is truly amazing. As somebody who's been in the private sector most of their career, to see that calibre of folks involved, is very impressive.

What I'd like to talk about is – a lot of my colleagues, of course, can reflect back on commitments and statements that have gone on in this House prior to this election. For myself, it's since the 14th of December when I was sworn into Cabinet. So I'm going to talk about from that date forward.

I must say it was a great honour to be invited to Cabinet and then to walk into that room filled with ideas, enthusiasm and a mandate letter which charged me by the Premier with a whole bunch of initiatives, each of which I looked eagerly forward to addressing; but the reality and the cold, hard reality was that there was a fiscal challenge well beyond what anybody's imagination ever could have been, and certainly what we were informed it was going to be.

As has been indicated, even in the House today, the scale of what we had anticipated to be a \$1.1 billion deficit, with the eventuality and understanding fully that left unchecked would have been in the vicinity of \$2.7 billion really meant that other priorities besides what was in my mandate letter, what was on my mind, what was in my department in terms of what we had wanted to do were checked rather abruptly to the side.

Within the various departments that I worked on, we collectively felt, as has been said about the vulnerability, we took a similar approach to each of the mandates of these departments, and I'll speak specifically around Environment and Conservation. We felt that while everything we do is important, and I think it can be argued to that effect, there are core services that we offer at Environment and Conservation and those are what we focused on when we made our decisions.

Namely, those include such things as drinking water quality, species of conservation status, endangered populations, protected areas and, of course, the all-important and very important environmental assessment process, making sure that resource development in this province, that undertakings are subjected to the highest scrutiny of the land and that we ensure that we have wise decisions. Compromises in these departments, frankly, were not available to us. We felt we needed to protect them, and I would argue that is indeed what we've done.

That said, we did have to make difficult decisions. I look forward to the Estimates. Tomorrow will be my day in Estimates and I look forward to further explaining to the Opposition and anyone else who's available sort of the intricacies and the thinking behind that. But, as I said, we took the ask of the Minister of Finance very seriously. She went to all departments and asked that we – the number was 30 per cent. The intent really, though, was to ensure that all ministers and their officials looked deep into how their departments are being run to ensure that if there are efficiencies to identify them. If there are opportunities for increasing revenues, let's avail.

There was quite a combination of this exercise and, as I said, a lot of great long nights and weekends, frankly full time, for a couple of months before we were able to arrive at Cabinet with all of the proposals before us. It was a difficult challenge. What I'd like to do is take a few minutes – I'm going to watch the clock because I'd like to spend the remainder of my time, approximately 50/50 between talking about what's going on in my department, and then I'd like to talk about what's going on in Lake Melville.

In terms of the focus of Environment and Conservation, as I said, we are focusing on species, the vulnerable populations, safe drinking water and environmental protection. These are the key themes that we're making sure we'll be able to provide.

We are reorganizing our Pollution Prevention Division. We were able to find some efficiency as we moved various sections of that department together. Unfortunately, it also meant when you move things together, you don't always need all

of the administrative support. There were unfortunate decisions that had to be made there regarding human impacts and people who have worked with the department a long time. That's the nature of these kinds of exercises when you're looking to find ways to save money and to provide better value for the taxpayers.

We're also changing the way that we conduct our research. Traditionally, wildlife management in this province, as in many jurisdictions, involves posing of questions, review of our own regulations and so on and completing an inventory of what's in the field. We don't work in schools. We don't work, necessarily, in accessible areas; we work in the wilder parts of this province. It costs money to get there. It costs money to do that work. It's also very labour intensive as to what you do with that information and how you use it in management decisions.

We anticipate and we plan and we will be continuing that type of work. What we are doing is actually starting to use more of that data for applications such as modelling, using statistics and understanding of wildlife and habitat relationships to make those decisions. Other jurisdictions are finding that they need to do this, of course, as costs are increasing. They need to find ways to do the same thing, but with perhaps less cost in the field.

The big game management, safe and sustainable drinking water and so on, as I said, these are all key priorities. I wanted to talk a little bit about – I'm sorry (inaudible). I'm going over to go over to parks, and there is certainly lots of focus on parks. If I could just detract from my messaging here for a minute – people will notice that this morning we launched our camp reservation system, and I'm pleased to say that within one minute of the system going live on the Internet the complete seasonal inventory available for Barachois Park was completely sold out in one minute. It was completely amazing. So there's huge demand for our parks. They are indeed jewels of this province, and it's a great honour to be associated with a department that's overseeing their operation.

We did make some tough decisions, and one relates to three of the larger parks. Barachois, Bay du Nord and Butter Pot, where we've

moved back from a year-round operation to a seasonal operation. That did result in a significant savings, some \$180,000, with a \$43,000 saving alone to Butter Pot.

While there are some effects unfortunately to entities such as the Avalon Nordic Ski Club, we've been in discussion with those people and we're having a discussion with them, I believe, later this week. So with them, as with other interest groups that are affiliated with any of the departments, I've been keeping an open-door policy both prior to, during, and now as we roll out the budget and what it means and how we can work together to ensure that we continue to address what's most important.

As I said, in terms of wildlife management, we're moving more to a computer modelling, computer simulation. It will allow us to evaluate the frequency in which we go out and collect information. For example, moose management areas are surveyed now on a period that we're going to actually have to pull back on, but we will be supporting that in terms of the habitat relationship work and other kinds of parameters that will help us make wise decisions when it comes to setting hunting quotas, making management decisions, evaluating environmental assessment-type information.

In terms of drinking water, we are actually able to identify savings there because we've actually come up with a much more efficient sampling approach for communities. What's gone on in the past is there have been water sampling and analyses completed of water systems that unfortunately have some chronic issues where the water may naturally be higher in some parameters that we're concerned about.

Without manipulation to those watersheds and to those systems it really behooves one to ask, why would you continue to test if you haven't done anything to adjust the water quality in the first place, Madam Speaker? Applying logic to the situation, I mean some of the decisions were very tough but others were very straightforward as we realized, why are we paying for something if we haven't fixed it in terms of whether or not it's been changed in any way?

I'd like to speak a little bit about water rates as that also applies within my department and I'll

just grab a for instance. The concept of fees, and yes government does apply and oversee some now 1,000-plus fees. Actually many of them, I think there's – I'm not sure of the exact percentage but it's a very large percentage for a small department. Environment and Conservation is actually responsible for a great number of them.

One of them, for example, is in water power rental rates related to hydro developments. It's quite interesting that the Muskrat Falls Project, when it comes online, will be charged a megawatt hour rate of \$2.50; yet, other hydroelectric developments that are operating now in the province are only charged 80 cents. That's just a prime example of the adjustments that were quite obvious to be making. People say, well, you just raised fees everywhere. Well a lot of them, frankly, we've been implementing them in a very unfair way. Some were paying much less than others. So we've moved that in line

Further, and I want to speak a few more minutes on fees. We also found a lot of the fees that were out there had not been increased, some of them for almost 20 years. Other fees that we've adjusted and moved upwards, frankly, were never there.

Environment and Conservation provides a lot of services. A lot of industrial clients were going out and doing various kinds of testing for them and recovering nothing for the service. So it was a very obvious opportunity to go in there because of the good service we are providing to recoup some of that cost. These are very logical decisions. On the face of it you say, well, you're raising all these fees; but in actuality, it's a very fair adjustment for the service that this department and government is providing.

They will produce a great deal of revenue. I'm pleased to say that certainly with the revenue increases it does help us because when you're implementing costs in a department such as mine, or any of the other four I have, there are a lot of good people there. So what we need to be most concerned about is how decisions affect their lives, and stats such as an FTE – well, actually that means a person's job. It means their family. It means all the people who depend and

rely on them. All these kinds of things need to be considered.

Camping fees have gone up, everything from laundromat services to what it's going to cost you to camp. All of these are in line frankly – and this is another criterion that we used in our assessment of fees which was to increase in line with how they relate to elsewhere in Atlantic Canada, how they relate to elsewhere in Canada in general.

With that, and because I don't want to run out of time, I want to speak back to my district. It's an area I wish I could be there more often in. I did have a great last few days. There are a lot of things happening in Labrador.

I'm very pleased, on behalf of the District of Lake Melville, to sit at the Cabinet table and to work with my colleagues, the four Liberal MHAs from Labrador. We have a very strong team who we meet regularly with the Premier to discuss Labrador issues. I can assure everyone in Lake Melville and throughout Labrador that we are working very collaboratively. Issues important to them, each and every one of them, are raised at the highest table in our province. I would say that it's a great team atmosphere. That said, difficult decisions still have to be made and I'd like to explain some of those details.

First of all, I want to talk about the Trans-Labrador Highway. It's often a project that I think a lot of people in the province don't fully appreciate. I think folks in Labrador certainly get it. It's the way that we are going to pull ourselves together.

Labrador is 300,000 square kilometres, less than 30,000 people. We get together very rarely. Situations such as the Labrador Winter Games and maybe a couple of other events that are sort of pan-Labrador in nature, help us to come together. Some basic services that many folks on the Island enjoy, whether it mean going to a doctor, going for your groceries, just going to meet family and friends in the adjacent community, these are completely unheard of for so many communities in Labrador. So the completion of the Trans-Labrador Highway and all that it means is absolutely essential for Labrador.

I must add, in reflection to one of my colleague's statements last week, the Trans-Labrador Highway is not a regional highway; it is the artery through which this province will access goods and services in Central Canada. We're not in competition with North Sydney-Port aux Basques route, but I will argue, and certainly the information is out there, that once that road and all that it means, including an efficient cost-effective way to get across the Strait of Belle Isle, you will see tremendous improvement in goods and services, not just to Labrador, but to throughout the Island. I think we'll start to fully understand the role that Labrador and our geography can play to really assist this province.

The \$63.7 million that our government was able to identify is a huge amount of money. I don't say it to belittle it, I don't say it to exaggerate it, \$63.7 million will go a long ways to supporting this project and the ongoing construction, enhancements, widening and paving. I look forward to seeing what our MP, Yvonne Jones, will be saying in terms of the federal commitment, but I anticipate this will be a very robust, a very busy season this year, and look forward to making continued progress on that very important project.

Another very, very positive announcement was that we are continuing the travel subsidy for Labrador teams and individuals to participate in athletic events on the Island. That amounts to some \$730,000. It's very important – I don't know how they do it. I actually am involved in coaching and officiating some of the sports myself, and I am constantly amazed, particularly when I get to the communities that are isolated. The calibre of the athleticism and their ability, communities and small groups from Hopedale and Makkovik, for example, always are dominant forces in the Labrador Winter Games and in provincial events.

It's really something else. You can just imagine if we could better connect these people, further enhance their facilities they're training in, they're competing in, and where these people could go. There is an amazing natural ability to really excel, despite their handicaps. As I say, I'm very pleased to see almost three-quarters of a million continue to be allocated to that.



A very important aspect of life in Labrador – and I just lived it on the weekend. I left Churchill Falls and meetings there with constituents on the weekend and I drove through a wonderful snowstorm for some five hours from Churchill Falls to Goose Bay. It was interesting. I got one-third of the way and then the snow plough stopped. So there I am, mercifully, in a Jeep with a four-wheel drive capability but able to keep going. No guard rails; frankly nothing out there except just myself hanging on tight with my dog Zoey in the back, cheering me on, but we did make it.

In the wintertime – and it's interesting that most western societies don't appreciate it, but winter in Labrador is a time for people and their communities to get out of their communities. So transportation by snowmobile is huge. It is the way we all get to see each other and the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy and the \$351,000 allocated there is a huge boost.

Finally, I want to make a final comment about the remediation program in Hopedale. For the last several years, this government has allocated some \$12 million to the cleanup of that former US military facility. I'm very pleased to say we are continuing this year with \$1.46 million to clean up the contaminated soil, and I look forward to talking to all residents of Labrador.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster):** The hon. the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

I'm very pleased to stand this afternoon and make my first formal presentation in the budget debate. While I've used many opportunities over the last couple of weeks to make points about the budget, both in Question Period and in reading petitions and in responses to Ministerial Statements, and I think I have made a lot of important points, this is the first time that I'm speaking directly to the budget and I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to do that.

It's been a pretty crazy intense time since this budget was brought down by the Minister of Finance. I have said publicly, and I'm going to say it here in the House of Assembly, that in the decades that I've been involved in work as a community activist, as an educator, as a social justice activist and now as a politician, I have never seen a budget as austere and difficult for the people of the province as the one that was brought down this year.

I think, unfortunately, that Budget 2016 is going to go down in history as one of the most austere budgets that will have ever faced this province. I can't imagine one being worse. I can't imagine anything coming after it that will be worse but you never know what this government is going to surprise us with. They are telling us already we have to expect more in the fall, and I'm really concerned about what that more is going to be.

What I find disturbing is that while the whole province seems to be upset by this budget, while people are using the public airways in every way they can to voice their concerns, while people are rallying around the province – we had almost 400 people out on the doorstep of this Confederation Building last week and that was only a taste of what's going on – while people on social media are certainly expressing themselves, while people are expressing themselves through emails – I have hundreds and hundreds of emails printed off where people are telling me why this budget is bad for them – that in spite of all of that, we had the Minister of Finance stand in this House last week on Thursday and say she was tired of listening to people like us on this side of the House spewing non-facts and that she was going to get up and give the facts to the people.

Well, I think it's about time that the Minister of Finance, the Premier and the government side of this House listen to the facts that are being presented by the people to them. I cannot believe the insult that's being made to the people of this province when they're being told by the Minister of Finance, by the Premier, by other ministers that they really don't understand what's there.

What I want to do this afternoon is to present some facts back. Not facts that I've made up, but facts that are being presented to me by people as

they put together all the pieces that make up this budget, all the pieces that are going to affect their lives. These are the pieces that this government has put together.

We have a list of four or five pages of all the pieces of the puzzle. They're all spelled out by government itself. It's a document that we received when we were given the budget for the first time and we were able to look at it. It's almost like the government is proud of these five or six pages of all the different cuts to services and cuts to programs, and additional taxations and additional fees that are being laid on people that are affecting their lives.

I want to take some of what the Minister of Finance is saying and put back on her the facts that people are saying to us. We're not out there brainwashing people; we're not out there telling them what to say. They saw it for themselves as the budget was read on budget day. Their reaction was immediate. Nobody had to tell people what was in the budget.

The government said it itself on page 5 of the Budget Speech, the minister even read: "Several major economic indicators like employment and real compensation of employees will be lower by 15 per cent and over 22 per cent respectively when compared to 2015 levels. Provincial deficit reduction measures are estimated to account for 40 to 50 per cent of predicted declines in these broad measures of economic activity."

The government itself told the people we've put a budget in your hands that's going to cause our economy to weaken in two major areas, employment and the amount of money in your hands. They actually said it themselves in the budget. They've set people up for a budget that they say will weaken the economy. So what are they expecting back from people? Oh, thank you very much, that sounds really lovely. Especially when what's being laid on them is saying you are going to pay for this and you're going to get nothing out of it, because the economy will be weakened by this budget. Can't they even hear what they're saying themselves? It just blows me away, Madam Speaker, just blows me away. I can't believe it.

They keep saying they had a difficult choice. No, they made a decision, and rather than sitting

down and taking the time and putting the energy into trying to come up with something positive, something that would help people have some hope, something that would say, you know what, in two years' time we're going to have more employment. You know what; in two years' time things are going to be a bit better. Not in two years' time we may take off your back the levy we're putting on now. That doesn't give people hope. You're going to carry this Deficit Reduction Levy and you're going to carry it for two or three years, then we're going to take it off your back and then you're going to feel better – no.

People wanted to see a plan that would give hope, a plan that could show how our economy can grow in this province. how can it grow in the fishing industry, how can it grow in agriculture, how can it grow the use of our natural resources. The only hope they're giving is that if you suffer this for four or five years, we're going to bring you back to a balanced budget and we might be able to take some of the taxes off and I guess they're hoping by then the price of oil will have gone up. They have nothing creative in this budget. They put no energy – it's a lazy budget. It's a budget that's based on, we'll raise the taxes, we'll do line-by-line reductions of expenditures and that's it. That's not a budget.

No vision, no thought of the people, no thought of how are things going to get better in this province. I mean the hope of a child care program, out the window. They can't even think about how a child care program would be an enhancement to our economy. More people would be employed. We would have a stronger economy with a child care program. A stronger economy, like they have in Quebec, like what happened there. Nothing, not one thing did they put in that could be a sign of hope. I don't get it. I don't get how they can do this and continue to say you're not seeing the truth; you're not seeing the reality. They're not seeing the truth; they're not seeing the reality.

The Minister of Finance, for example, when she spoke last week here in the House, because she did take one of the speaking times – and you were in the Chair, Madam Speaker. She said: Madam Speaker, we've also invested in enhancing the Seniors' Benefit so seniors will be able to get more money to offset the

implications of the consumption tax increase and also to offset implications of the Home Heating Rebate reduction.

Well, let me give a fact back to the minister if she thinks that's the fact, if she thinks that will help. I have the permission of Wanda White to read what I'm going to read next in an email that came from Wanda, an email that she sent to many MHAs including her own MHA who sits on that side of the House. She allows me to read from her email.

She says in one part: Now, you might say what about that new Income Supplement, won't that help? She is saying that to the Minister of Finance who said last Thursday that's going to help. Let's listen to what Wanda says. What about that new Income Supplement, won't that help? It might help some but when you look at and weigh in other factors mentioned above – and I'm going to read those in a minute – as well as the shutdown of other programs, I see very little to no change at all.

In fact – this is her fact – I estimate, based on other figures I've seen, that my husband and I will see our buying ability drop about \$1,000 to \$1,500 annually. The Liberal government budget will not see us merely falling through the cracks; it will be the hand that pushes us through the cracks.

Now, there's the fact. There's the fact from Wanda White. Wanda White, who is disabled, both she and her husband are disabled, and as she says in her email, they live on, or maybe subsist is the better word, less than \$10,000 a year. We do not smoke. We don't drink. I'm in a wheelchair. We live in a very modest one-bedroom home and heat only one room in our home in winter in order to survive. To do this, we rely on the GST-HST rebates as well as the annual home heat rebate.

Since the HST and home heat rebates have now been cancelled, we may not even have that luxury – some luxury – next winter. Also affecting our ability to have heat next winter will be the assorted array of raised fees and higher taxes – and I can go on and list them. They've been listed over and over in this House. There's the fact. There's the reality. There's the fact.

I would ask the Minister of Finance: How come she can't understand this fact? This is what I don't understand.

Even the 16.5 cents per litre on gasoline, Wanda White refers to that as well in her email. What she says is even though we don't have a car – because obviously a senior couple on disability with a subsistence income of just under \$10,000 a year doesn't have a car. However, they're smart enough to know that they have to get taxis to go to their appointments, to go buy food, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, that will be affected by the 16.5 cents a litre.

There's the downward effect of the 16.5 cents a litre cost for gas. Are taxi drivers going to be able to pay that and not put the fees up? Of course they won't be able to. It's going to be impossible. So once again whether you own a vehicle or not, you will feel the impact.

What about the effect of the 16.5 cents per litre on the cost of food when most of our food is trucked around the Island and in Labrador? Most of our food comes on ferries and then comes onto our roads and use gas. We all know that you cannot have the cost of trucking the food around the province happen without the cost of food going up. These are the things that Wanda writes that as they see it, their buying ability is going to drop by \$1,000 to \$1,500 annually. They are facts. They're the facts that I put to the Minister of Finance.

Let's look at another fact, not using the name of this couple but a real couple, a couple that live in my district who took time to sit down and put together some of the realities of their lives. Two parents, they have a young toddler. The husband is the main breadwinner, not in terms of the only one working but in terms of earning a salary. He earns just under \$25,000. They have an \$1,100 a month mortgage. You add to that the utilities, you add all the other expenses of a home on top of the \$1,100 a month mortgage. I don't have to tell you what those are; we all know it.

Their income tax will be \$3,600. The levy they'll pay will be \$600 because they'll both be paying it. The 2 per cent HST will cause for them an increase of expenditure of \$1,800.

Then you add to that, you eliminate the Home Heating Rebate program they would have gotten. You eliminate the Labrador Building Material Rebate program, which is important to them because they want to do some repairs to their home. You add to that the elimination of the Parental Benefits program and you have a couple who, as she says, in the next year – I didn't write this, I didn't tell her what to write – in the next year we will have to choose again and again whether to feed ourselves or to pay the bills. I am very fearful, but we intend to remain and give our best to the community we have chosen.

These are immigrants. A couple who are now both citizens of Canada. A couple who came here separately, met here, have married here, have started their family and now they don't know if they are going to be able to stay here. He has a job here in the city in the retail sector and she's trying to start a home-based business; yet, they don't know – as I said, I didn't ask her to say this – whether or not they are going to be able to feed themselves or pay the bills.

I have so many more of these emails upstairs and I am going to read more to you. I won't read more today. I want to speak very directly to some of the points the minister wrote. Why I'm reading this is to show you these are facts. My brothers and sisters in this House, these are facts.

I really take umbrage when the Minister of Finance says we are not presenting facts when we talk about the budget. She has to do the mathematics. She prides herself on being able to do line-by-line analysis. Well, do line-by-line analysis of the list of cuts to services, the cuts to programs, the new fees and the new taxes and you will find out that \$250 doesn't cut it. It doesn't cut it at all.

When we were in the lockup studying the budget we specifically said to the people who were there from the Department of Finance, when you look at these supplements, do these supplements balance out all the other losses that are going to happen? They said no.

The Finance Minister thinks it will balance out the Home Heating Rebate, but she's not adding up everything else that's there besides the loss of

the Home Heating Rebate. I can't believe how this government, Mr. Speaker, can sit here in this House and not realize that people fully understand that what Wanda White has said and what this woman, this young parent from my district has said – these are the facts. They do not have the money; they will not have the money.

I had another email that came to me last night, again, a mother from my district. A man and a woman who have four children, two of whom are in university and two of whom are much younger. What they're concerned about now is not only all of the pressures on them and whether or not they are going to be able to feed their children and heat their homes and do what they want to do as parents, but now they have the added pressure that their daughter, who is getting ready, after two years I think, to graduate from university – she now is facing the fact that she is probably not going to be able to get a grant. They're going to have to look at trying to help her again because they don't want her to be burdened.

As this constituent wrote to me last night, they themselves over the last year have just finally managed to move from what they considered being low income to finally moving above that slightly. I've been told by my constituent, the changes in the budget mean that for them they are going to be dropping down again into a low-income category. That's what this budget is doing to people. That's the fact.

When the minister says something like we're spending \$570 million invested in infrastructure that's going to create a thousand jobs a year for the next four years, she's only talking about our normal economy. That \$570 million is \$138 million less in infrastructure than last year's budget. That's a fact.

She tells a half-truth there, doesn't give the other side. That's what she's saying that we're doing. We're not doing that. We're looking at the whole picture.

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

**MS. MICHAEL:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the time. I promise my friends I will be back.

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

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

**MR. KING:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to speak here today on the budget for my first Budget Speech. To say that this budget has been tough is an understatement.

None of us like the situation that we're in, but we find ourselves in the situation that we're in and we have to move forward. We have to protect the future of this province and the future generations of this province.

Mr. Speaker, like many other of my colleagues and the people around the province, they're talking about it, they're talking about this budget, how it affects them. I've been getting the emails, I've been getting the phone calls, and I take pride in emailing everyone back, taking time to answer their questions on the phone calls. You have to do that; you can't hide from it.

It's ten years, \$25 billion spent – we can't blame them all the time. We own this budget, so I have to go up and face the people in my district. I have to go to the firemen's ball, I have to go to the Lion's charter night, I have to go to Mifflin's to shop, Swyers to shop, go to the post office, and I sit down and I take the time and I talk to the people about this budget.

Over this past weekend I held two public meetings – one in my hometown of Catalina, and one in Lethbridge. People were pretty vocal, and I gave them a chance to raise their concerns. I told them your concerns are relevant and I'm going to bring them back to the caucus table, because that's what I'm here to do as MHA.

What I also told them about, I gave them the backstory. I said here's where we are. We have to make some difficult choices. Yesterday I attended a NAPE rally in Bonavista. I was asked by Neil Fleming, the president of the local NAPE chapter, to show up. Do you know what? I showed up, because an MHA has to show up to the things they're invited to. I'm a representative for the District of Bonavista, and I was there to hear their concerns. They're not happy about the AES office closing in Bonavista; they're not

happy about the cuts to the health care facility in Bonavista. Neither am I.

I had a meeting with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills and the Mayor of Bonavista last week in a delegation, so we raised our concerns then. I requested a meeting with the Minister of Health on the health care facility in Bonavista, and he's graciously accepted to have that meeting with me. I thank him for that, because we have to listen.

So how'd we get here? That's what everyone asks. They say: Neil, how'd we get here? Well, I said: How'd we get here? So last year – this is the Fisheries Minister who pointed me to this. This is *Budget 2015: Balancing Choices for a Promising Future*. Well, I don't know about that. They had a deficit last year of \$1.09 billion. In September we asked them: Where are we at right now? They based their budget last year on a \$71 barrel of oil. That didn't last too long. So in September we asked them: Could you give us an update? Where do we stand? No answer. When we got in on the 22nd of December that deficit had crept up to – I believe it was just shy of \$2 billion.

Because we came out and Minister Bennett and Premier Ball – excuse me, the Premier and the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board got up and said here's where we're at. We're \$2 billion in deficit for the fiscal year 2015-16. I shook my head and I said wow, that's a lot of pavement and fire trucks going out in the last few months. Anyway, I digress.

Because of that, we took a hit in our credit rating. We dropped. The cost of borrowing went up. For the fiscal year 2015-2016 we had a \$2.2 billion deficit. Because of that, our debt interest payments amount to 11.6 per cent of our spending. That is \$982 million dollars.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Almost a billion dollars.

**MR. KING:** Almost a billion dollars. Thank you.

What do we pay for our children's education? Mr. Speaker, 10.5 per cent of our total budget, \$890 million. So we're paying roughly – I'm not too bad at math. We're paying almost \$10

million more on our debt repayments than our education.

We had the good times, right? The good times rolled for a lot of years. A lot of people did well for themselves. Let's talk about personal income taxes that went down. The personal income taxes went down and I'll give the former government credit under Premier Williams. The first bracket, the lowest earners, they went from 10.57 per cent in 2001 down to 7.7 per cent. Do you know what? They deserved it. The middle class deserved it too, 16.16 per cent down to 12.5 per cent. That's fine as well. The third bracket, the highest earners in this province dropped from a period of 2001 – well after 2007 I should mention, from 18 per cent to 13.3 per cent. I mean come on; you look at what's saving there.

What we did with this budget we put it back up to 16.8 per cent. Next year it's going to go back up to 18.3 per cent, so we rose it by 3 per cent. Let the ones who can afford to pay it, pay it.

How does this budget affect us in the District of Bonavista? What's in it for us? What's in it for us, I tell people. I don't know if any of my colleagues have ever driven from Georges Brook to the Bonavista Highway, 4.3 kilometres of bad road. That's been like it for 25 years. We just got that infrastructure money put in place. That will be done this summer. So that's good news in the budget

We're also getting some pavement, some roadwork done in the back route in Elliston, from Elliston to Bonavista. Now that's carry-over but we felt we had to do it, and they deserve it. Those people travel that road day to day and they deserve a good road to go over. Now we need to focus a little bit more on the other Elliston road, which I took the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development over twice this past weekend. After going over that road he said we have to do something about that one.

We're also doing some roadwork up around Route 235, which is the back half of the Bonavista Bay side of the old Cabot Loop. A lot of work needs to be done there. A lot of it was put in place by the previous government. We decided we needed to invest more in it. So that's

good news as well. Not all spending they did over the past few years has been bad.

Infrastructure investment is needed. However, we have inappropriate spending, Muskrat Falls. Everyone asks me: Neil, Muskrat Falls, can we stop it now? I said we're at the point where we can't. We stood up and said – I never did agree with that. We're paying \$1.3 billion out of this budget to honour Muskrat Falls. Humber Valley Paving, \$21 million went in that route.

What else do we have in the District of Bonavista? The Minister of Environment and Conservation talked about water and I appreciate the fact that he did speak on water because we do have a lot of water issues in my district. My hometown of Trinity Bay North, we've been on boil order for years. I think there's a standing offer on Channel 6, where the local ad is on, to keep that boil order up.

We're getting phase four of our water improvement in the municipality of Trinity Bay North. The Town of Bonavista is getting investments in the new water tower. Do you know what? We're a growing area. We're an area where we're growing. We want to see new people come in. So we need to have the infrastructure to get more water to meet the demand for the people that are coming into Bonavista. Bunyan's Cove has been having some water issues so we're continuing on with that project.

The biggest piece of water infrastructure that we do have in this budget is going to Milton in Georges Brook, the LSD of Georges Brook – Milton. We are investing in water infrastructure that is going to connect Milton. Everyone knows that Milton has had water issues throughout the year and they've had to hook into Clarendville. Clarendville has been gouging them on the water rates. What we said is we're going to invest in that. We're going to give Milton the water they need and move it up to Georges Lake because that's a good thing. I'm not saying anything bad about the Member for Terra Nova. That's just the way it is. I'm getting a little off track.

We just had the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development visit the District of Bonavista on Friday. I thank him for coming to the historic District of Bonavista. We visited

Sexton Lumber, the largest full-time employer in the district. They employ roughly 120 full-time workers there. We sat down with Kevin, his wife Susan, and Neil Greening who's their CFO, and we said, what can we do to get you guys growing, to grow the economy in the Lethbridge area to the bottom half of the Bonavista Peninsula?

It helps my friend in Terra Nova as well. He's happy that we're getting the road from Georges Brook to Route 230 done because his constituents use it as well and we use it to bring some money into his district. There's nothing wrong with that. We're close and we have people coming down from his district to ours. Anyway, I'm digressing.

We said how can we help you grow your business? We sat down – this is my third meeting that I've had with Mr. Sexton and his team over the past six months. What we're going to do is try to get him better access to forest product, to lumber – to the forestry so that he can actually hire more people. He's actually looking at investing in his company doing finger joining. He's got machinery coming down from Quebec right now and he's getting that operational. All of that is going to grow our economy in the area.

What did we do after that? We left Sexton Lumber and we stayed in Lethbridge because tourism, fishery, agriculture and forestry is important in my district. We met with a group of dairy farmers. We didn't cut any money in forestry; we didn't cut any money in agriculture because we know it's important to farmers to have the ability to go purchase more Crown land to put their machinery there, to cut it down to provide foliage for their cows so they could produce more milk and put that into our local economy.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** More diversification.

**MR. KING:** More diversification, exactly it.

So when they say there's no diversification, I mean, come on. I got four things in my district; we're a pretty diverse district.

From there we met with the municipality of Trinity Bay North. That's my hometown, born

there, raised there. I saw the impact the closure of the cod fishery had in the municipality of Trinity Bay North. We had a big FPI plant in Port Union that employed 1,400 full-time employees year-round – 1992, that all closed. We had Fishery Products later come in with a shrimp plant that provided year-round work for people. However, since Igor came that plant got flooded and OCI made the choice that it wasn't viable for them to keep the plant open. That's fine.

So I'm working with the municipality of Trinity Bay North and representatives of OCI so the town can purchase that plant and bring an operation into that town that will create jobs. We're a very short amount of time away from getting that accomplished.

The cod culinary project based on the tourism industry – now, the tourism industry, people loves the hands-on experience; how do you do it? The fishery has always been big in my district. We're the District of Bonavista – John Cabot through a basket over the *Matthew* and hauled up a basket of fish. I'd love to see it like that again, but it's not going to be like that. So we have to get back to utilizing what we can.

The cod culinary project is partnered with local fishermen. The College of the North Atlantic in Bonavista – which is a great resource for the District of Bonavista, and it will be focused on the tourism sector. When the fishermen come in they're going to come to this facility, they're going to fillet a fish and show them how it's done. Local culinary students can then show them how to cook that fish, and then will provide them a sample, give them a real-life experience. Newfoundland is based on real experience, because we're a real people.

Then we talked about a Geopark in Port Union. Now we just had the discovery a few years ago of the oldest fossil here in the province, which is currently sitting in The Rooms, and I've got to get down to visit sooner rather than later, I tell you.

So we're looking at what we can do because it's a great area. People come to visit and the geo-tourism industry is going wild right now, so we want to take advantage of that. In my district we have some of the nicest hiking trails in the

province. You have the Skerwink Trail which you can't even park around there because the lots are full and even though you're going to walk, you have to walk a little bit further to get to the trail.

You have the Murphy's pond loop in Port Union which brings you out around, shows you the beautiful Green Island. You have the trail from Little Catalina to Maberly which we are investing money in because after Igor, the trail is not safe so we're going to invest money into that. We want to market our area in that manner.

Then we met with the Bonavista area Chamber of Commerce before their AGM and election of officers. We had a great meeting with the members. They had some concerns about the budget, like everyone else does, but we look at opportunities. We didn't cut back on any marketing. We didn't cut back on any of the historical – excuse me, (inaudible) but I'm getting off track and my time is getting short.

One thing I wanted to talk about is the Income Supplement. This is what a lot of people are asking me about; \$74 million in support that we are giving those most vulnerable citizens. Those include seniors, low-income families, low-income singles and people with disabilities. So for a single senior with a family net income of \$16,000, do you know what? They are getting an annual quarterly installment of \$394; that's every quarter. They are going to get a double payment in October.

A senior couple with a net income of \$26,000 their annual Income Supplement is \$510 with the seniors' annual benefit of thirteen, giving them an amount of quarterly installment of \$455.75, which will be doubled in October, because it takes place July 1.

A single parent with one child – and I had someone message me from (inaudible) with this. They said: I'm actually going to do better off. Family income \$16,000, annual Income Supplement \$466, she is going to get an amount of quarterly installment of \$116. A single earner family with two adults and two children under six – and it varies if you have children a little bit older. You are still going to get something, but you won't get as much. Two children under six,

net family income– now net is not gross. Net is your taxable money.

So when people say: All right, I make this amount. I said: What's your net? What do you actually take home? What do you get taxed on? They say: Oh, well, that's not too bad. So they're getting an annual Income Supplement of \$910, which brings a quarterly installment – double this year, in October. So people relied on that money to buy Christmas gifts, the grandmothers, all that sort of stuff, they're getting that. So it's \$227.50.

So I can go on, I can go on and I can go on. I know it's a difficult budget and that's not lost on me, and I talk to everyone. So I'm going to wind down here. I have more to say, but I get another 20 minutes and then I get another 20 minutes after that. I don't know after speaking here today if anyone wants to listen to me for another 20 minutes.

I said this initially, and I'll say it again, I said –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

Order, please!

**MR. KING:** B'ys, if anyone has any questions, if anyone has any concerns, call on my personal cellphone, email me, stop me in Mifflin's, stop me in Robin's Donuts, stop me at J.T. Swyers Limited, come to my office. I want to make myself accessible and answer as many questions as I can.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Topsail – Paradise.

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

I appreciate the chance to rise again in the House and discuss the budget, which is by far the most frequently discussed topic in the province over the last couple of weeks. I had someone say to me over the weekend – I've had a couple of people make this comment to me. They said:



The government is waiting for the discussion to stop and everything to cool off, and for it to all go away. I had a couple of people mention – I had one conversation with a person over the weekend who said: I'm not going to let this happen. I'm not going to let them forget. I'm not going to let the discussion stop, because it's too important.

Now, I just heard from the Member for Bonavista, and I congratulate him on his time up speaking. He comes from a beautiful area, and it's an area that I visit on a regular basis. When I say regular, two or three times a year I'll find my way down to Bonavista for my own personal pleasure, and the pleasure of my family. We have family down there, and I have friends down there and so on, so we visit there. No doubt, it's a beautiful part of the province and there are some great people down there. I've gotten to know more of them as I've been going there over the last number of years.

The Member referred to a number of matters down there. Sexton Lumber, no doubt a significant contributor to the region, to the area on the peninsula. I think he said he's bringing some new equipment. I'm glad of that. The only thing he never said was if the government was providing him any support or not, and it would be good to see that.

He said there were no cuts to forestry or agrifoods. I just want to draw his attention to page 6 of the document that was distributed by the province, by the government, and it's entitled, GNL 2016-2017 savings because he did mention there were no cuts to forestry or agrifoods. I'd just like to remind him that under Forestry and Agrifoods, "Eliminate the Agriculture and Agrifoods Development Fund and phase-out program funding over four years." The budget at \$2,555,000 would be reduced by over a million this year and the full amount would be reduced, annualized. So there would be an annual savings of just over \$2.5 million. That's a cut.

Another one there which is, "Line by line and other operational savings" they're the ones that kind of worry us. Until we get all of the Estimates done, and as government rolls out announcements – and I would imagine they're going to roll out announcements when a

program is discontinued or an office is closed or whatever. I'm sure they'll be making the public aware of that. "Line by line and other operational savings" is going to amount to \$4.4 million this year – \$4,440,700, which is what's indicated in this document, and \$4,065,000 annualized.

In any case, "This decision will reduce program and/or operational budgets." When you reduce program budgets, it's a good chance you're reducing programs. I just point that out to the Member opposite because he may not have been aware of that when he said there were no cuts to forestry or agrifoods. That is absolutely not the case according to this document. Very significant cuts, \$6.6 million to an industry that really needs help in this province.

We all benefit from that. We all benefit from a strong agrifoods industry. We benefit from local operators who can provide and produce great products; shorter delivery to the markets, which of course provides for a better product, reduces the impact on our environment for transportation and movement of such goods when they're made local, produced local, grown local and then consumed local as well.

At a time when investments – also, as the Member said himself, alluded to it himself, when you make those investments and partnerships, you're creating an economy. He talked about when you don't make cuts it helps diversify the economy. Well there are cuts, so it reduces the ability to do that. There will still be funding left for the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency to operate, of course, but you have \$6 million in reductions. That's going to take its toll somewhere along the way.

Other cuts that we've seen in the budget, Madam Speaker, include Justice. We haven't had a lot of discussion in the House about Justice yet. We will. I know the Justice Minister, when he rose in Question Period last week and he said my first question, but don't worry, he knows and I can tell him – and I'm sure he knows, there are going to be some coming.

We have Estimates scheduled for tomorrow night. We've been working hard in preparing for that. We have lots of questions that we will have in discussion. For those at home, Estimates is

when we go line by line through the budget of the department and we see what was budgeted last year, what the actual number is projected to be and what their intended spending is for that department this year.

We already know there's a reduction in policing and justice services. I understand – we're going to get into this more tomorrow night – there are four vacant positions being made redundant or being eliminated at the RNC. I'm also hearing there's going to be a reduction of 10 hires this year. So we look forward to more of that. That means 14 positions gone from policing at a time when our province is at – at a time when we hear almost daily in the news media about armed robberies and an increase in those types and related other violent crimes.

We know there's action taken on courthouses, supreme courthouses, provincial courthouses. We know that in Harbour Grace we have reductions in the provincial court in Harbour Grace. I'm told it's the third busiest provincial court in the province. It serves a large region, Conception Bay North. It's heavily populated, busy area, lots of business out there, lots of people work in that region. A lot of people work outside of the region but live there as well, continue to live there. People have families and have had attachments there for decades and for generations.

We know there was a meeting, a gathering, a rally over the weekend. I understand the Member for Conception Bay North stood there and made some comments as well. I don't want to speak – I wasn't there. I never heard it. I've only heard about it. I understood she was opposed to it, but she can speak to that herself.

Also, what really should be interesting for people to remember, when you move a court from Harbour Grace to, I assume it's going to become St. John's is where the court matters for that area will be heard in the future. When you reduce that it means all those services have to move to St. John's. So the people in Conception Bay North who come within the jurisdiction – that includes everything down from Clarke's Beach, Bay Roberts, that area, Harbour Grace, right down to the top of the peninsula. That means a lot of services will have to move there.

If a police officer this evening makes an arrest in that area, there is an arrest made down in – if I name a town someone will be upset that I named their town to make an arrest in, but if somewhere down there they made an arrest, the person is detained overnight and has to go to court the next day, well, someone has to take that person to court now in St. John's, which would be no less than an hour away, versus a few minutes' drive to get to Harbour Grace from the Harbour Grace detachment to the court out there. It's going to mean an hour in, do the business you have to while you're in here and an hour to get back which, unless they're going to add more policing services and resources to that area, it is going to mean a decrease in policing resources for that area.

That's one of the big glaring results that will happen here. Unless there's an increase in policing resources that means there's going to be a decrease because officers are going to be out. When I was a police officer, I went to court thousands of times. And I mean that, thousands of times over the years. That could mean that a police officer is working today, has a subpoena to go to a trial that is scheduled to start at 10 o'clock and they have to leave 8:30 a.m., 8:45 a.m., leave Harbour Grace to drive to St. John's to prepare to go to court.

They show up in court at 10 o'clock and they may be there all morning waiting for their turn to testify, may have to stay till after lunch, could end up being gone for the entire day on one case and you may never get in court that day. It happens numerous times that a case is set over, the trial is taking longer than anticipated and while you have to be available to the court, now you leave and you haven't testified and you have to go back another day – a full day where a police officer is out of the community as a result of moving the courthouse, closing down the third busiest provincial court in the province. I stand to be corrected on that, but that is my understanding that it's the third busiest.

The other part that happens quite often through court processes is that there is a date set for trial. It is not unusual to hear cases were it gets postponed two or three times. It is a major frustration quite often for victims of crime who have to go to court over and over and over waiting for a trial to happen but, for one reason

or another, an accused or their lawyer would appear before the court, the trial is ready to start and say Your Honour, we have to postpone this; I ask for a postponement because of – and many times, courts will provide defendants with those opportunities and postpone court matters.

I can remember cases where it happened numerous times, where cases were postponed. That means every time a police officer has to go, expecting a trial, go to St. John's, leave at 8:30 or 8:45 in the morning, you arrive at 10 o'clock; by 10:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m., 11 o'clock the defence lawyers says we're not going to be ready to go ahead with this today and we are going to get it postponed; and the person gets back lunch time, half the day is gone, the morning is gone. That's what's going to happen in Harbour Grace because it's such a busy place.

There is a strong police presence out there. Just last year when we were in government, we reopened the second detachment that had been closed for some time out there. I understand they probably just reopened this spring or since the winter. But it is still going to create challenges and slowdown in people seeking justice.

You take, for example, someone gets a parking ticket and wants to contest it. Someone goes down in Bay de Verde and gets a parking ticket, they are going to have to go to St. John's to fight a parking ticket or a moving violation. It's going to be a significant inconvenience for many, many people for a busy court process.

We know there are job savings and jobs that would be saved. That happened in health just this last week; we had a lot of discussion, and still having a lot of discussion. I was talking to some people over the weekend and I talked to a gentleman last night talking about Masonic Park closure and the upheaval and the stress that it has caused for a family member. My understanding is there are 18 positions there going to be saved, but to significant expense and turmoil to residents who really aren't sure where they are going to go.

I know the Minister of Health has said they are going to go to the Veterans Pavilion but there's only, I understand, about 25 vacancies at the Veterans Pavilion and 40 residents at Masonic

Park. Therefore, they have 14 or 15 additional places they are going to have to find.

I don't know how the person who is next on the list to go into long-term care in St. John's is going to feel when all of a sudden you have 14 more that are gone ahead of you, now you become 15 on the list, plus you have 10 from the Waterford who are going to go down to long-term care as well, so now you're 25 on the list. You have gone from one to 25, or maybe you're number five on the list and you just became number 30 on the list.

We're still hearing a lot of discussion about the closure of Masonic Park and why are we closing long-term care beds when we have such a demand, the fastest aging population in the country, and we have acute care beds occupied by people who are waiting for long-term care.

I understand as well part of the Veterans Pavilion, the change in the Veterans Pavilion was because – and again, I stand to be corrected on this and we are hearing bits and pieces of it. We don't have access to information in the Opposition like we used to in government, but we still hear a lot of information. As a matter of fact, I don't remember ever getting so much information fed to us by phone calls or emails, or messages or people sharing stuff with us. That never happened when we were in government, that's for sure. Not to this level.

There used to be block funding for Veterans Pavilion and the federal government has changed that to per-bed funding. When it was block funding, the Veterans Pavilion – because someone asked: Why are there so many vacant beds at the Veterans Pavilion? Well, they were earmarked strictly for veterans because there is block funding to provide long-term care for our veterans who served their country well and now deserve to be treated with the same dignity that they treated their fellow Canadians with.

That is the way the government did it; the federal government provided block funding. My understanding is that this year they have changed the block funding to a per-bed funding. So the provincial government is no longer receiving that block funding for all those beds at the Pavilion, and I think there is 45 down there altogether or so. They don't receive that block

funding any more. The federal government is only going to pay them per bed.

Now you have these vacant beds that you were being paid for before by the federal government that you're no longer being paid for. So while they were reserved for veterans before, you actually could have taken those empty beds that now can be used for people who are not veterans and move people from the wait-list who are waiting for long-term care and could have moved them into the Veterans Pavilion. Kept the Masonic Park open, kept the 10 long-term residents of the residential unit at the Waterford Hospital – could have kept them in place as well.

Some of them lived there for decades, been there their entire lives. They are now aging, but have been there their entire lives at the Waterford. Could have left them there and could have left people in Masonic Park, and then could have opened those unused beds. Now that the federal government has changed their funding model, could have opened those long-term care beds for patients.

That's not happened. That's not the choice that this government has made. Budgets are about choices and they can make the choices and decisions that they'd like to make. They've done that. As I said one time in Question Period, I said it doesn't have to be like this. The budget didn't have to be like it is because there are choices made.

The Premier today went back to 2007. In 2007, what happened was – that was a time long before I came into politics, but that was a time when the government of the day reduced the level of taxation for the people of the province. I know from talking to people around the table back in those days – and also people from the former government and the former premier as well – the whole idea of reducing taxation was to make our province more inviting for people and business to come here. So if you lower taxation for business, then you have a competitive chance to lower that business to get them to come here. Sometimes you have to compete with other provinces.

I remember Johnson Insurance wanted to open a – if my memory serves me correct – centre of

excellence a year or so ago. It was about to go to Nova Scotia. I can tell you where it was going to go. It was going to go to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. The Dartmouth part of Halifax, Nova Scotia was where it was going. It was headed there. We wanted it to come here. I think about 330 new jobs.

Under their business plan what would happen if a person calls their company anywhere in Canada and wants to do business with them, wants to purchase insurance from them, then they call a number and it would answer at one of their centres of excellence. This was going to be a new centre of excellence to be built here.

Some people called it a call centre. I don't call it that. You're calling an insurance professional looking for a quote. What coverages do I need? How much is it going to cost? What are my options and so on? It's a little more than a call centre; it's actually people who work in the insurance industry.

Madam Speaker, I add to that, one of the highlights for me was that they were going to be good-paying jobs. These are jobs that are going to pay \$40,000, \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000. They were good opportunities for over 300 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to get a good-paying job, good training from a company who's been around for, I don't know, a hundred years maybe. They've been around forever it seems like. That's what an investment has to do.

So if you lower taxes and lower tax burdens on a business like that, then you have a better chance of bringing them here because you lower their tax burden so they can hire more people. Now, it's a pretty easy concept. That's what happened in 2007. I can't remember one person, one person opposite, anyone in the House of Assembly, anyone in the province, anyone anywhere saying b'y, that's a bad thing they're doing there. I can't remember anybody saying that's a bad thing the government's doing there, they're reducing taxes; I want to pay more taxes. I can't remember anybody saying that. I can't remember anyone saying this is going to be bad for the province, because it helped to open the doors on so many industries.

If you look at our technology industry and the businesses that have set up here and are doing

business here and operating here, that are doing world-class software, world-class instruments and electronic devices that are being produced right here in our province by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, that are doing well, internationally recognized, doing very, very well and are selling their products worldwide; if you look at the point-of-sale terminals that are available by so many banks around the world that the security systems on those are developed right here in the province, ran and sold, those security features are sold right here by a Newfoundland and Labrador company and business that was set up and assisted through partnership with government.

That is what investments do. When you set up those investments, it gives you an opportunity to help grow and provide jobs. You ask most people in the province where they were a decade ago versus where they are now, what kind of house do you live in, what kind of car do you drive, how often do you have a vacation, what kind of quality of life do you pay for your children and so on, people generally have a better standard of life today than they did a decade ago.

Then the budget came along and we started seeing these taxes. It is really amazing to me how many fee increases there are. We have not begun to get below the surface of some of those fees here in the House of Assembly, but 300 fees – I talked about this last time I was up here in the House – 50 new fees that are being instigated or brought forward by this budget. Then, of course, not only do we have an HST increase, which is the same HST increase that we brought forward a year ago to take effect in January, but we also see HST on insurance. When you see HST on insurance, then that can be very critical to people, people who need insurance for their own business.

What you do, when you do those things, put HST back on insurance, what happens is – because those same businesses who operate here and hire Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are going to start to say: Well, am I better off having my business in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia? Am I better off now – what are the long-term impacts of this? I know a lot of them are waiting for the budget. A lot of them are waiting and hoping there's going to be some change in the increases

that have been brought forward by this current government, by the Liberal government that we have today.

I talked to a gentleman last week who's a business owner. I said what do you think? He said, well, I really hope they're going to change some of this because I can't survive, my business can't survive if this is what is going to happen in our province. They're reading the impacts of it already because there's so much uncertainty for the months to come, so many people who – public servants, for example, 45,000, 46,000 public servants today really don't know how far or how long their jobs are going to last.

We have 2,500 temporary or contractual employees who are normally extended for a full year have just been extended for six months bringing them up to the end of September. We have 45,000, 46,000 public servants who are saying to themselves now, I don't know what's going to be coming in the budget in the fall, what's going to happen. They're saying, I wish they'd just hurry up and tell me. I wish they'd hurry up and tell me what's going to happen to me.

Someone who's not going to lose their job or lose their income as a result of the budget, well, tell them they're not because maybe then they will have their vacation this summer. Maybe they will go visit great places like Bonavista or Twillingate or the Northern Peninsula. Or maybe they'll take the ferry and go to Labrador and visit Labrador. Lots of Newfoundlanders have never been to Labrador. Lots of people talk about they'd like to do it sometime. Maybe they'll go to Springdale because it's a nice area down there or Baie Verte.

They're not going to do that, Madam Speaker, when they don't know what's in their future. When they don't know what's going to happen to their jobs or livelihoods in September, they're going to say, well, hang on now, I don't want to go to that restaurant. I'm going to take money that I'd spend on a restaurant tonight, I'll cook a meal at home with our family, we'll have a nice time. I'm going to put that money away because I don't know what's going to happen in September. I'm not going to go to a movie or a show or a concert or an event. I'm not going to

take some time and travel around the province. We're not going to go visit our family members as often as we used to. We have to reduce our spending because we don't know what's going to happen in September. We don't know what's going to happen.

When people start to feel that way and think that way, and then when they slow down their spending – you have 46,000 people slowing down their spending, then the province comes behind them. Now the grocery store is not doing the business he did. The grocery store owner is going to go, gee whiz, I have to rethink this now. I just lost five or 10 or 15 or 20 or 25 per cent of my business. My business has gone down. I have the same number of customers coming here, but they're not spending like they used to.

You go to the hardware store and you say, okay, what's going on with my – well how come so-and-so was in here last year, I did a consult with him. He's going to put a new deck on the back of his house. He's going to put a nice covered deck on it. He's going to go to the hardware store and he's going to spend tens of thousands of dollars on this beautiful project. Now he comes in and says, I need a few of them and a few of them because I'm just going to patch up the deck I have. Well that doesn't help that business owner. When that business owner has to deal with that, then he's thinking now, my business is down. I don't need as many employees. I'm going to have to lay somebody off – and on and on and on it goes.

That's where the province is today before we've even passed the budget, because there is a level of uncertainty in our future that as far as I'm concerned is unprecedented. Members opposite talk about we're in an unprecedented circumstance. Yes, there's no doubt we're in a tough circumstance. No doubt at all, and hard decisions have to be made. We agree with all of that.

As well, if you leave people hanging, if you leave people not knowing what's in their future, if you leave people with an unknown of what's going to be in the future for them or what's going to be their future – are they going to have a job tomorrow? Are they going to have a job in September, in October? Is my program that I worked on for government for 10 years, is that

going to be cut? Will that be eliminated? I don't know. Will that be eliminated? Will I still work here? I don't know.

So that leaves an awful lot of uncertainty for people, which creates that implosion in our economy. That's what we believe is beginning to happen already.

As I said earlier, I've been contacted by so many people since this budget came down. Some of them have written me two or three times saying, where's my answer, where's my answer? I said, look, you're in the list. I'm going to get to you. I am going to get to you. If you're listening now, I can tell you that all of our caucus, we're doing our best. I know Members opposite are doing the same thing in responding to emails and messages, Facebook messages and so on.

The response has been unprecedented. So that should tell you something. That really should tell the government something. It's about the choices that you've made, about the decisions you've made. If you look at courts – I was talking about courts a little bit earlier.

Let's look at Labrador for a few minutes. In Labrador we know the Wabush court is being shut down. Now in Labrador City, Wabush, in that area there's about – I think the population right now is probably around 11,000 people. Maybe a little bit more than 11,000 people, maybe a little bit less after the last year or so, but there's about 10,000, 11,000 people. They're going to shut down the Wabush court. The closest court to that would be Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

I remember one time I was down in Labrador – I'm sure the people of Labrador will appreciate this. I was down in Labrador, it was probably last year or maybe the year before, and I had planned to meet with somebody in Labrador – and I won't expound on that. I said, well, this trip I was going to Labrador West only and not to Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The person I was hoping to meet with was in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Anyway, the person said they can drive over to meet with you. I said they obviously don't realize the immense geography of Labrador. Because some people think it's a short drive to go from Wabush to Happy Valley-Goose Bay or Churchill Falls in between.

Well, I've driven from Labrador West to Churchill Falls and back again probably, maybe three times, two or three times, and it's a long drive. The last time I drove it most of it was paved. It is a long drive. I've been to Happy Valley-Goose Bay many times.

I talked about Harbour Grace a little while ago, which is a very busy court, and police officers having to leave to drive to St John's to be in court. They're going to be out of their area for a long time and you're going to need extra resources to make sure there are policing services provided.

Well for Labrador City, Wabush, Labrador West, that's also going to create a pressure because police officers are going to have to leave and go to the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area to go to court, unless there's a plan to bring in a circuit court or other type of relief. We don't know yet what the plan is going to be, but for a community of 11,000 people that's so remote geographically speaking, so far from any other centre and would be so far from their court, then it's going to be tough. It's going to mean a reduction in services.

We also know, Mr. Speaker, there are other impacts in this budget that are going to impact Labrador and the people of Labrador. I know CBC did a talk show yesterday on it. There was a fair bit of interest in it. I caught a little bit of it. I didn't catch it all. I wanted to, but they talked about it.

I know one of the ones that I thought about, and I hesitate for a second even now to talk about it, Mr. Speaker. That's the \$75,000 rec grant for the Sheshatshiu Band Council that's being cut in this budget. I don't get it. I don't understand it. Sheshatshiu is a community – I've been there several times. Sheshatshiu is a community that has a lot of good things going on in that community. We have people there who are working very hard to have a future for the community and for the residents; especially the young residents, but they also have many challenges.

Natuashish is very similar. There are many challenges facing Natuashish. Natuashish is much more remote than what Sheshatshiu is.

When we see there are reductions to a rec grant to a community that has so many youth who are in so much need of structure in their lives, structure that can be enjoyable for them, that can provide strong leadership for them, from adults who can provide chances and opportunities for them for supports in a community that so much needs it, a \$75,000 cut to a rec grant for Sheshatshiu is – I don't know how to describe it, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how to consider what the impacts of this may be to the recreation programs now where youth are participating in them.

I heard in one of the reductions – I heard this with AES offices because we know they're closing in Mary's Harbour, Nain and Hopedale. Someone along the way made the comment, well, there's not much uptake. I heard this with the youth centre that Eastern Health is cutting, and I turn to my colleague for Mount Pearl North. The youth program for –

**MR. KENT:** At the Rowan Centre?

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Yes, that's right.

**MR. KENT:** Cutting mental health programs for youth.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Cutting mental health programs for youth. The comment was it doesn't have a lot of uptake. One of the comments I heard, it doesn't have a lot of uptake.

Mr. Speaker, especially this week of all weeks, it's a week that we talk about mental health and youth and what's in the best interests of our future adult citizens and our future leaders. If it be Sheshatshiu in Labrador or if it be in St. John's here on the Island of Newfoundland, when you reduce those programs and you say there's not a lot of uptake on them, well maybe someone should have a look at why that is.

We certainly know there's a demand for services for mental health supports and assistance for our young people. We certainly know that. Members opposite who sat here in Opposition, Members of the Third Party for NDP many, many times have brought very important matters to the House of Assembly that involved the health and well-being, and mental health and well-being of our youth, not only just our adults but our youth.

When you hear, oh, we're closing that down because it doesn't have a lot of uptake. Did someone have a look and say why doesn't it have a lot of uptake? Maybe it's your program that needs to be modified so they can have an opportunity for a greater segment of the population. We certainly know that youth in our society and our province today, as I said, if it be in Sheshatshiu in Labrador, if it be in Natuashish or if it be their own centre in downtown St. John's, there's a need.

Go down to Choices for Youth and look at the great programs they've developed. Have they changed and modified those programs as they go along? Absolutely!

For all the new MHAs here, especially the ones from outside of St. John's, if you've never been to Choices for Youth take my advice – no matter which side of the House you're on, take my advice, pick up the phone and call Mr. Pollett at Choices for Youth and say, if I come down, will you give me a tour of your facilities and the programs you're doing? I'm going to tell you, it will be one of the most inspiring experiences you'll have and you'll come out of there going what a great investment in our youth.

When we have places like the Rowan Centre shutting down. When I see a \$75,000 recreation grant to Sheshatshiu to the youth and children in Sheshatshiu going to the Band Council, I have to ask: Well, was there a problem with the program? Could we have fixed the program to make sure that these services – the community is well known for its troubles and its challenges, for lots of discussion in Sheshatshiu, Natuashish surrounding addictions and how do we deal with addictions and substance abuse and also people who really need that help and assistance.

A \$75,000 grant doesn't seem like that's going to save the day. Well, it may not; it may save one life. I think that's certainly worth a \$75,000 investment if you can save one life or turn one person's life around and provide them with recreation and structure that they need and they're going to benefit from it, then that's probably a worthwhile investment – not probably, it would be a worthwhile investment.

The AES offices, I mentioned three of them in Labrador are closing: Mary's Harbour, Nain and

Hopedale. Similar commentary that I say again is that if it doesn't have a strong uptake, if it doesn't have a strong level of utilization – and we know that in every community in rural parts of our province there is a need to assist and support the citizens of that area. If the AES office is not meeting its goals and its objectives in some of these very remote areas, then we should look at how those programs are being delivered and ask the question: Is there a better way to deliver it? Are there a variety of programs or a way to change those programs that could take place in order to benefit?

We know that the airlift subsidy – I was doing a bit of reading on the airlift subsidy earlier today and wanted to know a little bit more about it and how it operates. We know the airlift subsidy for Labrador – what the note says that has been released by government on the savings, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador savings: "Discontinue the \$50,000 Air Foodlift Subsidy Program (\$28,500 to be reinvested in a new program to promote nutritional and artistic endeavours of Aboriginal Governments/Organizations in Labrador)."

Now, I heard President Sarah Leo yesterday on CBC and she was asked: What does that mean? She said she doesn't know. She has no idea. Kind of a sad commentary, I suppose, because while it sounds interesting, nobody knows really what that is. Somehow what I gathered from listening to President Leo who's finishing up – and we thank her for her service to the province, to her people, and the strong representation she's provided to her Aboriginal population, not only her own but others as well because she's been a strong representative for all Aboriginals as well as her own government.

It sounded to me like it was unilaterally just saying we're going to end the Air Foodlift Subsidy and bring in a new program of nutrition and artistic endeavours of Aboriginal governments – a new program to promote nutritional and artistic endeavours of Aboriginal governments. If she didn't know what it was, then that sounds to me like there wasn't an awful lot of consultation done on that, Mr. Speaker. There wasn't very much consultation done on that is what I took from there.



On the government website it says the Air Foodlift Subsidy, or AFS program, was established in the province in 1997. There's been an Air Foodlift Subsidy since 1997 – and now this government is going to tinker with that – “to ensure that nutritious, perishable items such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products were available to Labrador's coastal communities. Under the AFS program, a subsidy is paid to retail stores to offset the high cost of flying perishable foods into these communities. Retailers are required to pass these savings on to the consumer on the cost of goods sold.”

We've heard criticisms and I heard criticisms in the past on the Air Foodlift Subsidy. We had some discussion last year, as late as last summer or early last fall, about how we can improve the Air Foodlift Subsidy to ensure that those subsidies and cost savings are being passed on to the consumers who are purchasing all important items such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products, which are hard to come by in coastal Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, we can all imagine. If we've never lived there, we can't really fully understand, I don't believe – and I'm sure the Members from Labrador can speak to it. We can certainly all imagine the challenges of trying to find healthy foods, healthy choices for your children and your families such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products.

What I see here is discontinuation of the \$50,000 subsidy program and then \$28,000 of it to be reinvested. Mr. Speaker, \$21,500 is just being cut; it's gone. Then I see on the next line, “Eliminate the \$43,000 grant to YC NL to support youth from Labrador to attend the annual conference ....” That's the Youth Conference Newfoundland and Labrador. It's an annual conference; I've attended it myself in the past and I know other Members of the House have as well. It's an annual conference and it's a \$43,000 grant. That's being eliminated. So that's under Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

Young people in Labrador who want to attend the YC NL, quite often held in St. John's – when I went to it last time, the last time I attended it, it was held at Mile One Centre. The place was full. You'd think you were at a rock concert, but it wasn't.

There was music playing, there were lights and people were dancing, but they were all kids. They were all youth. They were all youth attending from multi-denominations from all over our province. They do great programming and great delivery of what should be important in the lives of our young people today, and about healthy living, healthy lifestyle, about choices, about opportunities that exist for our young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

What the government has done here is they've eliminated the \$43,000 grant to YCNL to support youth from Labrador to attend the annual conference. Now I don't know, Mr. Speaker – what I don't know is if there's another grant available. I certainly hope there is, because it is so important to make sure that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has a chance to attend this conference. No matter if you live in Nain or Goose Bay, or Mary's Harbour, or Wabush, or St. Anthony, or if you live on the West Coast, or in Central, or on the South Coast, or on the East Coast, that you have a chance to go to this conference.

I know lots of young people who've attended it. I know lots of young people who've gone back speak very highly of YCNL and the great opportunities provided to them, and to cut \$43,000 to our youth from Labrador so they can't go to YCNL is just a shame. It's absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker. There's no two ways about it.

Now they're going to reinvest \$21,500 – here's what's interesting. They're going to reinvest \$21,500 in a new program to promote nutritional and artistic endeavours of Aboriginal governments. The same as what we saw in the last one when they discontinued the Air Foodlift Subsidy. So they're going to promote nutritional and artistic endeavours.

Nutritional endeavours; now just think about that for a second. They've eliminated the Air Foodlift Subsidy but they're going to promote nutritional endeavours. You can promote nutritional endeavours all you want, if they can't afford to get the food there there's not going to be much point in promoting it. There's not going to be much point in promoting it if you can't get the food to Labrador. If you can't get the children to the Island to come to a conference

where they can learn about healthy living, then there's not much choice or not much point I'd say in promoting nutritional endeavours and artistic endeavours. Again, we're not sure what that is. President Sarah Leo certainly didn't know what it was.

Also, there's operational savings of another \$16,000. This was to reduce programs or operational budgets. I would think it's safe to conclude, Mr. Speaker, that's programs and operational budgets separate from the Air Foodlift Subsidy and separate from the grant for YCNL for the youth from Labrador to attend YCNL.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at some of these decisions that are being made you can't help but understand. I certainly get it, why the people in the province are so irate over this budget. That's the only way I can describe it, they are irate. I have the emails and messages and so on to support that they are irate over this budget. It's very easy to see why, when you're going to save \$50,000 on a Air Foodlift Subsidy but put \$28,000 into promoting nutrition. It really seems odd to me how they are going to do that. I don't know how they're going to do it.

I'm sure the Premier, who happens to be the Minister Responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, can articulate it. I'm sure he will when he gets up to speak to the budget. He'll have his chance to speak on the budget at his will, as we do as well. I hope he takes some time to explain that to the people of Labrador who – part of his role that he's accepted in Cabinet or assigned to himself in Cabinet is to be responsible for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of gives you a nutshell of some of the concerns in Labrador. Now it's interesting to note that we heard from the MP for Labrador. Over the weekend I saw a story, I think it was on CBC, where she referenced the Black Tickle community clinic and the change to the method of health care delivery to Black Tickle. She spoke out against this. She was critical of it.

Again, I didn't speak to her myself, but the story said she had good things to say about the budget. Then the story went on to talk about good things

in the federal budget, not in the provincial budget. I'm sure she said there were good things in the provincial budget. I believe there are some good things in the provincial budget. I'm sure she does too, but the story went on to talk about some good things in the federal budget which was a little bit odd.

She did highlight the impacts on Black Tickle, the community. She felt strong enough about it to speak about it publicly. She felt strongly enough about it to make a comment about it. We know dental services for Flower's Cove, Roddickton, Bide Arm, Southeast Labrador combined dental services. One dentist and one dental assistant will provide services to four locations coming into effect this year in October, 2016.

We know the chartered air service for the north and south coast are increasing by \$80. Down in Labrador, and I heard someone refer to it I think presently – I referred to the schedevac yesterday. People are not aware because of the large land mass, the small populations, the history of Labrador and the attempt by government to ensure that they have an opportunity for health services, there is a schedevac or scheduled medical flights or scheduled flights for medical purposes is the main purpose of those flights. It's a chartered air service that flies to coastal Labrador and will bring people to the centre, quite often Happy Valley-Goose or even beyond then to St. John's, as the case may be – but quite often Happy Valley-Goose Bay for people who need to see a medical professional, they need to see a doctor or they need a medical service, a test, a procedure, sometimes a surgery, operation, treatment, those types of things.

There is a chartered air service. It's been increased – fee increased to chartered service to \$80. The coastal Labrador chartered air service is changed to twice a week service on the South Coast effective July 1, and three days a week, January to June. Orthodontic services: "... discontinuing its contract for private orthodontist services to residents of Central, Northern and Coastal Labrador."

All of which I know are important to the people of Labrador. They feel strongly about many of these because people in Labrador already feel like they are not getting the services they

deserve. The people in Labrador believe that they should be getting more from their government than they get today. Anyone from Labrador will tell you – and I'm sure Members opposite probably have experienced this. I know we've experienced it in the past, where someone from Labrador will say you extract so many natural resources, you create so much revenue for the province right from Labrador, we should get more back and we don't get what we deserve.

It's a real tough thing to do to say to those people – because health services for the most part, you're not going to get a personal service at a spa. It's not that. These are health services. This is your own well-being and your own health.

To save \$858,000 a year, the elimination of six full-time equivalents to reduce services in various parts of remote Labrador, it's going to be harder for some of those people. It always is the way, when it comes to health care we talk about health care – if you talk about health care in St. John's, we know that wait times in many areas of surgeries have been reduced significantly over the last decade, wait times in emergency rooms have been reduced. More efficient ways of providing services have been found and effective ways.

We have probably the best cardiology program anywhere. I would match – based on my limited knowledge of health, based on what I've read and been informed of and what I know about it is that our cardiology program in Newfoundland and Labrador is as good as you're going to find anywhere in North America. That's something we should all celebrate.

When people of Labrador and remote parts of Labrador say we're not getting our fair share as it is today and now you're going to take something else away, I can appreciate how they probably feel about that, and all for \$858,000 in savings for six full-time equivalents for some of those communities. I just remembered where I was going to go, Mr. Speaker, because we talked about those reductions in wait times. Well, I say, the wait time in emergency rooms are less today than they were than they were five years ago, or less than they were 10 years ago and less than

they were 15 years ago – you're making progress.

People don't really care too much about that until they have to go to the emergency room. When you tell a cancer patient you have to wait for your treatment, you have to wait to see a specialist, but the time to see a specialist is less than what it was a year ago – some of them say that's fine, but they don't care about that until they are the one that's waiting to see the specialist, and then they care a lot about it.

Sometimes that's what happens in budgets. When an increase or a change is made in the budget and someone doesn't realize an office is closed, and one day they say I'm going to go down to that office now and they pull on the handle and the door's closed and they say: What happened to that? Oh, they closed that in the budget. Well, I didn't know that. I didn't realize that. Because it didn't impact them at the time, they didn't pay a lot of attention to it. Health care is much like that. Health care is very much like that.

If a decision that's being made doesn't impact people today, then for the most part people don't pay a lot of attention to it. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in many cases today in our province people are more in tune with the budget than they've ever been before because they are finding and hearing things that are going to impact them directly. The levy is the number one that we've talked about. We've talked about the levy and how the levy is going to impact people. The last time I was up talking about the budget I talked about it at some length and how the levy is going to impact them.

We know that there is an increase in gas tax – 16.5 cents per litre on fuel, being added to the fuel. So people understand if the price of fuel today is a dollar and this tax becomes effective tomorrow – I think June 2 the price of gas is going to increase. It's kind of funny to see because government says effective June 2 – I chuckled when I first read it. And it's not funny; it's serious business. I chuckled when I first read it and I'll read it again: Effective June 2, 2016, gasoline tax will temporarily increase by 16.5 cents per litre. When that says temporarily, of course we don't know what that means. We don't know what that means, and I suggest the

government today doesn't know what that means, only that it's not a permanent tax.

Mr. Speaker, no tax is permanent – no tax is permanent. Government can change taxes and fees at any given time and it says: This tax increase will be reviewed ahead of the fall 2016 supplemental budget. So we know they're going to review it then, but we don't know if it's going to change. It doesn't say it will end then; we'll have to wait and see.

In all fairness, the good thing is that it does leave a door open for the government who is under tremendous pressure right now in this budget to roll back and to change some of these things back. So take the 16.5 cents off gasoline back in the fall. Having said they're going to review it in the fall, well that gives them the open door to change that, come the fall.

It's very similar to what we said last year when we rolled out our plan. We said every year we're going to review the plan. We'll have to make changes based primarily on the price of oil and the exchange rate, but primarily on the price of oil. If the price of oil doesn't come back up, we're going to have to make changes to the plan. If the price of oil comes back higher than expected, we're going to make changes to the plan, but they'll be for the better.

Then it also says effective June 2, 2016, "A new rebate of 10 cents per litre will be provided for gasoline used in motor vehicles in the Labrador Border Zones ..." which is a good thing. I'm glad I mentioned the border zone because there are also changes we made to the border zone last year on tobacco.

Labrador West is so close to Quebec. If there's a significant difference in the price of goods or products, such as fuel, then people drive the short drive, about a 20-minute drive to Quebec and they can save themselves a significant amount of money. If they're a smoker and they consume any beer and alcohol and use gas, they can go to Quebec and save themselves some money.

What that shows is that – the government reflects it on the fact that for businesses to be competitive, we have to be competitive with our neighbours in Labrador next door. I think that's

a fair thing to say. If you want to keep people buying and purchasing in Labrador City, in Wabush, in the Labrador West area, and not have them all just drive over to Quebec to save themselves money, then you have to have these Labrador zones.

When I was up there a year ago and met with the business owner up there, he had all the statistics. He knew – and I'm sure the Member for Labrador West probably knows who I'm talking about. He had all the information of sales. He could show you where sales went because he sells to Quebec and Labrador West. He could show you where sales went down in Labrador West and the sales went up in Quebec when taxation changed. When we changed the taxation back so it was more competitive, lowering the taxes for that region but more competitive than Quebec, sales in Labrador West went back up again. That's a good thing. That's what should happen.

Also though, that thought, that philosophy should be expanded province to province. Not just for Labrador West and for Northern Quebec, but also that philosophy should be expanded beyond provinces when we talk about trying to make this a competitive place to live as a province. You make it a competitive place to live because you should look at the taxes of other areas, you should look at business costs for businesses to operate in other areas.

Because we're so remote – the Island and Labrador is so remote from the rest of Canada – in order to be competitive we have to have better rates than Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, PEI, Ontario and Quebec. In order to have better rates – and this was a comment I made earlier in my time speaking today – we have to be lower and better, careful in how we tax businesses and individuals because of our geography in order for us to remain competitive with the rest of the country.

That philosophy is shown right in their budget documents when they did, effective June 2, a new rebate of 10 cents per litre will be provided for gasoline use in motor vehicles in the Labrador border zone. Like I said, I'm glad they did that, because what's happened in this budget – I'm glad they did it there, but if they do it in a bigger picture we're not sure.

They did increase the HST, which we supported and said they should have done. If they had to have left the HST on in January they would not even have needed the levy, not this year anyway. The HST from January to July 1 would have generated \$90 million. Paid by people who have the money to spend, which are generally the people who have the money. Who spends the most are people who have the money. People who have the money are the ones who earn the most.

The highest earners, it's reasonable to conclude, would have paid the highest proportion of the HST and will pay the highest proportion of the HST increase. So from January 1 to July 1 the HST increase would have generated \$90 million. Now effective July 1 we're going to have a levy to pay plus the HST increase. The levy, which I argue, is disproportionately burdensome on our lower- and middle-income families, unlike the HST.

What's happening is now we have both to pay effective July 1. It's going to generate \$79 million. If they had to have left the HST on in January 1, from January to July this year, the levy would not even have been needed. That's my point on this.

Someone asked me the other day, what would I have done? I said I would have left the HST on. They said, well, you needed to do more than that. I said that would have gotten rid of the levy. That would eliminate the levy that so many people are upset about. The levy that's going to cost a person who earns \$25,000 a year an extra \$300, plus the HST; the levy that's going to cost a person who makes \$38,000 to \$47,000, \$450. If there's two people in your house who make \$38,000 a year or \$38,500, say \$40,000 a year, if there are two people in your house you're going to pay \$900.

If you have two people in your house making \$40,000 a year, that's \$80,000 a year, and they're trying their best to make ends meet – they're working hard, trying to keep their own home, trying to keep their car going, trying to keep the kids involved with a couple of extracurricular activities to make their quality of life a little bit better. Maybe take them to soccer or they play hockey, or maybe it's not sports. Maybe they have some other extracurricular

activities involved with school, or they go to Scouts or they go to Girl Guides, or they go to the Lions Club or the lionettes – no, it's called Lionesses. I think that's what it's called – or they're a member of some type of organization like that, now you have \$900 extra, which happens to be the same amount – if you happen to earn over \$200,000 a year, maybe there's only one of you working then.

Maybe your partner or spouse or whatever decided we don't need to have two of us working. One of us will stay home, spend time at home running a house and so on – which I found out myself in the last week or so how much work there is involved with that, I can assure you. They'll only pay \$900.

So a person making \$202,000 will pay \$900, and two people in a home that are both working making \$40,000 a year each also have to pay \$900. Mr. Speaker, that's why people are so upset about this levy. It is so unfair. It is simply so unfair.

If you put the HST on top of that, now you have to pay HST on your insurance for your vehicle. You're probably spending – most people are over a thousand dollars for their insurance and paying on their house, \$1,000, \$1,500. If you're paying \$1,000, it's another \$150. If you have a couple of vehicles and a car, both of you go to work, one goes east, one goes west, you're going to need two vehicles.

Your home, you're probably paying \$2,000 for insurance. So there's another \$300 that you have to pay on insurance this year. Plus your gas just went up 16.5 cents a litre. If you're doing any kind of driving anywhere, you have \$200 or \$300 or \$400 or \$500. I think about taxis and people who drive, people in the transportation industry, couriers, the people who provide goods and services and how that's going to impact and have that ripple effect.

Today in Question Period I asked the Premier if they've done an analysis on the impact of groceries, on food, the purchase of groceries. I asked him a couple of times and he never gave an answer because –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He never did it.

**MR. P. DAVIS:** Well, that could be, because they never did it. That's where people are being hurt.

That's where people that live paycheque to paycheque are saying how am I going to go to the grocery store and how am I going to take my kids to Scouts or to hockey or soccer. How am I going to do it when I'm making \$40,000 a year and my wife makes \$40,000 a year? We have to pay \$900 for a levy. We have to pay taxes now on our insurance. We have to pay taxes on books. We haven't started to talk about books yet. We have to pay taxes on books.

Apparently, I'm told Nova Scotia tried it last year. They saw the light and cancelled it. They're not going to go ahead with it. That's my understanding. I could be wrong, but that's my understanding. They decided that this is a bad thing to do. This is the wrong thing. I know the minister of education defended it recently, but I know it was a bad thing to do. I'm told now – and I'd have to double check it, but we remain the only province in Canada which has a tax on books.

So you have all of that and now you look at the 300 fees because you don't know what's going to strike you yet. Here's a list. It's on the website. For people at home, go [gov.nl.ca](http://gov.nl.ca) – the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada – [gov.nl.ca](http://gov.nl.ca). On the front page you'll see Budget; go on there, you'll find all the documents, and look for fee changes.

As I'm told there are 300 fee increases and 50 brand new fees that are now being charged. So when you start to add all of those up – your income tax went up. That's the other one; income tax went up. We put up income tax last year on the highest wage earners. Income tax has gone up this year across the board. So you've got income tax gone up, the sales tax gone up, you've got tax on your insurance, you have all these things going up.

With all due respect to the Premier and the Minister of Finance, I'm not sure they understand today how difficult it is for a family to live on two salaries of \$40,000 a year, let alone a family who's trying to survive on \$25,000 or \$30,000 a year; but certainly on someone who's got a couple of children, they're

working hard, they have to pay now \$900, so if you take them down to \$25,000 you're going to have to pay \$300 on a levy. If there are two of them working, that's \$600 on a levy.

I'm not sure they understand what it means, with all due respect, to live from paycheque to paycheque. I tell you, I did it for lots of years as a police officer when we were way down in salaries, salaries were terrible and conditions were bad – I'm not going back there, but it was a long road for us back then. And others do too.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** (Inaudible).

**MR. P. DAVIS:** What's that?

**MR. K. PARSONS:** (Inaudible).

**MR. P. DAVIS:** And that too, yes.

I know it's hard to do. So, Mr. Speaker, there's so much in this budget. I made the comment today and I make it again. It doesn't have to be this way; there are ways to change this. I again encourage the government to go back to the drawing board, have a look at what you've implemented here, find a way to make this more reasonable for the people of the province, especially hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who can't afford the burden that's been placed on them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER (Lane):** The Speaker recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

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

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

It's indeed an honour to get up and talk to the people of this province about something I find is going to be a devastating situation and have an impact on their lives. I've had the privilege over the past 33 years of either sitting in this House listening to a budget being presented, or scrutinizing it as part of my responsibilities as a civil servant and as a volunteer – but particularly the last six years as a politician.

There are times when I've been disappointed with budgets. I've been very frustrated with them at times. I've been confused about some of the things that have been offered or some of the programs that have been cut, or some of the increased fees. I've been somewhat bewildered about the rationale for why a government would choose to go a certain direction. I've been at times even angered at some of the cuts that have been made, or some of the philosophical arguments as to why changes need to take place.

There are times, and I'll be honest, unfortunately – and I do realize how government works. I do realize fiscal restraint and I do understand governments try to have a fiscal balance where necessary and where possible. I've even been, in a couple of cases, pleased and have made that known. I try to be balanced where possible; if there are good programs, acknowledge them. If there are challenges and things have to be done, acknowledge that also.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time and I can honestly say in 33 years of following budgets that I'm afraid for the people of this province and the impact this is going to have on them. I don't think that would have been said from a theatrics point of view until three hours ago, what I experienced at a protest on Bell Island with the closure of the AES and the people who spoke to me there, clients, low-income clients, the working poor, the travelling public, the impact that this budget is going to have.

We went to talk about the AES office closing and, no doubt, that's going to have a dramatic effect and I'll note that. I'll be having some discussions with the minister about whether or not there are any efficiencies in closing that office. Particularly I think it's going to be a loss to the taxpayers because of the costing for the individuals that are going to be hurt by this.

What I heard from people – I heard one gentleman come up and very honestly say: David, I can show you my T4. I made \$56,000 last year. He said it was only three days ago I passed out to people and shared information about particularly what fee increases, what cuts were being implemented, what impact it would have on people. He said: I went through it. He said: I live with my two kids and my wife. What he considers a meager existence, but something

that he's proud of and is comfortable for him at that point.

He noted 37 fee increases that he is going to have to either adjust to, find ways of living around or things he's going to have to give up, literally going to have to give up. Some things he can't. Some things are part and parcel of how he earns his living.

That became very alarming, so I said give me some examples. We all know the standard ones and our leader has articulately outlined the big impacts: the levies, the cost of gas, all those type of things that are going to have an impact on things that are important to people and are part of their day-to-day survival. But he outlined things – he's an apprentice. We get confused sometimes because we've been doing so great with our tradespeople and it's great that we've had megaprojects. Not everybody who is an apprentice or a journeyman makes the dollars that they make in some of our bigger projects or didn't have the luxury of going back and forth to Alberta making big money.

They live here and they provide services on a day-to-day basis for companies that require an apprentice or journeymen but their salary base are completely different and what they live on. He even looked at some of the fees that he wanted to do to become a journeyman, additional fees. He said that's just one additional fee that I'm going to have to pay when I go to write my test. He said he looked at all the other added things that are going to be expenses to him.

He'll leave Bell Island, like everybody else. He'll incur all these other expenses that we have to go by, but he'll leave and pay 42 per cent more just to get on the ferry, before he pays two cents more for gas, or in this case 20 cents more for gas, before he pays for his insurance on his vehicle, insurance on his home. The fact now that obviously – he said my kids like to read. He said we're going to have to avail of the public library which he's very fearful may not exist on Bell Island after this. So the tax on books, as our leader had mentioned earlier, becomes another fearful factor.

He said he enjoys once a year his recreation. He's out doing his hunting and that. Now the

cost of fees for that and the additional cost, and he went on and it was a continuation. This is not somebody who lives, by no stretch, an elaborate lifestyle. Your day-to-day average individual who does their part for our society, tries to encourage their kids to be involved in things, himself a volunteer in the community and now is considering leaving this province because he says he can't survive.

He was quite content with the lifestyle he had. Again, not elaborate. Once every two or three years he'd get to go visit a relative in Ontario. That was their family trip. Or they'd go across the province. He said he has a small trailer, not very elaborate, but now the fees on that are dramatically changed.

His insurance policy – he has to make some decisions. What does he insure? What does he not insure? What does he get rid of? What does he change in his lifestyle? How does he alter now what was considered traditional family events? They're going to have to change. They weren't elaborate; they weren't jetting off to Hawaii somewhere or the Cayman Islands. This was basic stuff, people getting to see part of our own culture, experience what Newfoundland and Labrador is meant to people. This is going to have an effect.

If you come from my home community, his income is in the middle to the higher levels. The impact it's going to have on those working poor who are coming to St. John's for \$12 and \$13 an hour, who leave at 4:30 in the morning and don't get home until 8 in the evening because of the challenges of ferry services, because of Mother Nature being what it is, because of the demand on it.

It becomes hypocritical and it becomes very confusing when we look at the numbers – and we've shared the numbers with this government. It was shared with the previous administration. The arguments made sense that if you invest money in certain areas, you're going to get a bigger return.

On Bell Island over the last number of years we invested in the AES office, we invested in Adult Basic Education because we felt the best chance that people would have – instead of a handout, a hand up. The best opportunity they would have

is if we can find a way to open up access for employment to give them a better skill set and encourage them to be more active in the communities. We've done that. We invested over a period of time.

We have an office over there now that responds to 1,100 people on their clientele list – 1,100 people who at any given time may need services.

The issue here is about only a few years ago it was 1,500; only a few years before that it were 1,900 people. Because of the success, because of the integration of programs and services, because of what we've offered over the periods of time – and it's not only this administration, it was the previous administration before that had offered it – people managed to be able to get to a better place in life, have better control over what they were doing, be able to find more opportunities for employment.

It became worth going to St. John's for \$11 or \$12 an hour than being reliant on the state through Income Support – a bit of self-worth, being able to give back; but opportunities, because they could get better access to education so they could eventually find a new job, a higher rate of pay; maybe an opportunity where they could encourage their kids to have a better understanding of education and these types of things. All of that is wiped out now. The closure of AES is one struggle they're going to have to face, anybody who takes that opportunity, after they get through some of the struggles in life they may have for whatever reason. Now that's gone.

We talk about let's move them to our nearest regional service centre. Well, the nearest regional service centre here has five and a half kilometres of water, Mother Nature, any given day, people who come from low incomes or fixed incomes, or in some cases, no incomes. We literally have a clientele group who have no income. For whatever fate in life has played them, they now have to depend on the state for some supports. But again, depend on them for support to get to the next level, to move them forward.

Now they have to find a confusing opportunity to get to St. John's, with no supports, to be able to find the avenue for someone to be able to



assess whether or not they get to speak to somebody about what their future should entail. We had all that for 50 years, one of the first offices to open. For 50 years those services were provided, and provided, I think, in a very financially beneficial way for the people of this province.

It gave people an opportunity. Not everybody stayed on Bell Island, obviously. Not everybody stayed in this province, but it gave our citizens an opportunity, wherever they went, they'd at least be able to be on an even playing field. That's one of the things that are lost here. I'm going to have an opportunity, I would hope, privately with the minister to discuss how I don't think from an economy of scale there's any savings. As a matter of fact, I'll show him where he's going to lose money in this endeavour.

I talked to people there today. I talked to seniors who were terrified – terrified – about what impact it's going to have on the health system. I talked to administrators who were devastated because they got their notices about teacher allotments and what that means. Particularly if you come from areas where you can see strides being made to improve the education system because there were challenges when you come from one-industry towns and there's a big outflow of the population and there seems to be not the same emphasis or access to certain levels of education.

We've seen improvements over the last number of years. When I went to the graduating classes, the numbers that would graduate, those who went on to post-secondary. That was because there were additional supports and services put in place. The Eastern School District understood that. We all lobbied over the years as to why – if you invest money here you're going to get a better return. It made sense. Sometimes there were higher allocations for certain schools but there's always a rational reason for it.

There are some children who may have some additional challenges and they need those extra supports. There may be some other special approaches that can be used to engage students to keep them in our school system. Give them a concept of what career paths may be out there for them. Match their wants, their particular

needs, their talents with a career path that will make them productive citizens, make them taxpayers, make them the volunteers in our communities, make them the community leaders.

Mr. Speaker, this past two weeks we took major steps backward, and not only on Bell Island or in my district but in every district in this province. We see the impact it's having in Labrador. We see the impact it's having on the Burin Peninsula. We see the impact in Central Newfoundland. We see the impact in Bonavista and those areas. We've seen it everywhere.

We're going to see it here in St. John's. I don't think people have caught on to it here yet because we're still fairly robust here. You're going to see the impact when all these services and all these fees and the real concept of what people are going to lose if all these fee services, the cuts to our programs, the extra levies, the tax increases, the actual tax grabs in certain areas and the impact it's going to have. This is only the surface. I'm not talking about budget number two. I'm just talking about this is the surface.

I spoke to a contactor Thursday evening at a function. He has 21 vehicles in his fleet. So he's doing fairly well for himself. A Newfoundland and Labrador based business built up, as you know, 71 employees and doing fairly well. He knows he's going to take some hits, no doubt about it. He understands that's part and parcel, but when he looked at it, the number of increases he's going to have to incur – he provides a service to people who normally are middle income to lower income. He's going to have to pass that on.

Inside of all the fees that this level of income individuals are going to face, they are going to have to face the 10 or 12 or 13 per cent on the service he provides to them. In this case, it's a service they can't do without. From a safety point of view there are certain things they have to have. They have to take that.

Somewhere along the way they have to find that same amount of money, that increase. He'll absorb what he can. He's fair enough. He seems like a genuine individual, like most of our – if not all of our business people are here, but again, they're driven on profits. They're driven on

expenses. They're driven on overhead. They're going to put all of their work into it. They want to see some fruits of their labour at the end of the day.

If somebody else is taking it away because we've imposed in this House of Assembly so many costing increases, so many things that were never known before. So many things are fees in there that were expected as part of the services we provide in government and now we're charging for them. No business can have that much hindsight to be able to build in that many increases and still be sustainable, unless they pass it on to somebody else. In this case it's the consumer.

Mr. Speaker, the fear here is the consumer doesn't have that ability anymore to absorb all those. Can we absorb a couple of them? Sure we can. Can anybody readjust their own living budgets? We have to do it every day. That's reasonable. The sensibilities here, they're the right things and the wrong things to do when you look at rightsizing the civil service and the programs you offer when it talks about cost-recovery measures –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

I would ask Members to take their conversations outside.

Thank you.

**MR. BRAZIL:** When we also look at how we generate additional revenues, there are good and bad ways to do it. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there are far too many bad ways outlined in this proposed budget.

I was open minded to the fact, tell me where there are some benefits to this budget, or tell me the things that have to be done, that are being done in the right manner, that are done in the fear manner. I accept that. I was part of administrations that had tax increases, that had to cut programs, that had to change how we delivered services. I understand that. I understood it for the last 33 years as I watched budgets be unfolded and how they were designed and the input people had.

It's the first time I think a budget was based on, if anything, total lack of input from the general public. I can't find anywhere in there where the major hits that the general public are taking that they would have suggested that, by no stretch of the imagination.

I was kind of hoping more Members would get up and explain it to me because if there are some, again as I mentioned in the beginning, I'll give a nod. I'll say that makes sense. I can see why we no longer need that program. I can see why we need to readjust how we deliver a certain service.

I do realize this is a service people should pay for, no qualms on that, no confusion, no misleading anybody around that. I would go out and say, government has to make certain steps; it has to do certain things. We have to invest in certain areas. There are other areas it's not our responsibility to invest in.

I didn't see that vision here. What I did see was an exercise in let's add some numbers. We want this amount of money, let's add it to everybody. In some cases it seems minute and small, and it is. It's dollars in people's pockets.

When you have 15 or 20 categories where you as a family person have to incur those costs, they're not small costs anymore. They accumulate. Now they're major impacts on your budget. Then you have to make decisions around what you can and cannot provide for your family. What type of services, what kind of protection you're going to be able to provide as an individual in society. What is it you're no longer going to do? Is it be engaged in social events? Is it going to be the level of education you pass on to your children that you support? Is it about physical health? Is it about mental health? It's about the quality of the food you eat.

All these things have a major impact on how we grow our society, how we make our citizens more productive. Most of the things in here are detrimental to that philosophy and trying to move things forward. I think somewhere along the way we missed the philosophy here, and this administration missed it. We have a responsibility of providing services. We have to do them equitably, no doubt about it. We have to do them responsibly, no doubt about it. We have to

do them in the best interests of the people of this province, no doubt about it –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – but we have to do them so that at the end of the day, we don't hurt the people we serve.

So not only are we going to –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** – hurt the people we serve, but we're actually going to stifle and we're going to stall the economy in this province. Because no where there, no economist will tell you, no average citizen out there will tell you the cuts, the tax increases, the minimal services being provided are in any way going to encourage people to spend more money. If they do happen to have a small nest egg, they're holding on to that, because they're not quite sure where things are going to go in the near future.

The construction industry is going to be hit dramatically. Only recently the construction industry met and had discussions. They're fearful of the impact it's going to have, and not just because there are certain projects that have been put on hiatus or cancelled or deferred – that obviously has an impact. That's the big, upfront impact. Some companies can survive based on the principle. Well, over the next few years we'll have smaller projects. We'll downsize how we do it; we'll cut our overhead.

Some used to say we'll get into the American philosophy and the process around the multi-nationals where they say we'll do managers' salaries. If you can cover a manager's salary for the three to five years while there's a downturn in the economy, particularly the franchisee concept, that's fine. What we lose in one jurisdiction we're making up, because things are doing well in another province, in another country, somewhere else in another area – but we don't have that ability.

The construction industry here, particularly the homegrown one, they can only absorb the expenses they have. They can only pass them on to the general public to a certain degree. They can't do that if the general public says I can't absorb those anymore, so I'm just not going to invest. I'm not going to build my new home. I won't do my alteration. I'm not going to buy a new vehicle. I'm not going to have it painted. All these things have an impact.

It bewilders me how at the end of the day all these impacts on people are in any way, shape or form – and there's cuts that have to be made and I want to put that up, clear; I realize there's things have to be done – all those numerous cuts, the hundreds of cuts or the hundreds of added taxes are going to help stimulate the economy.

I had hoped there would be a philosophy here around tourism. I was bought into it. As part of the previous administration I understood why we invested in the Film Development Corporation; why we invested in our ads; why we invested in encouraging people to come here; why we fought with Marine Atlantic to keep rates reasonable; why it made sense that our tourism industry became a billion dollar revenue generator for this province; why it made sense that we partnered with the private sector. They're the drivers here.

All we were, were the co-ordinators. We could help co-ordinate the effort, the message. I think we did a great job. That's why we got to a billion dollar industry. We did the same in aquaculture, but if you're going to put your hat on an industry that you think has the ability to thrive and expand, like the tourism industry, you have to invest in it. You have to encourage people to ensure that this is going to go to the next level.

What this budget has done, Mr. Speaker, and all these fee increases and the fear process that its put in people, this is not going to happen. National, international, in particular our own homegrown people are not going to travel. They're not going to invest in tourism. They're not going to feel comfortable where they are. We're going to lose people from this province.

Our people who have a skillset here, people who moved back through our retention and attraction strategy are going to say, I made a mistake. I was sucked in. I thought things were going to go well. I can take a bump in the road. I accept that, but, Mr. Speaker, we didn't do that.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all the Members over there to take a hard look at this budget. I would hope this government would look at, are there changes that need to be made to improve it? Listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. Listen to the people.

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

The Member's time for speaking has expired.

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

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

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Those against.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The sub amendment has been defeated.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

### Division

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

Are the Whips ready for the vote?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

**CLERK:** Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Kent, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers.

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

**CLERK:** Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Haggie, Mr. Hawkins, Mr. Crocker, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Mr. Lane, Ms. Gambin-Walsh, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Ms. Parsley, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Warr, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King.

Mr. Speaker, the ayes six, the nays 27.

**MR. SPEAKER:** I declare the sub-amendment defeated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would refer to Motion 1, the Budget, and I believe we're on the non-confidence motion.

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

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

It's a privilege to get up here and speak on behalf and represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and represent the people that put me here. Mr. Speaker, before I start, people at home now today are going to be watching this and they're going to be wondering why are there so many Opposition Members up today.

I'd like to let the people at home know that each Member on the other side had the opportunity to get up and explain the budget to them. I believe only five got up on the amendment. They had the opportunity.

While we were here in Question Period today we heard oh, we'll explain it. You don't understand it. We were at this; we were at that. Each one of you had the opportunity to get up and explain to the people why this is a good budget. I'd like to know why only five did. I really would. I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who you represent deserve to hear what you have to say on the budget.

It's shameful – it's very, very shameful that only five of ye decided to get up and speak today.

We've heard from the Third Party, we've heard from three Members now on this side and you have not gotten up and told your constituents, the people that put you in those seats over there, why you agree with this budget, what's good in this budget and what you're doing in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I really believe that it's shameful. It's an opportunity to get up and tell the constituents that elected you – an opportunity to tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador why you're voting for the budget. We just saw a vote that time that 27 got up and supported the budget, but none of you gets up and tells the people why. I believe it's shameful; I really do.

I stood here last week and I said there were good things in the budget. I brought up things that were good in the budget; I brought up things that were good for municipalities in the budget. I'm sure that things that are not cut – there are a lot of good things in the budget. There's \$8 billion getting spent. I'm sure most of that money that's getting spent is for good things in this province.

I really believe that this is where we're to. This is the place that we were elected to represent the people that put us here and you should be able to get up and defend and tell why this government is doing a great job. Just to see that five just got up and spoke that time, I find it hard to believe; I really do. I believe that not everything in the budget is bad.

There are a lot of things that I don't agree with, but I believe that – I heard the Member for Bonavista today get up and he said about all the different things in his area that were good; roadwork that was getting done, investments in his area. He talked about the water tower in Bonavista that was announced last year under the previous government. That's a good thing and it's in this budget this year. Those are good things.

I'd like to hear from everyone over there that are saying good things so the people of the province can understand. The Member for Harbour Grace –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Listen, I applaud you for getting up and saying this is not a good thing that Coley's Point school is not getting built. I applaud you for standing up with a petition.

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

I ask the Member to address the Chair.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; I will address you.

I applaud the Member for standing with the people in Harbour Grace and saying that the closure of the courthouse and she's going to work as hard as she can to change that. You can't change it if you're voting for the budget because that's what's in the budget. In your budget, it is to close the courthouse. In the budget, it is not to build the school in Coley's Point.

I really believe that it's a missed opportunity for all ye over there today to really get up and tell the people in your area why you support this. Listen, I'm getting emails and phone calls and talking to people in my district, talking to people outside of my district, everywhere you go, people are talking about the budget.

We all know that everybody in the province – the budget is affecting every single person. It's affecting every single family. It is, and we all know it. I'm sure every one of these Members is hearing it. I look over every day and people are on their Blackberries. I look over there now and I'd say there are six or seven on their Blackberries over there now. They are seeing the emails. They are seeing what's happening on Facebook. They're seeing what's happening in the province. People are talking.

Listen, today's technology is different than what it was 20 years ago. I remember my father talking about it in here and that was before even it was televised or whatever. I'm sure there were no emails or no Twitter or no Facebook back then. People didn't have the opportunity. Today we do have the opportunity so people can contact us. People can say what's on their minds, and we're hearing it.

Today as I look who is speaking on this budget, I just look over and say you had the opportunity

to talk to the people that elected and you should have done it. You really should have done it. You shouldn't have just sat down and said let's put it to a vote; let's forget about what the people are going to say.

I hope that every single one of ye do get up. You have two opportunities now. Everyone here have two opportunities left, most do, to speak on the budget. I'd like to see every one of ye up so your constituents, the people who elected you can see

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

To help maintain order and decorum, I ask the Member to direct his comments to the Chair.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Do you want me to look at you, Mr. Speaker? No problem.

I'm just addressing the whole thing, Mr. Speaker. I just say look, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity, this is what we're elected for to come in here in the House of Assembly and to speak for our people and this is the chance we get. I'm going to do it today. I'm going to get up and speak about what I did the weekend, where I've been to this weekend in different functions.

Like I said, I always do take great pride in my district and when there's functions on the go, I do my utmost best to get to every single one, whether it's the 50th anniversary that I'm invited to or whatever. I'm very fortunate to tell you the truth, Mr. Speaker, because my district is a small district.

Some of these people who live in rural Newfoundland have districts that are unbelievable. They can't do it. Some have to stay in here when the House is open on the weekends and can't get out to it. I feel for those people, because I know they want to get to the volunteer fire departments, they want to go to the Lions Club, and they want to get out to the anniversary parties and church groups and everything else in their area.

That's where you get to talk to people. That's where you get to really hear what people have to say. When you talk to senior citizens who are nervous – I spoke today about seniors and I asked the minister, is she listening to the seniors.

I really believe if there's an opportunity again to speak to the seniors and let them know because they're afraid.

I went to a function this weekend. I can honestly say the people I spoke to say, Kevin, we're going to have a choice to make. We're going to have a choice whether we put grub on the table, we eat or we turn on our heat this winter, because we don't know where that extra bit of money's coming from.

You know what, I'm not the only one hearing that. You're all hearing it. Everyone over on the other side are hearing the exact things that I'm hearing. If there's something that's not true, then the opportunity is in here in the House to let the people know. Let the people know what's good about the budget. Let the people know they don't need to worry about this. This is not as bad as it's made out to be, not as bad as you think it is. I want to hear that.

I don't want to go to a function where I look at a senior or look at senior people – or any people, I'm just using seniors. I don't want to go where people are going to be afraid that they're not going to have enough food to put on their table or they're not going to be able to heat their homes.

That's what this budget has done. This budget has put a lot of fear in people. I'm going to talk another little bit about fear too in a little bit, but I really believe the seniors and low-income people in this province, they do get it. They do understand this budget.

Now the Minister of Finance may live in a bubble that I don't know anything about, but I tell you right now, in my neighbourhood, in my communities, people do get it. I don't know what she's hearing in her neighbourhoods, in her district. I don't know, but I can tell you in my neighbourhoods, in my district, the people in my district are talking about this budget. They're talking about the effect and the worry they have. The worry and the concern they have of whether they're going to be able to survive. That's what it's all about. I don't want to put fear in people. I really do not want to put a person in this province in any fear thinking, listen, I can't tell you. I said, you know, there are increases in this budget.

I believe they're going to find some sense and cancel the levy. I really do believe that. Maybe it won't happen, but I believe they're going to step forward and realize they made a bad decision. It affects too many people and it's an unfair tax. That they'll look at it and say, okay, we made a mistake. That they'll stand up and be able to say to the people, look, we made a mistake. We know we made a mistake, and get rid of that altogether. That's what I'd like to see and I'm still hoping that we will. I told people that this weekend.

There's another part to this that people are talking to me about. I heard the Member for Bonavista today talk about Sexton Lumber and what a great industry it is and everything else.

Do you know what a big fear is in what's happening? I know because I spoke to a young person the weekend that's thinking about building a home. He was wondering what effect the budget will have on him in order to build a home. How much is it going to cost him to be able to go ahead and build a home? And then, am I going to be able to afford that home when I get it built? People have that –

**MR. KING:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. K. PARSONS:** If the Member for Bonavista would like to say something, go ahead and let him talk if he wants to. It's up to himself.

I'm just saying that we have good businesses, small businesses that are in this. We have them here in Newfoundland and Labrador and they're fearful, just like a senior citizen is. They don't know whether they're going to be able to survive because of the actions in this budget.

It's too much, too fast I was told the weekend – too much, too fast. I wonder how many of you were told that, too much, too fast. We don't know if we can absorb these huge increases you're giving us.

We all hear – and again, I'm going to go back to the gentleman because I got off my train of thought there a little bit. I'm talking about the young person who's going to start a home. What that does when you start a home, it puts money back into the people who are going to be supplying the material. It could be the guy that's

coming in to put in the footings. It could be the person putting in the foundation. The money that's generated through building a home is unbelievable, it's unreal. They're all small businesses.

If that young person is thinking about: Jeez, Kevin, should I build a home or what? What do you think? I don't know if I'm going to be able to afford it. Right now I'm going to have an extra 15 per cent on the taxes just to insure my home and it's going to cost me probably \$400 or \$500. I don't know if I can afford to pay that much tax. I probably have a truck or a car or whatever; I have to pay extra insurance on that. We really have to look at what we're doing and how we're affecting people in this province.

The Minister of Education said the other day it's nonsense. I'd like to tell the person who's thinking about building a home, when he's deciding whether he can do it or not, a new home, whether that's nonsense. I don't think it is nonsense. Some of the things that are being said here in the House of Assembly are unbelievable. I'm not going to listen to who cries the loudest, but I'm going to listen to who cries the loudest. I'm going to listen to the people that have concerns. I'm going to listen to the senior. I'm going to listen to the people in my district that have concerns, that are in fear they might not have enough food on their table, that might not be able to put the heat on in their house. If they shout the loudest – so we're not going to hear them.

It's time for us to realize that this budget and people do – I saw demonstrations right across the province. I saw people coming out and people are really concerned. I felt like saying yeah – last week I went and picked up my son. He went to a party. I told him I'll go pick you up now whenever, give me a call. I went and picked him up afterwards; he's 25 years old. On the way home do you know what the biggest conversation at a party was? It was this budget and the effect it's going to have on young people. It's amazing.

I have been here eight years and I always followed politics because my father was involved, like I said. I always said that he was involved. My good friend Jack Byrne, I always was in around Jack. Budget time I used to come

in and watch. I've never seen anything like this. I've never seen people in this province so afraid, so fearful. It's so unbelievable. They really don't know where they're going to go to.

As politicians – and I know the Member for Bonavista, again, he said, oh God, I was out there with my crowd the weekend in Bonavista, I think, in Catalina. Good for him. But where were the other three Members that were invited to Gambo that never showed up and asked to explain it? Where were all the Members that had the opportunity to get up here today and explain to their constituents why this is a good budget?

This is not just something that's going to just go by night once we do the vote here. We know who got the majority. They got the majority; they're going to be able to vote what they want. They proved it here today. But you do have the right to let your constituents know why you believe this is a good budget, just like I do have the right to let my constituents know that I'm here and I'm going to argue on their behalf and make sure that I get heard.

That's what this is about here in the House of Assembly. I want to be heard because I want to be able to represent the people that put me here. My bosses are the people of Cape St. Francis. They're the people that voted for me and the same thing as everyone over on that side.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back. I know I'm going to get an opportunity again and I will be up again whenever I get the opportunity. As soon as I'm told to get up, I will get up and speak on this budget. I want to talk a little bit about the second budget coming up.

While the Minister of Education thinks it's funny, that's okay; that's up to him. He can laugh about all of it. I will tell you what's not funny. What are not funny is what's going to happen in the second budget and what fear is put out there about the second budget coming. Do you know what fear is put out there? You tell me the public service or anyone that's going to be laughing whether a second budget comes up or not, whether they're going to be fearful of their jobs and everything else. Are they going to be scared? Are they going to invest?

Our leader talked today about people going down to Bonavista or going around this Island. I think what's going to happen this summer is that people are going to stay where they can because they're not going to know what's going to happen. They're going to be afraid. Listen, I can't afford to spend the money. I don't know what's coming in a second budget. We couldn't hear it all in the first budget, so now we're going to hear a second.

I look at the public servants and I see a lot of hard-working public servants in this building and everywhere I go to. They work very, very hard. They're thinking listen, is my job going to be cut? What's that going to mean? I have to wait not until October or November or whenever it comes down and I have to look and say wow, I better make sure that I don't spend any money this summer, that I don't go down to a bed and breakfast down in Twillingate or I don't go to the Northern Peninsula, or I don't go into a fishing camp in Millertown or I don't go here because I don't know what's going to happen. That's what's happening in the province.

There were some tough decisions that had to be made. I am not saying there were not tough decisions had to be made, but I agree with the person that told me it's too much too fast. I really believe – I think we're putting too much of a burden on the people in this province. I think we're putting too much of a burden on people, hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, hard-working people that are out struggling.

The Premier said today about \$4 billion reduction in income tax. I look around the last number of years – and I saw a lot of progress in this area and I saw a lot of progress as I went all over Newfoundland. I love travelling Newfoundland. I'd rather travel Newfoundland than go anywhere because it's the most beautiful place in the world.

But I look at people building new homes, I look at a fishery that I go down – on Saturday morning, I went down to see the boats that are down there in the basin and see what's down there now and the investments that people are making. We've done well in the last number of years. The fishery has done well. The fishery has



done really well and it's a bright spot. This year crab is \$3 a pound.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** \$3.20.

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Yes, \$3.20.

I was speaking to a few fishermen the weekend and I spoke to the Minister of Natural Resources this morning on the way in through the door. She said it's a lovely day on the water. I said that's what it would be. It would be a lovely day on the water, and there are a lot of people out today. I know down our way most of the boats are out today because of a bit of weather coming tomorrow.

It is a lovely day, and our fishery is very important to who we are as Newfoundlanders, but it's a bright spot. We don't need to be in here talking about negative things all the time, don't need to be in here talking about them. I think there are bright spots. I think there are good things in this budget. The Minister of Finance is the only one who said there's nothing good in it.

I think there are good things in the budget. I think there are bright spots in our economy. I think the fishery is a bright spot. I look at the people in my district that are fishermen, they are doing very well. This year, with the price of crab up, this is going to be a banner year in the fishery in this province. I know it's going to be a banner year for the fishermen down my way.

So there are positive things happening. I encourage the minister, get up and say what's positive in your area. I'm sure there's not one district in this province, one district or one Member over there can't get up and say good things that are going to happen, and maybe good things that are happening in this budget. I look at municipalities right across the province and I know they were very fearful. They were nervous their operating grants were going to be cut. They were nervous their ratios were going to be cut, and I think the minister today in his statement said the next couple of years there are going to be \$650 million spent. That's a great thing. That's a great thing. We don't need to be doom and gloom.

I looked at Newfoundland and Labrador – and I'm very proud that we've come as far as we've come over the last 10 or 12 years. Our education system, our tuition for students – it's the most affordable place in all the country to go to school. That's a great thing. That's still a great thing. When I see our children who don't have to pay for school books that's a great thing. When I look at 14, 15 schools getting built and some more on the way and new schools getting built now, those are good things.

I believe that we all got elected – we're all in here to be able to represent the people who elected us. It's sad when people won't get up and give to the people that elect them. Their bosses are the constituents that elect them, and they should have enough gumption to be able to get up and speak on this budget, and speak as many times as you can.

I'll speak my three times. I guarantee you I'll speak my three times. And if you give me four, I'll get up again. I know the people in my district – there are some good things in this budget; there are a lot of things I don't like. I asked the government listen, give up on the levy, cancel the levy, and then go on and let people live their lives.

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

**MR. K. PARSONS:** Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

It is certainly a pleasure for me, even though I have some restricted time because of the hour of the day, but I just wanted to make a few comments. For my hon. Member opposite, when he's out talking to the seniors as well, maybe he should realize that if there is a couple with \$26,000 income as a senior that he should tell them that every three months there will be a \$455 cheque that they'll be getting to offset some of the costs that would be incurred in the budget.

So these are pieces of information that need to get out, Mr. Speaker, and I can assure the Member opposite as well that every Member on this side of the House will be speaking on the budget. We, obviously today, did not have the time for all of us to speak, so we will be speaking.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to getting up again to speak later on the budget as well, but I just wanted to talk a little bit today about transportation. One of the things, if you notice I met with a group of students this afternoon from Beachy Cove Elementary, along with the Minister of Seniors and Wellness. I had a very interesting discussion when it came to transportation. I know that the previous minister of transportation met with the group as well. One of the concerns they have is the fact that they're talking about safety. Safety is very important for us as a department.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, we know that there are tremendous strains upon the resources that we have. Our people are doing the best they have under the circumstances. We realize that – and I think I alluded to it the last time I spoke in the House, that I have roughly about 1,500 requests for road repairs.

Mr. Speaker, we did a costing on that. The costing to do all of that would be about a billion dollars. I wish I had a magic wand and I wish that I had the ability to be able to do every single road request in this province, but that's not possible.

However, I was pleased that we were able, in this budget, to have \$62 million worth of spending that was announced last week. That block of funding now, Mr. Speaker, is out. Many communities in many districts throughout the province now know that we're doing a fair amount of road repair. Of course, part of that as well in the budget, we were able to secure \$3 million so that we will continue our summer maintenance on areas that were not included in that block funding.

Mr. Speaker, as well I just want to let this hon. House know that we have had a tremendous reception from Minister Sohi.

**MR. KENT:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North, on a point of order.

**MR. KENT:** I'm citing Standing Order 49 which is in regard to offensive language in the House. The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development just used the words "coward" and "hypocrite" to describe an hon. Member in this House. I ask the Member to apologize and withdraw those comments.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Speaker didn't hear the comments, but if those comments were made –

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

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

As I was saying we have had some very successful discussions with Minister Sohi. One of the areas that we wanted to concentrate on, Mr. Speaker, was trying to get some of the restrictions and criteria that were around the Building Canada Fund – we wanted that lifted. We had a number of issues that we wanted to discuss because rural Newfoundland was being impacted under the PTIC and under the Small Communities Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased that I received information from Minister Sohi that they are actually removing some of the restrictions.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** As a result of that, we're going to be able to find more infrastructure money that will be moving into the roads. Also, of course, Mr. Speaker, one of the restrictions in the past from the previous federal government was that they placed a restriction on the Trans-Labrador Highway at \$43 million. We have now had that cap removed as well.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** We are now looking at making sure that we can access all the funding that's possible through the Trans-Labrador Highway, and certainly being able to invest into that as well as Southern Labrador. We are being

proactive. We are making sure that we are making the best use of the resources that we have and the infrastructure funding that we have.

Mr. Speaker, those are just a couple of items I wanted to talk about today, realizing that the hour has come that I would adjourn my speaking notes. I look forward to speaking to the budget again.

I move debate close for today, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Prior to adjourning, pursuant to Standing Order 63, we know that our private Member's resolution last week was cancelled due to the closure of the House due to weather. With leave of the Members opposite, I wonder if they would have an issue with the private Member's resolution entered by the Member for Bonavista to be the one debated tomorrow.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We have no issue with that.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you. I thank my colleagues across the House for that, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, prior to closing, as it relates to Estimates, I would advise the House of Assembly that this evening at 6 p.m. there will be the Estimates under Government Services Committee for Service NL and the Government Purchasing Agency.

Tomorrow morning in this House under Resource Committee there will be the Estimates for Environment and Conservation and the Office of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn, seconded by the Member for St. George's – Humber.

Thank you.

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

All those in favour?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Against?

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, at 2 o'clock, being Private Members' Day.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2 o'clock.