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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I'd like to welcome to the public galleries today John and Brenda Wheeler and Noel and Anne Lilly. John and Anne are the great-nephew and great-niece of Stephen Norris whose name will be read out today as part of Honour 100.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Just to provide some background on Stephen Norris. He was the son of James Norris, a merchant who had extensive business in Three Arms, Green Bay. Stephen enlisted in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment against the wishes of his parents. He was not at the front on July 1, but was subsequently killed in Gueudecourt in October of 1916.

His body was never recovered, despite an extensive search by his parents and it is believed that Stephen's death led to the demise of the community of Three Arms as his father never recovered from Stephen's death and there was no one to carry on the family business.

The story of Stephen Norris was the subject of a 2005 stage production *A Call to Arms*, presented by the students of Gonzaga High School in St. John's. Stephen's story was also told by Joan Sullivan, in her book titled *In the Field*.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today's Members' statements are the Member for the District of Terra Nova, Torngat Mountains, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, Burin – Grand Bank, Ferryland and Mount Pearl North.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great pleasure to rise in this hon. House and acknowledge the selfless efforts of six-year-old Sydney Sparkes, a grade one student from Little Heart's Ease.

When I first learned about Sydney and her interest in Shave for the Brave, I started to follow her story.

Mr. Speaker, each night Sydney prays for three people who are fighting cancer or who have lost the battle with this deadly disease: Pauline Seward, a young mother who lost her battle in 2015, as well as two family friends, Bruce Whalen and Bill Finn, who are going through treatments now.

During the past two weeks, Sydney's fundraising efforts have resulted in her moving from ninth place on the Young Adult Cancer Canada Leader Board to an impressive fourth place, raising \$3,944 – and she isn't stopping there.

Sydney's mom, Stephanie, remarks that Sydney feels she is now famous. When asked why, Sydney says: Because the government is going to talk about me.

Sydney will be taking part in Shave for the Brave at Southwest Arm Academy on May 20.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in applauding the deep understanding and kindness to others shown by this remarkable little girl.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: We should all say hello to Sydney, as well. I understand that her class is tuned in live from Southwest Arm today to hear the Member's statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize Mr. Johannes Lampe. Mr. Lampe was sworn in on May 4 as the newest President of Nunatsiavut.

Last week the Premier pointed out in his Ministerial Statement that President Lampe brings a wealth of public service experience with him to the office of president. Before assuming

office, he served on the town council of Nain and as a minister in the Nunatsiavut government.

I've known President Lampe for over 30 years, and I have on more than one occasion hunted and fished with him over the years. He's a well-respected elder and has a long connection with the Moravian Church in Nain, serving as a lay pastor and chapel servant.

As an Inuk from Nunatsiavut, I look forward to working with my new president. I look forward to sitting down with him to discuss mutual issues of concern and establishing a relationship of working together on issues that affect Inuit.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating President Johannes Lampe on his acclamation, and wish him all the success as he begins his term.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to celebrate Agnes Pike of West St. Modeste, for her more than four decades of community service and leadership in Labrador.

Mayor Pike is in her 35th year serving the town council of West St. Modeste. In addition to her roles as a civic leader, Agnes has served in over 20 other community sector leadership positions in the region since the early '70s.

Just to name a few, she has served as the Chair of the Labrador Straits Family Resource Centre; an executive member of the Labrador Straits Development Corporation; a Director of the Labrador Resources Advisory Council; an executive member of the Combined Councils of Labrador; and Chair of the Community Youth Network.

It's the hard work, outspoken support, and advocacy and commitment of people like Agnes Pike that make rural communities like West St. Modeste sustainable and viable places to live.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating Agnes for her long and distinguished track record of community leadership and volunteerism.

Thank you.

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

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the early 1900s, Newfoundland and Labrador were a sovereign country made up primarily of small and often isolated communities where people worked hard just to survive. It was into this world that Hilda Pardy was born on May 7, 1913 in Harbour Mille; 20 years later, she married Oliver Barnes who went to sea to earn a living.

As a young girl, Mrs. Barnes worked in her father's lobster factory by day and helped her mother with chores in the evening, without any of today's modern conveniences. But interspersed among the hard work was the joy of family and friends, Mr. Speaker.

This past Saturday, I visited Mrs. Barnes at the Blue Crest Nursing Home in Grand Bank to help celebrate her 103rd birthday, Mr. Speaker. Her age has not taken the twinkle from her eye, nor the smile from her lips.

I ask all Members to join me in recognizing Mrs. Hilda Barnes on the occasion of her recent 103rd birthday, and in wishing her continued happiness with family and friends.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the hon. House to recognize the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association on the vital role they play in the region. This group of volunteers has assisted in

bringing many important recreation activities to our area, engaging people from youth to our seniors. Many of our kids avail of many different recreation activities such as the summer soccer, softball and many other activities.

I would also like to congratulate the association on their Annual Regional Winter Carnival, which had something for all ages. I attended some of these events myself and, as always, very impressed with the variety of events. Many of these events were organized and sponsored by various businesses, community groups and organizations throughout the area and the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association played a huge role.

The association holds an annual auction which raises funds for recreation infrastructure for the region, which has been very successful in past years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the Bay Bulls to Bauline Athletic Association in organizing recreation programs and revenue generation for the Bay Bulls to Bauline region.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the young people honoured earlier this week at Mount Pearl's Annual Focus on Youth Awards.

The Focus on Youth Awards program recognizes youth in several categories. I would like to congratulate all of the nominees and winners of these awards. In particular: Female Athlete of the Year, Sarah Hiscock; Male Athlete of the Year, Liam Hickey; Team of the Year, the Mount Pearl Senior High Male Huskies Soccer Team; Adult Volunteer of the Year, working with youth in sports, Gerald Costigan; Youth Volunteer of the Year, Megan Glover; Official of the Year, Ashley Hammond; Female Youth of the Year, Victoria Jackman;

Male Youth of the Year, Michael Howse; RNC Youth in Service Award winner, Ryan Linstead; Youth Group of the Year, the O'Donel High School Robotics Team; Visual Arts Award, Shea O'Keefe; Performing Arts Award, Joseph Coffin; Adult Volunteer working with youth, the Mount Pearl Senior High Breakfast Club Teacher Volunteers.

For the Performing Arts Group Award: we had a tie between the Mount Pearl Show Choir, the O'Donel Jazz Band, the cast of Etcetera 29, the Mount Pearl Senior High Jazz Band, the Mount Pearl Senior High Transitional Band and the cast of Mount Pearl Senior's Musical: You're a Good Man Charlie Brown.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the winners and nominees on this well-deserved recognition. It was a fantastic night.

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 Labrador West.

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

Lest we forget: Laurence Murphy, Lawrence Murphy, Martin Murphy, Thomas Murphy, Walter Leonard Murphy, William John Murphy, Archibald Murray, James Murray, Samuel Murray, William Henry Murrin, Albert John Mutford, Hiram G. Mutford, Albert John Myer, John Myrick, Ralph Neil, Charles Joseph Nelson, Gregory Neville, Richard J. Neville, William John Neville, Clement Leslie Newell, Kenneth S. Newell, Victor Perrin Newell, E. Newhook, George Frederick Newhook, Archibald Mark Newman, James Newman, James Newton, Edward H. Nicholle, Levi Mason Nicholls, Campbell Whithycombe Nichols, George Duncan Nichols, Edward

George Noftall, John Noftall, Patrick Alexander Noftell, Henry Colton Noonan, Robert Anthony Noonan, Walter H. Norman, William H. Norman, Levi Normore and Stephen Casimir Norris.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to welcome our esteemed guests, 23 European Union Ambassadors to Newfoundland and Labrador. We are delighted to welcome our delegation and proud to share our innovative business community, our world-class research institutions and our rich culture. Last December my office reached out to the Ambassadors to reconfirm their attendance and welcome them to our province.

As Canada's second-largest trade and investment partner, we look forward to strengthening our respective economies for our mutual benefit. We welcome companies in the European Union to explore opportunities to do business with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the dynamic and resourceful organizations, and I am confident this mission will further solidify our historic connections with our colleagues from the European Union.

As one of the province's largest trading partners, participating in the European marketplace provides tremendous opportunities for local companies to improve their competitiveness and access lucrative international markets. This will be especially true when the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement – CETA comes into force.

CETA will position our province to take advantage of the largest consumer market in the world by creating an investment environment that reduces regulations and streamlines the flow of goods, services and investments, providing

unprecedented access to the European marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, this week we look forward to sharing the best of Newfoundland and Labrador with the EU Ambassadors. We also look forward to working with the EU counterparts to grow our respective economies through strong collaboration and strategic co-operation. On behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador, we extend a heartfelt welcome.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. We, too, certainly welcome the 23 European Union Ambassadors to Newfoundland and Labrador. It was in 2015 when some of the ministers of the prior administration visited Ottawa, met with the EU Ambassador, as well as other ambassadors from the EU. At that time, he extended an invitation to them to come to Newfoundland and Labrador and to experience economically and socially what we have to offer.

Today, it would be good to get an update from the Premier and from government on where they are with the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. In the past, when we've asked questions they've referenced that there are negotiations still ongoing, especially related to the fisheries fund. Our understanding is the deal in principle is being worked through in regard to wording and the legal text has been done.

The agreement, as far as we're concerned, is completed, yet we hear from the other side there are negotiations continuing. So it is due time that we get an update from the government on where they actually stand on the agreement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement. I'm very pleased to see the EU Ambassadors here in our province, and I'm pleased also to join with my colleagues in welcoming them to our beautiful province.

I hope while they are here, they will get a good sense of who we are as a people who are founded in the fishery and what we offer to the world. I hope, too, they have some fun and enjoy the wonderful generosity and friendliness of our people, for which we are rightly famous.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House today to congratulate St. James Regional High in Port aux Basques, on receiving this year's Inclusive Education Award.

Inclusive education is a philosophy that serves as the foundation for everything we do in education. It considers the diversity of every learner and helps guide decision making regarding curriculum, instructional methodology and physical environment.

Students come to our schools with various experiences, abilities, family situations, interests, learning styles and cultural backgrounds. Each student needs to feel that they belong, are valued and can contribute.

Through *Budget 2016*, our government committed \$118.8 million to support inclusive education in schools throughout the province, including an additional 27 teachers to provide support for inclusive learning.

Mr. Speaker, the Inclusive Education Award presented by the Newfoundland and Labrador Association for Community Living, is awarded annually to a K-12 school in Newfoundland and

Labrador that has shown an exceptional spirit in creating a school that is welcoming and inclusive for students with an intellectual disability.

St. James Regional High School was presented this award for their dedicated and committed effort to ensuring that every student is a valued and important member of the school community, and that all students receive a high-quality education, in a caring and inclusive environment.

Students at the school are provided many opportunities to promote inclusion, including a Best Buddies program which promotes friendship and acceptance by pairing students with intellectual disabilities with student mentors; Mental Health Matters, which focuses on ways to remove the stigma associated with mental illness, as well as maintaining a strong support system for LGBTQ students through its Gender Sexuality Alliance.

St. James Regional High school has worked very hard to ensure that all students feel welcome, safe and accepted. I invite my colleagues in this House to join me in congratulating St. James Regional High for their outstanding achievements.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition also extends congratulations to St. James Regional High school on them being awarded the Inclusive Education Award for 2016, a prestigious award that the students, their parents, teachers and administrators should be very proud of.

We all recognize the importance of our society to be inclusive to value diversity. Through promoting and recognizing inclusion in our school system, we are reaching entire generations and instilling in them the value of openness and acceptance, as well as providing

all students with a safe and caring learning environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Congratulations to the students, teachers and other staff of St. James Regional High school for winning the award this year.

It is wonderful that schools in our system, in spite of the lack of adequate support from government, are making strides in inclusive education. I urge government to listen to those who are telling them we don't have the resources that are needed so that all schools can achieve the same level of inclusion as has St. James Regional High school.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the recent tragedy in Fort McMurray has impacted thousands of Canadians, including many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. With the forest fire no longer appearing to threaten the town, the work of reintegrating people back into the community and rebuilding now begins.

I am pleased to advise that 30 officers and one civilian member of the RCMP in Newfoundland and Labrador have been deployed to Fort McMurray to assist in that work. They will join RCMP members from British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba who have been posted in Alberta on an emergency basis.

Mr. Speaker, the request for RCMP members from our province came due to this province's

unique connection to Fort McMurray and the people who live there. Throughout the deployments, our officers will be wearing a provincial pin on their uniforms to identify them as coming from Newfoundland and Labrador.

I understand that when the call for officers to volunteer went out, the response was overwhelming.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our members of the RCMP that are temporarily working in Alberta and also recognize the often dangerous, yet critical work of all first responders who make our country safer. Newfoundland and Labrador is proud of the sacrifices you are making which lead to stronger communities.

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 thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement on this matter today. I know we're all proud that we live in a province and a country where we reach out and provide assistance and support to others, especially in a time of need. We all know the deep-rooted connection that we have to Fort McMurray and the people who live there, and this makes sense in so many ways. I'm not surprised, but I'm also proud of the response, as referenced by the minister.

As residents return to Fort McMurray, we know that it's going to be a difficult and challenging time for them. We know there are going to be many stressors in their lives and challenges that they'll face in communities and neighbourhoods. So to ensure that all assistance can be provided, peace, order, safety and security, we thank them and we also thank the officers left here in Newfoundland and Labrador who will pick up the slack for those that are away.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Along with all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I thank our RCMP members and all first responders for their incredible, courageous and loving efforts in Fort McMurray. Our RCMP members who have been deployed to help the people of Alberta represent our culture of support, generosity and solidarity present in our own province.

I thank them for their passion and compassion. We are proud of them. Bravo!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, a story in *The Western Star* today indicates the Premier had stated the budget was created so municipalities won't have to pass budget burdens on to residents.

Now, Mr. Speaker, municipalities have a different story to tell and have expressed that. The Liberal budget will cost the Town of Conception Bay South an additional \$350,000; Grand Falls-Windsor, \$250,000; Corner Brook, about \$200,000 – just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that the budget choices they made do place a heavier burden on the municipalities who are going to cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So I ask the Premier: How are you expecting municipalities to maintain the services they've promised, the level of taxation they promised,

without having to be gutted and decimated by these budget choices you've made?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again I hear the Member talking (inaudible). In this budget a sustainable plan was put in place. The sustainable plan will ensure there are more funds going to every municipality in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, there will be over \$350 million in capital works for each town. The first phase of that, some projects that were reprofiled last year, Mr. Speaker, is just going to be announced soon.

So, Mr. Speaker, our government has committed – we kept the cost ratio in place. We ensured the sustainable plan for all municipalities in the province is still in place. Also, we partnered with our federal partners in Ottawa and we're going to have over \$350 million in capital works for all municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We know they've maintained funding levels that assist and help support operations. We're grateful there's capital funding being invested in municipalities. We support that, but capital funding cannot be used for day-to-day operations. This is millions of dollars of operations that councils are now going to have to bear the burden of.

I'll ask the Premier again: Now that you've burdened them with millions of dollars more in operating costs that they can't keep up, how do you expect them to make ends meet?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: I just find it kind of ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the critic is standing up saying what a great budget because the Municipal Operating Grants are still in place, the sustainable plan is in place, the gas tax is in place. The critic is standing up saying what a great budget for all the municipalities and he's so pleased that we kept all these options in. Now we've got the leader up saying that it's not a good budget.

So I ask the leader: When he stands up and says that it's going to cost them millions, is he talking about the sustainable plan that is carried forward for the next three years that his government was so proud to bring in, which we supported and we continued?

When he stands in his place, Mr. Speaker, we have to remember there was \$34.9 million that they wouldn't even sign to put into municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador. All the capital works for the three years, they had it spent in two years. That's the commitment they had to municipalities.

When you want to stand and talk about municipalities, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand on the record that this government made through the budget for all municipalities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

So the Premier won't answer and the minister doesn't have an answer. This is putting a burden on municipalities, and they don't have an answer to how they're going to consume and how they're going to absorb all these additional costs.

Their own Finance Minister said this was going to be a bad budget for everyone. We agree that there were some good things in the budget. Members opposite wouldn't say that for weeks, Mr. Speaker – they wouldn't say it. Municipalities are pointing out two main concerns they have with this budget: increases to insurance costs and increases to fuel taxes.

I ask the Premier: How are you going to address their concerns?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, once again I say to the leader, I attended the rally in Corner Brook, as also the Member for Corner Brook. At no time did I ever say that this budget was not a tough budget because of what we are left with from the previous government. At no time did I say that these people on this side, this government, want to bring in such a budget from what we were left with from this previous government.

Also, the Member opposite forgets about the sustainable plan that they were touting, which we continued on for the next three years, Mr. Speaker. There are additional funds going to all municipalities in this province for the next three years under the sustainable plan. He touted that. The critic even stood up and said it's a good budget for municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador. So, Mr. Speaker, they can't have it both ways in this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

If the Premier won't answer to concerns expressed by municipalities, maybe he'll answer concerns expressed by parents. Because, Mr. Speaker, we know that names are being drawn by a random draw to determine which children can participate in intensive core French in September, which parents are very concerned about.

I'll ask the Premier: What message are you sending to families who are generally interested in their children obtaining a bilingual education and they're told, well, if you're luck of the draw you're in, if you don't get the luck of the draw

you're out. What do you say to those families, Premier?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, intensive core French is a program that has been done on an optional basis for a number of years by students in grade six. I guess the intention is to give them some experience with French before deciding whether or not to go into late French Immersion. There are about 20 classes that are impacted in the change the way teaching units are being deployed this year. There simply aren't enough extra units, if you will, in the system because of the difficulty we have trying to meet our budget challenges today.

I want to stress again, this is an optional program. It's not part of the core curriculum. We continue to try and direct as much of the public resources that we have to classroom teaching and learning priorities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, I'll try this with the Premier, because he's not answering any questions today.

I'll ask him this. We know there's a growing interest and benefit for students to receive a bilingual education. Do you consider participation in the intensive core French program a luxury, as your minister portrays it and says, well, it's only an optional program, some do it some don't. Well, we know that lots won't even have to get it. Or, do you agree with all these decisions of bringing all education standards to the bare minimum?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, no one said it was a luxury. I said it was an optional program.

Unfortunately, the previous administration, by driving us off the fiscal cliff in the way that it did, leaving us with a massive deficit that we have never seen in the history of the province –

MR. K. PARSONS: (Inaudible).

MR. KIRBY: I say yes, to the Member for Cape St. Francis who continues to yell across the way. We're spending more on debt servicing this year than we are on all of the \$900-odd million we're spending on education. That's shameful, and we're basically left without options ourselves.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I say to the Minister of Education, you haven't seen the Member for Cape St. Francis yell yet.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is saying it's an optional program. It's an optional program now for fewer students than ever before because they're gutting the program. Bilingual education is more important for young families and young students than ever before.

I'll ask the Premier one more time: Are you okay with this reduction in a very important program? Bilingual education is important and beneficial to so many. Are you okay with this reduction, Premier?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've said on many occasions in this House of Assembly there were a lot of decisions that have been made in this budget that we are not okay with. There is nothing, as we said, in this budget that we can all be proud of. We've said that, but there's a very good reason for that, Mr. Speaker.

We've been left with a situation that has been unprecedented in the history of our province. Today, we are spending more in debt servicing, as the minister just said, than we are on education.

I would ask the former premier of this province: Is he proud of his legacy that he has left for our young children? Because it seems to me that what he wants to do is pass on the burden of debt that his administration and previous administrations prior to him have left squarely on the shoulders of the young students that he is talking about here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I recognize the hon. the Opposition Leader, I would ask Members to co-operate. Blurring out and heckling is not acceptable.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I can tell you what I can do; I can stand here in my place and say we made every effort possible to advance our education system in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: I won't apologize to the Member opposite for that, I can assure you.

He's going to have to speak for the choices that he made. He's going to have to speak for the choices that his government made. He's going to have to speak for taking education values and systems and options and reducing them to the bare minimum. It's the Premier of today who will have to answer for those decisions.

I ask him: Before you make all of these education systems which are going to wipe out opportunities for young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, you promised to consult, you promised to do your Premier's task force in education. Will you get on with the task force on

education? Get that done now before our education system is wiped out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the budget we announced on April 14, the task force on education is part of the budget process. It will deal with outcomes. It will include people across our province. There will be opportunities for people to engage. As a matter of fact, we would encourage you to engage yourself. I would say to the former premier and your colleagues: get involved. Let's work together to deal with the mess that we've been left on your behalf.

If you were so concerned about the future of our province, you would have done better planning and better management in preparing for this. It seems to me right now, you talk about choices. One choice you didn't do is plan for the future of the very young people that you are talking about here today.

It is about choices, but it is also about accepting responsibility. It seems not something the former premier would want to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've constantly asked questions about training for teachers to the minister without a response. The lack of response seems to be common from this minister. School councils and parents are not happy about the minister's silence.

I ask the minister: What training will teachers of combined classes be provided so they can be prepared to teach combined classes before school begins in September?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, I just want to comment quickly on what the former premier said over there about them supporting education. I don't know how they supported education by cutting almost 240 teaching positions over the course of two budgets. That's not supporting education in my view.

Mr. Speaker, we will be providing a comprehensive training program in professional development for teachers on combined grades. Just this week, we had some educational leaders in the area of research here in the province from BC, Ontario and Nova Scotia meeting with educational administrators and educators from across the province on full-day kindergarten and on the issue of multigrading.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, teachers and administrators are telling me it's a little too late to be implementing this right now and have teachers prepared and feel comfortable in being able to upgrade our education system.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has suggested that there would be no teacher layoffs. On Monday, there were numerous layoff notices.

I ask the minister: Can you provide a real number on how many teachers will lose their jobs as a result of your budget choices?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides an initial allocation to the school districts. The school districts then deploy those resources to the system. There's a process in place where principals advise the district about enrolment or programming changes.

There are currently about 164 notifications that teachers are going to be retiring, there are about 500 teachers eligible to retire and I'm pleased to say that the English School District will be

advertising shortly for more than 200 positions; 200 teaching positions will be advertised and people will be able to apply for those jobs, should they chose.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the minister reluctantly doesn't outline the fact that 140 will go into the education system for all-day kindergarten but nearly 200 will come out of the system from one to 12, which is going to be devastating to our one to 12 system.

Mr. Speaker, changes in school busing will mean some buses will serve more than one school and kids will have an earlier start to their day.

I ask the minister: What is the cost savings projected on busing? How can you justify the savings when so many children and families will be negatively impacted by these changes?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, just to correct what the Member just said it's a net reduction of 73 units this year. I didn't hear the Member complaining last year when there was a net reduction of 78 units in the budget. They're reductions that reflect reductions in enrolment, but we have put 27 new positions back in this year for inclusive education.

With respect to busing, there are double bus runs being put in, in some instances, in order to find cost efficiencies. Currently, we're spending over \$50 million a year on busing. That's going closer to \$60 million for next year. We're putting millions of dollars of additional monies in. We know the change in schedules is disruptive to the routines for parents, students and teachers, but we're doing the best that we can, considering the fiscal mess we have to deal with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with the addition of upwards of 1,400 kindergarten children into the education system this September, the School Lunch Association is very concerned that they will be unable to meet the needs they require. They require additional funding for infrastructure requirements.

I ask the minister: Why are you delaying meeting with the School Lunch Association and not having a meeting until July?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, funding to community-based organizations will remain the same for this fiscal year. They will receive \$100,000 from the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development. We've had numerous conversations, phone calls, emails and meetings and we will meet again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, a July meeting, just weeks before schools will reopen, will not provide adequate time for the School Lunch Association to strengthen their infrastructure for running the program.

Why the delay? Isn't this important enough to meet with them now?

I ask the minister: Will you meet with them this month?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, a June meeting will happen. The organization receives funding from numerous other organizations such as the City of St. John's. They fundraise. They receive funding from parents. They receive \$100,000 from the province. We will meet in June.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: I ask the minister: Did you budget any additional funding for the School Lunch Program in light of the fact that you decided to proceed with full-day kindergarten?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development will meet with the School Lunch Association, unlike the previous administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, she won't tell us if she has any additional funding.

So I'll ask again: Why are you proceeding with no plan and no consideration of all the impacts for full-day kindergarten?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, we are committed to working with the School Lunch Association.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No answers and likely no funding.

Due to the Liberal budget, residents of Newfoundland and Labrador – most notably, seniors – will now see cuts to diabetic strips, changes to the drug plan and reduced hours in home care support, just to name a few of the devastating impacts your budget will have.

I ask the minister responsible for seniors: Do you have any concerns that these changes will bring a lower standard of living for our seniors?

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

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

The issue of the diabetic test strips and the changes to that program will align us completely with Canadian national standards and follows the recommendations of the Canadian Diabetes Association. It aligns the number of strips allocated for a patient with their management, whether it be short-, medium- or long-term medications, and is best practice and good value for money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the minister responsible for seniors, their advocate, what her position is on this. Why won't she answer?

So, I'll try again. I say to the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development, programs like the Adult Dental Program give seniors confidence and dignity.

As the minister responsible for seniors: Do you have concerns about how this cut to Adult Dental will negatively impact our seniors?

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

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

The changes to the Adult Dental Program were made after considerable thought. They now align us with five other jurisdictions in Canada, and our program is better than three other jurisdictions on top of that. We will look after the dental needs of 44,000 of this province's most vulnerable citizens, and we're doing the best that we can with the money that we were left, courtesy of the gentlemen and ladies opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely terrible that the minister responsible for seniors won't stand up and speak on their behalf.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have cut millions from the Prescription Drug Program, including cuts to over-the-counter medications, especially for seniors.

I ask the minister responsible for seniors: Are you concerned that seniors will no longer be able to afford the medications they require and that doctors may now be forced to prescribe alternatives which may, in fact, cost the system even more?

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

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

The category of over-the-counter drugs includes all sorts of things from basically snake oil and folk remedies all the way through to what you might call vital over-the-counter drugs.

Any patient who has a prescriber in whose opinion an over-the-counter preparation is medically necessary can submit that to the department and it will be assessed. No one is being cut off from anything they need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget's discontinued the amount they paid on Coyote carcasses that takes upwards of 1,200 coyotes out of the population annually and it has helped manage the population.

I ask the minister: What is the impact on removing this bounty? With the elimination of this program, what is the plan for coyote management in the province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much for the question.

In terms of our plan on collecting carcasses and so on, actually what we're doing is shifting to a new model. There are better ways to do things. We're copying other jurisdictions. We feel it is more appropriate to work with the animals themselves as opposed to carcasses that have been piling up in a storage shed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Mr. Speaker, I want to caution the minister too – it is not part of my question, but I want to point out the public has a lot of concerns about coyotes in their neighbourhoods, my neighbourhood a couple of weeks ago, everyone's neighbourhood. That is a big issue. Just forgetting about coyotes is not going to have a good impact on our wildlife.

I ask the minister: What will be the impact on the caribou calving grounds because we do know that they are one of the main predators on caribou calving grounds?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TRIMPER: Actually we have a great understanding of predation by coyotes, by black bears, by hunting and so on. The key point is that the collection of carcasses was for a research technique which provided some insight into how we make our management. The ability for hunters, trappers to still collect and hunt coyote is still out there, so there's really no change in terms of our ability to control this predator.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to remind again – I do have an understanding of what you're saying there, Mr. Minister, but they do have a devastating impact the caribou. Just forgetting about science, that was the only incentive to get coyotes out of our wildlife. There is no other reason to hunt coyotes other than for the bounty, for what they do for protecting the wildlife. So you just threw away an incentive.

Outfitters generate upwards of \$45 million annually to rural Newfoundland and Labrador economy.

I ask the minister: What was the plan for the preservation of caribou and moose population? What is your plan for oversight protection of these and other species threatened by coyotes?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TRIMPER: It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, the history of the coyote and myself actually are in parallel tracks. This species showed up here about 1987. It is unfortunately here to stay. It is shaking up our ecosystem. I can assure the

Member opposite that coyotes are a very resilient type of predator. There have been a variety of strategies that have been deployed to try to control them. They were quite ineffective; it's a very successful animal.

What we need to do is work with the science, work with groups like the Outfitters Association. I'm also very pleased to say I've had two lengthy meetings with those people. We're going to continue to collaborate. We will work with other jurisdictions, and we'll come up with a solution.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the previous administration had advised EU that if Canada did not meet all obligations agreed to in bilateral negotiations between Newfoundland and Labrador and Ottawa, including the fisheries fund, that Newfoundland would not be relinquishing areas of provincial jurisdiction such as MPRs.

I ask the Premier: Has the position of your government changed, and have you updated the EU Ambassadors of any such change?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What the former minister is talking about today is really two different things. One is the CETA agreement that we just mentioned about, and that is an agreement that is done with Canada and the EU. That agreement obviously is moving through the process now and waiting for ratification.

Then, secondary to that, which has a significant impact on Newfoundland and Labrador of course, is the fisheries fund. That fund right now – we're certainly into discussions with our federal colleagues on how that would happen in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have the

support of our MPs, support of the Prime Minister, but what we will not do is we will not rent space to sign an agreement that has not been announced and not ready to be announced by both parties; but there are significant advancements made on that particular file.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader has about 20 seconds for a question.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier says they're not related. They're related in the agreement – they are. We didn't sign on for CETA unless we got the fisheries fund.

Why is the Premier now saying he doesn't care about the fisheries fund? He's got support in Ottawa, we haven't seen the cash, where's it to, it's all interrelated. Will you please give us an update on the CETA agreement? Because it appears you don't understand what you're actually saying.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What's apparent, to the former minister, is that you never should sign an agreement in a place where you don't have the other party ready to sign on with you. That would be an apparent fault of the previous administration.

The CETA negotiation right now, the agreement with the EU is now being – through the federal government in negotiation with the EU. The fisheries fund is a different fund, a different negotiation.

We have maintained the position about minimum processing requirements, and as we work with our federal government we're hopeful that in the future we can actually get an agreement in place for the benefit of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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.

All decisions have a ripple effect, or in the case of the School Lunch Program it could be a tsunami. Starting all-day kindergarten in September means 700 more mouths to feed on a daily basis, which, according to the chair of the School Lunch Association, means \$400,000 more a year. That means a lot of planning. All attempts by the association to meet with the Minister of Education so far have failed.

I ask the minister: Why is he showing such disregard for an organization that for almost 30 years has been serving the school children on the Eastern Avalon?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Thanks for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we've had many, many, many communications with the School Lunch Program folks since we took office and since this Cabinet was appointed. I haven't met with the School Lunch Program myself, although officials in my department have been speaking with them and I've exchanged correspondence. It's actually the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development's department that provides funding for that program.

Our department does provide over a million dollars a year for the Kids Eat Smart breakfast program, but the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development does not provide funding for that program. That's another department. So the School Lunch Program was referred to contact that department should they want to ask for an increase.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The chair of the association says it will take months of preparation to plan renovations, buy new equipment and make changes to accommodate full-day kindergarten, costing up to an extra \$100,000 more upfront. As the chair has said, you can't snap your fingers and expect food to be on the table come September.

I ask the minister if he even thought about the impact on this program when he made the decision to put all-day kindergarten in place in September.

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, as I said, it's the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development that provide \$100,000 a year for the School Lunch Program. There was never any mention of any impact of full-day kindergarten that I'm aware of in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development prior to sometime, say, late winter that folks contacted our department and asked if there was any additional funding coming from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

I advised our officials and I corresponded with the School Lunch Program myself and said that it's not the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development that provides that funding. Should they wish to request an increase, they should go to the other department that provides the funding already for them. That's basically what happened.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier split his budget in two, waiting for six months before telling people what other brutal cuts and job losses they're facing, causing fear and anxiety. People are understandably sitting on their wallets, further slowing down and choking the economy.

I ask the Premier: Why would he stifle our economy in this way at a time when our economy actually needs stimulus?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise here because I listened to the debate the other night – about stifling the economy in Municipal Affairs – when the co-leader of the Third Party got up and said there’s \$20 million put in for Municipal Affairs. The same \$20 million the Member for St. John’s Centre said was a slush fund.

That \$20 million, Mr. Speaker, helped leverage over \$350 million in municipal funding. On infrastructure funding, \$575 million in total in the province. If you call that \$20 million stifling the economy – thousands of jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That’s what’s helping the economy, supporting rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I say to the Members of the Third Party, when you stand in this House and make statements like that, please have the facts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, that’s astounding, and has absolutely nothing to do with the question I asked.

Yesterday, the minister said, “Certainly, as we worked through the budget the important women’s lens, gender lens was certainly used.”

I ask the minister: Will she table the specific gender-analysis tool she used and the results of the analysis of how her budget will affect women?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, as part of the Government Renewal Initiative, the officials who reviewed the recommendations that came in from departments that were ultimately provided to Cabinet for a decision-making process, were

undertaken to be reviewed through all different lens including women.

We have 82 per cent of single homes in this province led by women. That was a very important lens that we put on this budget. It was one of the reasons, quite frankly, as I’ve mentioned in debate in this House, that we thought it was very important to bring in the Newfoundland Income Supplement so that we could offset some of those costs to those low-income moms who are raising their kids.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: I hereby table the Report of the Auditor General entitled, the 2016 Update on Recommendations from the 2012 Annual Report.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Pensions Funding Act And The Teachers’ Pension Act. (Bill 28)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Law Respecting

Statutory Offices Of The House of Assembly.
(Bill 27)

Further, I give notice under Standing Order 11 that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 16; and further, pursuant to Standing Order 11 I give notice that this House do not adjourn at 10 p.m. on Monday, May 16.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just stand to answer the questions yesterday on the debate, the changes to the Highway Act. The Leader of the Opposition asked about the demerit points for the vehicle. That if the owner of the vehicle, even if they couldn't be identified, in consultation with Justice they said it would be more appropriate to not give demerit points against someone who passed a school bus or speeding in a school zone because they wouldn't be able to identify the person. That is the reason of what they said, because it would be harder if you didn't – and they advised that we should ticket the car but not take away demerit points on that issue.

The issue on the school bus, it is 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. The intent behind the department and in discussions is that it is almost like – I think the critic, the Member for Cape St. Francis brought up, is if you're in a construction zone and the signs are up on the weekend and there is no one there, you have no intention to slow down because people just see the signs.

The intent is that you keep it for when the children will be there from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. and then you will be more focused from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. That was on the advice of – why we kept it at that, so it would be concentrated instead of

just speeding through all the time; that you know from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. That's the answer to that.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS surtaxes are typically leveled 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 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 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, I think every MHA in this House of Assembly has heard from their constituents.

We've all heard how people know – it's not just people's opinions; it's clear that the levy is an unfair flat regressive tax.

Again, as I have said a number of times in this House, when you look at its application we know that it's attached to specific earners; it's not attached to a household. You cannot combine your household income to identify who's paying what for the levy. It's not like that kind of tax.

So if you have a household where there are two earners, each earning \$50,000 a year, then each of those earners will be taxed about \$600 for the levy. So out of that one household the levy will be \$1,200; \$600 each, separately. So you have a young family paying a mortgage payment, paying car payments, paying child care, who are just scrimping by, just making it. Although it might seem like a lot of money, two \$50,000 income earners, with the kids and mortgage and car payments and all that, that's quite significant. That's \$1,200 out of that household. Whereas if your next-door neighbour is making \$250,000 and there's only one earner in that household, they're going to pay \$900.

So it's so clear, it's so easy to see how inequitable this levy tax is, and it doesn't work. It's not progressive; it's very regressive. People know that, people can see that, because a lot of people, as we know, particularly with the downturn in the economy – and we have seen, any of us who go to the grocery store, how expensive food is. None of us are exempt. People are really aware of how much money they're going to have to put out and what this budget means to them.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

WHEREAS the current 2016 provincial budget impacts adversely and directly the education program at Beachy Cove Elementary in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; and

WHEREAS the parents request a delay in the implementation of full-day kindergarten at our school until September 2017, when at such time the new five-to-nine middle school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's will open; and

WHEREAS the student population at Beachy Cove Elementary is growing exponentially and this growth is sustainable into the future; and

WHEREAS the parents request the reinstatement of the previous teacher-allocation formula for Beachy Cove Elementary for this year and subsequent school years to service the growth in enrolment and to be able to provide all students with equal opportunities to enroll in the French immersion program;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the previous teacher allocation and delay the implementation of full-day kindergarten in order to provide the children of Beachy Cove Elementary the right to a quality education.

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

Mr. Speaker, we've heard in the media and I've noted it here in the House of Assembly through questions I've asked and presenting this petition in the past, there's a real upheaval when it comes to offering proper education to the people of Beachy Cove Elementary.

There has been a backlash by parents, by administrators, by teachers, by the students, by the general population in that community and other communities about what's happening to our education system with the cuts in this budget.

The parents have particularly looked at the impacts it's going to have. There are four key areas where they're going to be regressive in their education process, particularly at Beachy Cove, and that's around intensive core French ability.

Students who would have jumped into the French immersion but want to go the mainstream English system, knowing when they got to grade five, they could make the decision that grade six they would be into the core French program, but now that has been taken away. We're having things like a lottery, picking names out of a hat. There's no justification around those kids who really want to move to it, their previous background in it, any potential they had for what they want to do with the French program itself. None of that has been taken into account. They've backed the administrators into a corner.

Administrators sometimes are being seen as being callous in their decision making, but they have no other choice. They've been forced by the Department of Education who, in turn, forced the school board to make these choices based on simple issues around cutting teacher allocation to save money without having any vision about where the education system needs to go, or how you invest money or keep it at the level it is.

We've had a pretty good education system. No doubt, there's room for improvement. There's no doubt that every day we talk about how we can better encourage our education system to be more inclusive, how we can look at better training teachers, how teachers themselves take a better role in their communities and how the communities partner with them also.

Mr. Speaker, I present this on behalf of the people of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's and the school council itself.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

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

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* introduces over 50 new fees and increases over 300 fees; and

WHEREAS *Budget 2016* asks people of this province to pay more for a decrease in government services; and

WHEREAS these fee increases negatively impact the financial well-being of seniors, youth, families, students and individuals;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately reverse these fee increases as introduced through *Budget 2016*.

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

Mr. Speaker, as we hear every day in the House, in the media and whatnot about the levy, that it is no doubt a huge issue. I hear it on a constant basis.

You take everything else into – but if you take it in silos, it's different. You take it in all total context and you add the levy, the insurance tax, the gas tax, income tax increase – most budgets in past years you'd get a couple of increases and you'd get some fee increases traditionally to generate some more revenue. You'd zero in on a specific sector. This budget, if you said fee increases and everything else remained the same, it'd be kind of tolerable. When you throw the fee increase on top of everything else, it's a huge burden.

Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of seniors in my district who I hear from a lot actually, quite often. They just don't know how they're going to make ends meet with any of this budget. Then you're throwing fees from – every service you require now it's an increase in the fees. Again, I say people are crying out. I've never seen anything like it in my life and a lot of others have said the same thing. It's unheard of; it's astounding. They're not getting answers from the government. The ministers are – it seems like everyone is just put everything on mute. People are looking for answers.

I say this every time I get up in the House and I'll say it again here today that everything in

separation don't look so bad. You put it all together and it's crippling on the economy, it's crippling on seniors, low-income, middle-income earners. I really, really, really would wish the hon. Members opposite would start paying attention to the public. Forget about us, they need to start listening to the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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 a decision has been made to close the Provincial Court at Harbour Grace; and

WHEREAS this Provincial Court services a large geographical area, covering from Bay de Verde to Marysvale and Bellevue down to St. Bride's in Placentia Bay and all communities in between; and

WHEREAS a population of 50,000-plus citizens are served by this Provincial Court; and

WHEREAS four RCMP detachments use this court including Harbour Grace, Bay Roberts, Whitbourne and Placentia, with court checks for the Holyrood detachment; and

WHEREAS many related services will still be located in the area such as legal aid, crown prosecutor, probation officers, addictions residences and other related services and professionals from these offices will spend a large amount of time commuting to an alternate location; and

WHEREAS services such as the seeking of child support, civil action against another and victim services will also be adversely affected;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to

reverse the decision to close the Provincial Court at Harbour Grace.

Mr. Speaker, since the budget has been announced, I continue hearing about this particular issue pretty much on a daily basis. I continue to meet with members of the town council in Harbour Grace and constituents. As a matter of fact, we've met with the Justice Minister and the Mayor for the Town of Harbour Grace – which is the first name here on this petition – was in just this morning to meet with the Justice Minister to work toward a resolution.

But there are concerns with regard to public safety, should this service be relocated to Atlantic Place in St. John's, that RCMP officers in the jurisdiction will be taxiing people back and forth to an alternate location, which could have an effect, obviously, on public safety. This is a concern of constituents.

This region is a large region. It's larger than a district issue. This Provincial Court has been in service since the 1800s in the Town of Harbour Grace, servicing Harbour Grace – Port de Grave District, and the Harbour Main District, Placentia – St. Mary's District, and Trinity – Bay de Verde.

Again, I am committed to working with constituents, working with the town council, working with the Justice Minister, to do everything we can to provide a solution to reverse this decision. I will stand with constituents and again, we will work towards finding a solution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

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 government has one again cut the libraries budget, forcing the closure of 54 libraries; and

WHEREAS libraries are often the backbone of their communities, especially for those with little access to government services –

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

I'll continue the WHEREASes.

WHEREAS libraries are often the backbone of their communities, especially for those with little access to government services where they offer learning opportunities and computer access; and

WHEREAS libraries and librarians are critical in efforts to improve the province's literacy levels which are among the lowest in Canada; and

WHEREAS already strapped municipalities are not in a position to take over the operation and cost of libraries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to keep these libraries open and work on a long-term plan to strengthen the library system.

And as in duty bound you petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, once again these petitions have come in to us and, in responsibility as Members of the House of Assembly, we bring them into the House.

It's interesting to note that while some of the signatures today are from some areas where libraries will close, especially the Port au Port Peninsula, the majority of the signatures that I have in my hand today are from the St. John's area. So it is showing solidarity with people, that

everybody in the province is upset over the closing of these 54 libraries.

I also have a letter from an educator who has joined his voice in this concern as well: "A week or so after the budget came down I was made aware of the book tax. It was then announced that more than half of the libraries will be shuttered, some of which are located in schools, along side deep cuts to Memorial University of Newfoundland. That led me to wonder as to whether or not this Liberal government was waging a Stephen Harper-style war against education and higher learning. I do not think it is too far fetched to characterize this budget as anti-education and pro-illiteracy. Rates of illiteracy are already high in Newfoundland and Labrador and these measures will undoubtedly exacerbate this issue."

It's a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker, and I really implore the government to take it seriously. They seem to be sloughing off the petitions that are coming in, sloughing off the opinion of people in the province who are absolutely concerned about the loss of the libraries from two or three different perspectives. Literacy being one; being centres of community being another, and the government just seems to be ignoring these. I beg them to listen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, Third Reading of Bill 12.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Service Newfoundland and Labrador, that Bill 12, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, be now read the third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 12 be now read a third time.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

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

I thought you read the bill before you'd take a question. I appreciate the minister getting back to us and giving us that information.

Will the bill reflect the fact that – is it done through regulation or is it done through the bill that the demerit point reduction won't happen when an owner of a vehicle is charged with an offence?

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the question. The act will reflect that the demerit points will not be included, only the fine for the vehicle itself. It will just reflect the fine for the vehicle if the driver cannot be identified.

MR. SPEAKER: Are there any other speakers to the bill?

It is moved and seconded that Bill 12 be now read a third time.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act. (Bill 12)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 12)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 14.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the following resolution:

WHEREAS subsection 16(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* requires that an independent committee, called a Members' Compensation Review Committee, be appointed at least once during each General Assembly; and

WHEREAS in accordance with subsection 16(2) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the Speaker has consulted with the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the Third Party on the appointments to the said Committee; and

WHEREAS the Government House Leader, Opposition House Leader and the Third Party have agreed with the introduction of this resolution; and

WHEREAS under subsection 16(4) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, a Members' Compensation Review Committee appointed under this resolution must report to the Speaker on its recommendations within 120 days of its appointment;

BE IT RESOLVED that Sandra Burke, Kathy LeGrow and Jeffrey Pardy are appointed to the Members' Compensation Review Committee, with the appointment to be effective on July 7, 2016; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in accordance with section 16 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the Members' Compensation Review Committee shall inquire into and prepare a report respecting the salaries, allowances, severance payments and pensions to be paid to Members of the House of Assembly, and in particular, the Committee shall 1. recommend the annual salary for Members of the House of Assembly; 2. review and make recommendations regarding the additional salary provisions for positions identified in subsection 12(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*; 3. recommend a formula or means for making annual salary adjustments for salary amounts referenced in clauses 2 and 3 above; 4. review and make recommendations regarding the current severance pay policy for Members of the House of Assembly; 5. review the current provisions for Members' pensions and provide recommendations for adjustments; 6. review and make recommendations regarding the Intra-Constituency Allowance for each District established in the Schedule to *Members' Resources and Allowances Rules*. This review should take into account the provision of services by Members as a result of the increase in the size of some districts, as a result of Electoral Boundary reform in 2015; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Members' Compensation Review Committee, as part of its inquiries, consult with appropriate persons who can assist the Committee with respect to its required duties and shall 7. consult with Members of the House of Assembly, review and make recommendations with respect to the *Members' Resources and Allowances Rules*, including but not limited to: a) current accommodation provisions for Members and whether other alternatives are available from a cost-benefit perspective; b) travel and living costs for training and orientation of Members following general elections and by-elections; c) clarification of the parameters regarding usage of the constituency allowance; and d) clarification of the parameters for the use of rental cars; 8. consult with the House of Assembly Service regarding issues in administering the current regime as well as impacts, legislative and otherwise, of proposed recommendations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that research and administrative support to the Members' Compensation Review Committee will be provided by or arranged by the House of Assembly Service; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Members' Compensation Review Committee deliver its report to the Speaker on or before November 4, 2016; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House of Assembly Service shall conclude the contractual arrangements required to carry out the intent of this Resolution.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question or are there further speakers?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I'm sorry about that; I thought there was one more procedural step in between, but learning as I go here, as I think we all are sometimes.

I just want a few moments to speak to this very important committee and the work that they're going to do, and the work that former committees have done in this House of Assembly. In doing so, I actually took a look back at speeches by former House Leaders on both sides to see their remarks towards the work of this committee.

In fact, I know that the Member for – I keep calling it Signal Hill – Quidi Vidi; I know it's St. John's East – Quidi Vidi. I'll get it someday. But I know she's probably, in terms of people sitting right here now, with the exception of the Speaker, maybe one of the longest-serving Members, along with the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I looked at the comments that the Members has made.

I looked at what the former House Leader, actually, Mr. Kennedy, had to say and the former member for Burgeo – La Poile, whoever that person was, I looked at what that individual had to say as well. It's changed.

I don't think there's a need to belabour why we are making this submission here, why this resolution is here. It goes back to a very, I guess, unfortunate time in the history of both this province and especially this Legislature where there was a time where due to the actions and lack of controls and accountability that this House and that all Members of the House before, during and after, there was a lack of faith, a lack of confidence. And that's something that nobody in this province should have.

Out of that came what was known as the Green report. Again, there's a longer title to it. I think it was restoring confidence, and there was a longer title, but everybody refers to it as the Green report. There were a number of issues and items were brought up in this report but the main one, one of the things that were born from this report was the Members' Compensation Review Committee, MCRC. That's what I'll refer to it from here on in. I apologize to people from Hansard by using the acronym, but it's probably easier rather than me fooling up the name continuously.

I look back to some of the comments actually that the former Government House Leader made. He obviously took some time to speak to this. He put some thought into what he had to say. I was actually sitting across when he made those comments, listening to what he said and actually the former Opposition House Leader, Yvonne Jones, who is now in Ottawa, spoke to it. As I mentioned, the Member opposite for the NDP also spoke to this as well.

What it comes down to, I think if you break it down to its most basic, the fact is that by being elected here there's a cost to doing this. There's the salary that goes with it. There's the cost of getting to and from your districts to here. There the cost of staff. There's a whole contingent of costs that are a part of this.

I like the comment that the former Government House Leader said: I think MHAs are entitled to fair treatment, but we do not want MHAs determining what is fair. That's how he put it out there. I think that says it very clear.

Now, also one of the things that came out, there's a Management Commission. A Management Commission is a number of

Members from this House who sit down and discuss matters affecting the House of Assembly. I think one of the big things with that committee, as well as with anything going on here – and what people need to know is everything really is now open and transparent. The meetings are televised. Everything that's done is put online. Any expense by any Member in this House is online right down to the nickel, whether it's the cost of a meal, whether it's the cost of a rental car, whether it's the cost of your loggings. Everything, as it should be, is online for scrutiny by the individuals who put us in this House.

The other thing I would note that's changed I'm sure from 2007 to now is that there's a very rigorous process in doing each one of these claims when it comes to the money that is spent by Members. There are a number of highly skilled individuals, very hard-working individuals who go through it to make sure – this is public money that's being spent and we need to make sure that it's spent properly and according to the rules.

That being said, what we've also learned since that time is that the Green report came out – and things change over time. There are maybe things we didn't account for. There are changes in circumstances, certainly in this House since that time. There are eight less Members since that time, which one of the things is that a number of Members have changed districts, have larger districts. So we had to take into account the allowances that are necessary for a Member to get around their district and speak to their constituents.

We also look at the fact that through time we learn: Are there things we can do differently? What I was going to do was actually go through some of the provisions here. One of the things I'll note that's mentioned there – I guess what I will actually do first is speak about the three individual and Members opposite – in fact, I only know one individual and that's Ms. Sandra Burke, who's a member of the legal community of this province. She has a very good reputation in the legal community. I think her reputation speaks for itself.

The other two individuals, Ms. LeGrow and Mr. Pardy, I actually don't know them but I

understand they have very solid reputations in the community.

The last time we actually had a judge that led the committee. This time there are three individuals who will be leading the committee. Again, this was something that was done upon consultation with Members opposite.

I don't think anybody will say anything negative about the three individuals who have been appointed. They have the skillset, the expertise, and thankfully they have the time to put into a venture like this. It will take some time. Their commission begins on July 7 and it will be reported back to the Speaker by November 4.

When you go through this, here are the things that this commission is going to look at. It is going to look at the salary. There's a base salary for every MHA. That is posted online, and I think it's been the same for some time now. Some Members may know better than me. I think it was frozen at one point. It was rolled back at one point.

Again, I'm not quite sure. That's all out there. It has been done. All I know is the salary has been the same and that – but they should look at it. Should it be lower? Should it be higher? Should it be the same? What are the factors? I don't know. That is what this committee – their job is to look at.

They have to look at the additional salary provisions. They have to look at, what is the formula we use to come up with these things? What is the severance pay? Should we be looking at severance? Severance is an issue that is quite a hot topic. Should we be looking at doing that differently? That's something that does generate discussion in the public, as it should, because all of this – every time you do one of these commissions it's done in the perspective of the time in which it's being held; 2011 was a very different time than 2016. There's no doubt about that.

Right now it's done in the context of the fiscal circumstance that we find it in, and it's hard not to keep that in consideration obviously as we go through this. This is all done in light of a – I can't remember if the last one was actually

started before the budget for that year. In this case, we're doing it after *Budget 2016*.

I think these things have to be considered when this committee does their work. They have to keep in mind the fiscal circumstances of the province, but at the same time recognizing – and I don't think any Member will disagree, and I don't think anybody who has any familiarity with the position of a Member of the House of Assembly will say – it's an extremely tough job. No matter if you're a Member from here in St. John's or – I live in Port aux Basques. We have Members from up in Labrador. We have Members from the South Coast. We have Members from all over this province.

Some districts have different travel requirements. Some are right here, but I tell you the workload is extremely high for every Member in this House, whether you're a Member in the Opposition, whether you're a Member in the government. It's an extremely difficult position.

I think in many ways it has gotten – with the advent now, I'm willing to bet that even when this first commission was done – the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi will probably talk about it. I know just with the advent of social media, the expectation on the Member was probably different then than it is different now. You have so many more responsibilities to respond to your constituents, to people of the public that were not there in 2007, or were not as widely used. She's certainly more equipped to speak to that than I am because she is one of the longer serving Members here.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, you would have the ability to speak to this, but I can even say I've seen a difference in it since 2011. More of your constituents – no matter their demographic, no matter of their age – have the ability now to contact you. That's a good thing. That's what we want, but it speaks to the greater point I'm making.

I think the workload has always been high but it's certainly not decreasing any. That's good, the fact that people have the opportunity and find it successful. That's what we're here for; that's what we're supposed to do. That's

something that is always taken into consideration.

One thing here that is going to be considered, I'm happy to see it, is the provisions for Members' pensions. That's something that also garners significant public attention. You can look back to former Members and what they have had to say. They perhaps speak a little more eloquently than I have, but we have to look at Members' pensions as well to figure out: Are there changes that need to be made to the pension plans for Members of the House of Assembly?

That's why we have these individuals with the skillsets they do. They'll have the ability to get the expertise they need, and that's something that is going to be considered by this committee.

Finally, looking at the Intra-Constituency Allowance; just so people know, every Member has a budget that's spent on travel and expenses within their district. Obviously, that changes, depending on the Member. I'd probably have a larger budget than say a more urban Member because I have a number of rural constituencies. I have three very remote communities that you can only access by ferry or by chopper. In many cases, when I go now I actually try to get down via speedboat. So that's something that needs to be considered as well. With the change, many Members had changes in their districts where they accumulated new territory and new communities. These need to be factored in.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the Member for Torngat Mountains. One of the things that I don't think was actually considered in the original Green report was: How do you calculate expenses for travel over Ski-Doo? I can say that with a smile on my face. It's funny, we talk about travel: I have to catch a plane and then drive 250 kilometres. That's a lot of travel. The Member travels by plane and then gets on a Ski-Doo in the dark of night and travels through very, very rough terrain. The fact is I don't think the provisions were actually geared to take into account that kind of travel, and how do you pay for that. Again, it's only about paying for that actual travel, but that's an interesting set of circumstances.

I know the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune also has a very remote district. It's adjacent to mine. A number of communities you have to get to by ferry. Sometimes it's difficult to get those ferries; sometimes you have to take alternate means to get there.

We always have to reconsider those and say: Are we giving Members the ability to do their job the best they can? Do we have to change the allowances to allow for that? Do we have to change the means by which we quantify that? That's why we have these committees every four years with the election of a new House of Assembly.

Now, the other thing I think is interesting here, and number 7 says talking about consulting with Members of the House of Assembly. I think that's of the utmost importance. Obviously, the last time I had an opportunity to speak with Judge Brazil, who headed up the last commission. At that point I had obviously a more limited perspective or view than I would have now. I was fairly new into it. I could only give you what I gathered in that short period of time. I could only talk about what I knew then.

Obviously, it's been almost four years since that time. You gather more knowledge, you see how it goes. I had the perspective, I've been on that side, I've been on this side, to see the requirements and the toll it takes, the work that you do. There are some Members who have been here a lot longer. There are some Members who have had both perspectives. There are a number of things.

That's why I think it's important that every Member is going to get an opportunity or should take the time to speak to this commission to pass on their experiences and what they've seen, because while this committee is obviously very experienced and very knowledgeable and very intelligent, there's nothing like the perspective of the person that's going through the position.

So whether you're brand new elected in this most recent election of November, or somebody that's been here for a significant number of years – three terms – we all have a perspective that we should provide to allow this committee to do the best job they can, which is to allow us to do the job we were elected to do and make

sure it's done in the best interests of taxpayers, because everything we do is with the money of taxpayers. We have to make sure that we can do the job but it has to be economically feasible and spent properly. I encourage all Members to take that opportunity to talk about their perspectives, their experiences thus far.

We talk about the different things, some of these – I would say to an urban Member who probably lives in the district and lives here in the area, it's a different perspective than when we look at under number seven, the accommodations or travel or living costs. Someone like myself goes through a different experience: hotel living. That's a whole different way of doing things. I have some opinions on that. I think there are ways that can allow us to do the job and spend taxpayers' money better. I think it can be done.

I've seen that where in many cases the cost – this is something actually that Yvonne Jones when she was here as the Opposition House Leader she spoke about four years ago and said you are living in a hotel all those nights. Maybe there's a way that we can have you here but not spend the cost of a hotel. Is that something – we have to find a way. But that's only done by talking to all of us, collectively, to figure what's the best way to do it.

MR. KENT: (Inaudible).

MR. A. PARSONS: The Member for Mount Pearl North has invited me to share his accommodations. I'm going to take a rain check on that one, Mr. Speaker, for right now, but I appreciate that.

The other thing too is we have to look at: How do they do it in the House of Commons? How do they do it in the other Legislatures? We have to look at it and see: What are the other perspectives that are taken? Someone like myself, I am willing and looking forward to passing on my perspective on this. It is something that I've done for five years now, packing up and going back and forth. I have a perspective on that that I will pass forward.

There are a whole range of things here. It doesn't happen now; we've changed this. But one example is that previously, before our time – again, I'll use the former member for Cartwright

– L'Anse au Clair, Ms. Yvonne Jones. She'd be driving home, might get caught in a snowstorm. She actually had to call the Speaker of the time and ask if she was allowed permission to get a hotel because she was stuck in a snowstorm. That wasn't accommodated, that wasn't allowed in the rules, and that's obviously not a common sense application. Maybe it wasn't considered, so that was something brought here, brought in, changed and we have that.

Now certainly I've had that myself – I think a lot of Members have been stuck going back and forth. The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune has a long distance to travel for her, so she has some experiences as well.

These are things where, over time, we can change these rules. We don't change the fact that it's not about doing anything to be less accountable. It's about making it more of a common sense application, something they may not have considered. It's no different in many cases than legislation which we sit here in this House and we debate, and say the legislation was drafted at a particular time for a particular reason, but over the passage of time things may change. How do we change it to make it better? In this case, this is what this committee is going to do.

It goes on here, Mr. Speaker. What it comes down to is that this committee is going to do the work to make sure that taxpayers' money is spent. It's one thing for us to sit here and determine what's the best way to approach this? What's the best way? How should we be paid? That's an awkward situation for us to be in.

I don't think anybody in this House wants to do that, nor should we. That's why this commission is going to come in and do this. It's independent and it's something that – there's a lot of stuff that happens in this House that's partisan by nature or adversarial in many ways, but in this case there are 40 Members who are equal. It has to be treated equally. That's why an independent committee will look at it as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think I have any other points to make on this. I think the Members opposite are going to speak to this now. Certainly, both Members have been here longer

than I and will have an opportunity to add insight that I don't have. I look forward to that.

What I would suggest to members of the public that may be listening or may be watching, if you do have questions on this process or if you do have concerns or queries, that's what we're here for. You can ask those questions. I've had people ask me that question and we can refer them to the proper documentation online.

That's why this House is televised. That's why everything is done – televised so people can see it and it's documented. You can go online and get it. So if people do have questions, I think you should ask those questions and we'll certainly try our best to answer.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to stand here and speak to this. I look forward to the comments of my colleagues across the way and hopefully the passage of this resolution so this committee can begin their work, which will be done in the best interests of people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

It's a pleasure to get up and speak to this resolution. I'm not going to repeat all of the summary that the Government House Leader had referred to; however, all his points I think are, for the most part, valid to the motion and the reasons for doing this.

We do remember – and I'm sure most everyone in the province does remember the days of the Green report, the reason for the Green report and the work that Justice Green had done to change how business was done in the House and the administrative backroom operations in many respects of the House, and how MHAs are compensated and how their costs are reimbursed, and how that works and what the rules are about that. It was a signification change through Justice Green.

I got elected in 2010 and even to this day, my office and I quite regularly will reference the manuals, or from time to time will contact you or your staff and seek clarification on a matter if it be someone had called us looking for an opportunity to advertise or support, through public advertising in a newspaper or a bulletin or program, which we can do under the legislation, but sometimes we look for clarification to make sure: Is this within the rules? How do we make sure we're following the rules and we stay within those rules?

So the interpretation – and I think the Member opposite referenced this – as times change, technology changes, opportunities change as well that the rules have to change to be flexible with them. Sometimes I know that has been a challenge for Members as well, especially from the advertising point of view.

The goal of it is so people know who their MHA is, who their elected Member is, how they can contact and reach out and get a hold for their elected Member when they need to and how they can contact that elected Member when they need to. There are provisions for that in the legislation.

The last report was done in 2012 by Judge Jackie Brazil, who acted independently. She references salaries – the Member asked about salaries – and she had highlighted the fact that they were rolled back in 2009. In 2009, there was a rollback to, I think, around 2007 and prior levels, and that's much were they stay today.

She referenced in her report of how she travelled around the province. She did public consultations in St. John's and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, in Corner Brook, in Grand Falls-Windsor and Clarendville. She travelled the province and she had very little uptake from the general public.

She also referenced that was a similar response to what other provinces had experienced. Other provinces as well said that while people quite often express an opinion on the salaries or benefits received by elected members, she said that as other provinces did similar kinds of processes, there was very little uptake to that.

So I would encourage the public who have an interest in this when this process gets underway, that they do take the time to write the commission, the MCRC, express their views and give rationale for that because they're looking for not just someone who says they're good for nothing or they're really good or – on this side of the House, you generally hear they're really good, but you don't generally hear that on the other side too much these days.

The salaries are all the same for all Members, no matter what side of the House you're on. I encourage the public to do that. I encourage the public to have thought-out and meaningful dialogue or input into the process and those who are considering it. I mean that in all sincerity.

The Member opposite mentioned that he participated in the process last time in 2012. Most of our Members who are sitting in our caucus today, we did as well. I remember meeting with Judge Brazil and discussing many areas of our roles, our lives, the impact, salaries and benefits and so on.

If you look in the House here, there's such a diversity of backgrounds from people elected. Quite often, the work that the commission does will reflect well, what do we need to do to make sure that we have good people who are interested in politics, to get good women and good men throughout the province to run for politics? It is tough to do that. I know the Members opposite, I'm sure they would agree that seeking candidates, good candidates to run and stand for their party is a lot of work. It's a lot of work to do that to entice people because many people say today why would I want to do that because of the public scrutiny that quite often happens, because of the criticism, your life becomes an open book, I've said before.

So we have to make sure that we have a process in place and an opportunity in place that people can come in here, they can effect change, they can represent their constituents, they can speak on behalf of their constituents, they can do so while still having a private life, or somewhat of a private life, but also so that we have those quality people that we attract to come here to do that.

That's what it's about and you get compensated for your expenses. There are a lot of expenses in the work that we do and that there's fair compensation for those expenses. That's what this does. That's what this review commission does. It looks at a number of areas in salaries, allowances, severance payments, pensions as well to be part of the review and laid out specifically in this one as well, that be reviewed.

But also, as the Member referred to under number seven, that it look at accommodations for Members and travel, living allowances and so on. As a Member was saying, one time a member had to contact – I think he said he had to contact the Speaker's office to say I'm stuck in a snow storm, why do I do? The Member here behind me who travels long distances on a weekly basis, I think it's about an eight-hour drive on a Friday to get home and an eight-hour drive on Sunday to get back, quite often needs to go back to her district, has meetings arranged while she's there. That's part of the job that rural MHAs quite often have. You're here in the House during the week. When you get back to your districts on the weekends while the House is open, you work throughout the weekend, you meet with constituents, it uses up a lot of your time on the weekend, quite often it impacts that time, the little bit of amount of time you have with your families and so on, and come back again.

Members who live in the greater St. John's area or the capital region, as its referred under the House of Assembly, I think it's easier for us to do a bit of both. We can do district events and so on during the week and in the evenings and also on the weekends, and there's a big difference. I would say, Mr. Speaker, that I have the opportunity to go home every night – unless we're here for a filibuster. I get to go home in the nighttime to my own home and my own family, where rural Members quite often, they don't get to do that. Many of them spend hundreds of nights in hotels during a term of office.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the Government House Leader will get a chance to speak again or not – I'm not sure if he does or not – but if does, I would ask him, maybe, if he can explain to the House – I didn't hear him reference it in his comments – that the appointment we're doing

today requires that the compensation review commission, appointed under this resolution, must report to the Speaker on its recommendations within 120 days of appointment.

Now, while we're doing the appointment today, the resolution also indicates that the appointment won't be effective until July. Maybe the Government House Leader could comment on that, if he gets a chance, and I'll remind him again before I finish up to see if he can reference that.

One of the problems is, come July, I would anticipate the House will no longer be sitting and probably the group that that will be consulted more than any other segment of our population will be Members of the House. If they don't become effective or start their work until July, I think it's quite conceivable to expect that Members will be gone back to their districts by July, people will be back in their own districts by July, and it will be much more difficult and challenging for the Members' Compensation Review Committee to actually meet with elected Members of the House.

Then they have 120 days to report, and the motion goes on to say that they'll report by November 4, which is, generally speaking, before the House reconvenes in the fall. So I'll ask the Government House Leader, maybe he can comment on that. So just outline for him to make sure that he understands what I'm asking if he gets a chance to get up again, the appointment is not effective until July 7, effectively after the House no longer will be sitting. It will make it much more challenging for members of the committee to meet with Members of the House of Assembly. They'll have 120 days to report by November 4, and likely before the House of Assembly sits again. So maybe the Member opposite can explain to the House why the delay in the effectiveness of the appointment.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned, and I'll mention again, the importance for all Members to participate in this process, because we all have different circumstances that brought us here. As we considered and thought about running for public office, some people here have considered it and thought about it – it has been on their

mines their entire lives, about running for public office.

I remember when the Minister of Transportation spoke in his maiden speech, and he talked about it. He talked about where he was and the point of his life. He talked about the years where he thought about it. He talked about where he is in his life today, and his family and his grandchildren, and the impacts on him giving up what he had going on in his life at the time to come here to the House is different from other Members of the House. We are all different.

I think it's important for Members to participate in a process, to have a discussion with the committee and sit down and – I remember when I met with Judge Brazil. When I sat with her, one of the first things she said to me was: Paul, what I'm going to do is I'm going to make everybody's comments to be independent but also I'm not disclosing your personal circumstances to anybody.

I remember reading through her report in 2012-2013. I think it was November or December of 2012 that she actually tabled her report – November it was. I remember reading through the report, and she was very careful not to identify Members' individual circumstances. She did it in a way whereby people could appreciate the point that was being made without being able to identify who the particular MHA was or what their particular circumstance was, but I was quite comfortable in discussing my own circumstances in some detail. As a matter of fact, she asked a lot of questions about it. She was quite interested to know. I'm glad she did it that way, and I'm sure this new commission will do the same.

We support the nominees: Sandra Burke, Kathy LeGrow and Jeffrey Pardy. Our caucus will be fully there to assist them and do what we can to accommodate them as they go through the role.

The Government House Leader as well, he was talking about the timing. The last report timing was very similar. It was appointed in April, and the report was submitted by Judge Brazil in November of 2012 – appointed in late April. She started her work very quickly, if I remember correctly. I could stand to be corrected on that, but she started her work, did her work and

submitted her report in November. So the timeline for this one would be similar, only that there's a delay in why the appointment would become effective.

I'm not sure if the act requires that, other than the motion requires it. That they report within 120 days but it not start effectively until July 7. There may be a benefit to starting now, where the committee could meet with MHAs and so on that may not be available during July or August to come back into the House of Assembly for the purpose of meeting with the commission, or travelling to one of the areas where I'm sure they will do public meetings and public consultation sessions.

Mr. Speaker, that's my conclusion. We'll be supporting the motion. We support the process and the reason for it.

We know this is done every General Assembly. Every time there's an election – I think it's six months after the election – it's required that we do this.

In this case, we're doing it within six months after the election; however, the delay in the appointment is the only question I have. I'm not sure that was the intent of the process to just bring the motion before the House within six months, but also to enact and have the committee working within six months. This resolution is to delay that. I'm sure the Government House Leader will explain that to us.

Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm happy to stand and speak today to this resolution. As has been pointed out by the Government House Leader, I'm one of the longer standing or sitting Members in the House – not the longest, I defer to the Speaker – but I am one. So this is my third time speaking to this similar resolution.

I was in the House when the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* was put in place. As a matter of fact, my very first summer as leader of my party, which was the summer of 2006, I was not yet elected as an MHA. That didn't happen until November 2006 for the first time in a by-election.

The summer of 2006, I was the leader of my party and working as the leader of my party. In actual fact, I got in on the consultations with Judge Green. He respected my position as leader of the party, though I wasn't elected, and was able to sit and have a chat with him about the work that he was doing. That was great that I was able to do that. I was part then, of the legislation when we took the act that he actually wrote with the staff that worked with him, and brought and approved that here in the House of Assembly.

This is extremely important. One of the things that a lot of people, even in our own province, and especially in Canada, don't realize is because of the act that came in after the work done by Chief Justice Green, we have one of the most open and accountable Legislatures in the country.

As was pointed out by the Government House Leader, everything we do is open. The money we spend is all accounted for publicly. People can get the information they need to get to know how we are spending the public money, how we are spending for the good of the people of the province and how we operate. The decisions that we make in the House Management Commission are public decisions. We are accountable on a level that is not seen in many of the Legislatures in this country. I think we should be proud of that and I think we should let it be known more widely and more openly.

Sometimes we'll hear of something happening in another Legislature and I sit and I think, they should be reading our legislation. They need to do the kind of cleaning up of the house that we did. Obviously, we did it under duress in the sense that we had a major issue here in our House of Assembly that forced us to recognize that we needed to look at how things were run and we needed to clean up that House and that's what happened. We will continue to do that.

So this thing of having an external body, an external group – it could be an individual as it was the last time in 2011. An external look at who we are as Members and at our compensation, whether we're talking about our salaries, whether we're talking about our pensions, whether we're talking about our accommodations when Members of the House of Assembly are in the St. John's region for when the Legislature is open, whether we're talking about getting compensation for travel that we do as MHAs, having to go to other parts of the province and sometimes outside of the province to do the work that we've been elected to do, that all of that is looked at by this committee.

I think it is extremely important that, again, we let the people of the province know that this is not done everywhere else in the country. In actual fact, before 2011 – well, before the act was put in place we didn't do it either. It was an internal committee. It wasn't called the House management committee then. It had a different name, the internal economy committee, which was an in-house committee of MHAs who made all those decisions privately. Now we do it completely openly. We are out there for people to see and we have this external committee, and I'm really glad that we're back to a committee. Judge Brazil did a great job, but I feel like it's much better to have more than one head looking at stuff when we're talking about this kind of thing. So having a committee of three, I think, is a really good way to go.

It's a sharing of wisdom, a sharing of observations and I thank the government for consulting with us, letting us know who they were proposing to be on this committee. I think we do have three people who have the expertise that we need.

Now one other thing I'd like to talk about before I go on to talking to the role of the people of the province. One of the things that's in the review this time that I think is very important is that the committee is asked to "review and make recommendations regarding the additional salary provisions for positions identified in subsection 12(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*."

There was a point in time earlier this year, some months ago, when there was public debate about these positions, positions like the party Whip or the Chair of the caucus. The legislation allows for a number of positions. I think it's extremely important that this committee is asked to review and make recommendations regarding the additional provisions for positions identified in the section in the House that refers to them.

A lot of that work doesn't get seen. It's work that's over and above what – not every MHA is doing that work, so it is extra work. I said publicly when this issue was raised earlier in the year that if this were to come before the House Management Commission, the issue of what the different positions are and what individuals in those positions receive that I would be totally open to having a discussion about that legislation.

I will be, and I'm sure the rest of us in the House will be too, open to sitting and talk with the Review Committee when they meet with us and I, too, encourage, as the Government House Leader did, that we all take advantage of sitting down and meeting with the Review Committee and discuss with them everything that we observe, everything that we experience; and one of the things would be, very importantly, these positions are named in our act and if people have views on those positions, whether it's those of us in the House of Assembly or whether it's the general public, well this is the time to make those views known.

I think that's what I want to say to the people of the province as well as to ourselves, but especially the people of the province. This is the time for you, if you have observations to make about the remuneration that MHAs receive, whether it's in terms of salaries or whether it's in terms of pension or accommodations when people are in the St. John's area or whether it's reimbursement for expenses, no matter what it is, we need to have that out. Whether people do it in person or whether they do it in writing, I really encourage them to make their views known. Don't wait until it's all over and say well, here's what I think. Put it out. If you do it in writing – maybe you don't want to sit down and face the Review Committee, well do it in writing, but the opportunity would be there.

I really do encourage the government – I'm not sure to whom the committee will be speaking with when they start their work. I know the services of the House of Assembly will be there for them in doing the work, but I think it's going to be really important this time because I was a bit disappointed the other times in terms of the advertising that was done with regard to the public consultations. I think the committee will need to be certain that they are using every logical form of media they can to advertise. Especially now – the Government House Leader talked about how times change. Well, times change – even though the last one was only four years ago, the use of Facebook and twitter now it way beyond where it was four years ago.

So the use of social media in terms of advertising the public consultations, the use of public service announcements, the use of the local papers as well, but we can no longer think that when something is put in a local paper now that that's enough for advertising. It just isn't anymore. I think it would be really important for the committee to make sure that every form of the common media that are now used should be used in advertising the consultations so that people really, if they don't turn up, then it won't be because it wasn't advertised well. I think that's really, really important.

One of the things coming back to the directions that are being given to the committee, one of the things that the Government House Leader mentioned and that I would like to reiterate is how important it is now for a review and recommendations around the intra-constituency allowance for each district. For people who don't know, that means that when we travel within our districts and we travel in and out of our districts there's gas, there's mileage involved, there are accommodations involved sometimes – not all the time, sometimes a trip can happen within a day – there are meals involved, and now that we have 40 electoral districts rather than 48, we do have some really large districts in the rural areas of the province.

It doesn't make a difference here in St. John's – we went from eight districts down to seven, but that really doesn't affect our work very much in terms of cost. Probably doesn't affect it all, actually, in terms of cost. Some of the rural districts have become much, much larger and we

do need to see changes there, and I hope people will understand that. There has to be allowance made for the different sizes now of the rural districts, and I'm glad that the committee is being asked to review that and to make recommendations.

Again, those recommendations are coming, not from us, not from the House of Assembly, because what we did before, as I'm sure what we'll do again, we took the recommendations and we passed them, the recommendations of Judge Brazil and then the recommendations of the committee before because we're trusting them to be listening to us, to be listening to the public, and to use their own wisdom in coming up with a decision.

The first committee, for example, cut back the salaries of the MHAs. That was passed by us here in the House of Assembly. We accepted that and we passed it. So it's an open process, it's a transparent process, but also we all have to take responsibility, both us, as well as the general public, that if we have observations, if we have concerns, that we make them known, that we meet with the panel either in person or in writing. But it is something that doesn't exist everywhere, and I encourage the general public in particular to recognize this is a real opportunity they have but it's like voting. It's also part of the democratic process and they have a responsibility. I encourage them to look at it that way, not as a heavy thing on their shoulders, but this is a privilege. It's a privilege and a responsibility to be able to come out to this panel and to make their views known.

So, I think that's all I want to say, Mr. Speaker.

Oh, one other thing. I think we'll probably get an explanation from the Government House Leader and the minister on this. It was a point that was raised by the Opposition House Leader. Just a little bit of an explanation that we're going to need with regard to the appointment being effective on July 7, which is eight months since the election. Right now we're going to pass the bill, and we're passing the bill within six months of the election, which is what the legislation asks for, that the committee be appointed within six months of the general election. So we're passing the bill within six months but the work of the

committee doesn't begin until July. The bill is saying that's when the appointment is effective.

Then, the report is supposed to be made within 120 days of the appointment. The WHEREAS that talks about the report, has the report coming out 120 days after July 7. My question is if July 7 is the appointment, then that is eight months since the general election. We're going to have to look at how to get this worded or understood in a way that we know exactly – all I'm saying is we need to have it done within the legality of the legislation.

Right now, I think we have two different definitions almost of when the appointment is. I think the Government House Leader knows that. As Minister of Justice, I'm sure his legal mind is already working on this. So I just add that. It was one of the things I had picked up.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible).

MS. MICHAEL: One of the things I had picked up, as well as the Opposition House Leader.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, thank you.

I heard some good-natured heckling from the Opposition there as the Member spoke. The point raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member St. John's East – Quidi Vidi is certainly a good one.

As has been consistent in the past, in this case the work will begin July 7. That's a scheduling issue with the members of the committee which we have seen in the past; however, the appointment was to be effective today, to take into the fact the six months. So we have seen that in the past where the appointment is done so you can be within the six months, but the work is going to start July 7 which is going to give you the 120 days. There is a precedent for that, I've been told, with prior committees, which I think actually there are Members of this House that have sat on prior committees to do this work.

I'll certainly check with House staff to see if we need to amend that to be within the legislation. I think I've gotten across the point and I hope that's satisfactory. It's a good point to be made that the wording here – if one were just to read this as it is, sometimes the intent is different than what comes out on the writing.

What I would also say, the Leader of the Official Opposition passed comment about the timing and the work. So two points I would make to that is that this is actually not uncommon, as it's been done in the past, to have work going on during the summer. In fact, I never met in person with Judge Brazil. I met on the telephone with Judge Brazil.

I know most of us are in our districts during the summer. If a phone call comes, you'll get just as much done by a phone call, and I would also suggest that it's probably more economical to do it via telephone call to get those points across. If you happen to be in the vicinity of the committee, then obviously take that opportunity to sit down with the committee. I'm sure that's what everybody wants. I hope we're not going to – again I certainly won't be incurring expense, myself, to go and travel and sit down or have a committee travel to me.

What I think is important, though, is as we've seen in the past, that the committee has a chance to hear from the public too. That's obvious. It's like everything we do, you don't want to do it so that people don't have a chance to consult, but also you have to be within the confines, the financial constraints that are obviously reasonable.

In the case of Members, I sat down; I can distinctly remember it, being sat in my office in Port aux Basques. I had a pretty lengthy phone call with Judge Brazil. I sat down and had a chat. I certainly felt that I wasn't disadvantaged by not meeting in public. I think that would be the same for Members with the committee, we'll say, the three people.

I'm glad actually to hear the comment – I really appreciated the comments by the Member opposite when she talked about the fact that a different perspective with three individuals may bring some strengths that maybe one doesn't have. That's nothing against Judge Brazil, not at

all. As someone who sat through three different ones now, I think the variety of opinions and perspectives by three individuals offers certain strengths with it. I'm looking forward to that.

Unless there are any questions by anybody opposite I'll sit down, and I think the Member opposite will have a –

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

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

Maybe the minister could respond to this. I sort of hinted at it when I talked about the use of media. There was one point I forgot to mention, too. That is I do have a concern about the consultations for the public happening over the summer.

Will any direction around things like that with regard to the advertising, also the timing of consultations – because even if you advertise as much as you want, if the consultations are in August that's a time when an awful lot of people go on holiday. So I'm just wondering about the directions that will be given.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: I think (a) it's a valid point raised by the Member opposite, but (b) it would not be up to a government or anybody to provide the direction to the committee. I think this is an opportunity for Members to express – I think the committee is going to hear that loud and clear. So I get the point, but it would not be proper or regulated for me to suggest how they should go about doing their business. The committee will do it.

I'm sure, though, that during this process they'll hear from Members opposite saying – and they'll hear from us, but as an MHA not as a government minister, not as somebody providing direction. I'm going to provide my opinion.

Again, I'm not trying to be – I don't want to be providing direction here because I don't think

that's appropriate, but I do appreciate the opinion put forward.

I think the Clerk, as well as – I don't know if the Speaker, but the Clerk and the House of Assembly will make sure that – I don't think resourcing will be an issue. I'm sure the committee will do what they feel is necessary to get the wide variety of opinions they're able to get by using media that may not have been accessible in prior years.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Against?

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Before I move on, I'd just like to thank Members opposite for their contribution to that resolution because it is an important one to the House. So thank you for that.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the following heads of expenditure: (1) Contingency Reserve; (2) Consolidated Fund Services; (3) the following activities of the Executive Council including the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, Office of the Executive Council, Intergovernmental Affairs, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, and the Legislature.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, if I'm allowed, I would move, with the agreement of all parties, that for the purpose of debate in Committee of the Whole on Supply, we forgo the traditional

process of debate in this House and instead revert to the process that we use in the Estimates Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and I do now leave the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dempster): Order, please!

We are now doing Contingency Reserve, Consolidated Fund Services, the following activities of the Executive Council: The Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01; Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 inclusive, 2.2.05 through 2.4.01 inclusive; Intergovernmental Affairs, 2.5.01 and 2.5.02; and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, 2.6.01 through 2.6.04 inclusive.

We're going to start with the Opposition House Leader, the Member for Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I could, I'll start with the contingency reserve. Minister, that's under Newfoundland and Labrador Consolidated Revenue Fund, Summary of Cash Requirements. Just if you give me an explanation on that line item, what actually the contingency reserve is, what is the purpose, and when will it be used?

MS. C. BENNETT: Just for clarity, for those watching at home, the discussion we're going to have now with this portion of Committee of the Whole is we're going to follow the same process we would have in Estimates. And just for the benefit of those Members who are in the House

maybe for the first time experiencing this discussion in this format, I want to also point out for the Members opposite that officials who would normally be in the Legislature during Estimates when we're in Committee, obviously are not here as part of this, but they are outside.

As has been the practice in the past with a number of ministers, if there is a question the Members opposite have that I'm unable to answer from the materials I have in front of me, officials are ready and willing to be able to provide some additional information through the technology we can use in the House. So I just wanted to let everybody know that.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: I also wanted to say thank you to the officials who are sitting outside and waiting for the questions that may come up that I'm unable to answer.

Back to the question around contingency fund, this amount of money being voted on is in the sum of \$30 million. The contingency reserve has been used in the past to provide for expenditures that could not be foreseen or would not be provided for in the Legislature. So this contingency fund would be for things that would be unanticipated. For example, natural disasters, if there was an emergency crisis, as sadly residents in Fort McMurray have been experiencing in their community, this would allow us as a government to be able to have a fund that we could use for that.

Just to provide some additional information, the federal government and several other provinces use reserves as a prudence measure. This is in contrast to practices under the former administration. They didn't necessarily have a budget line in there for this. It wasn't in there in the past.

The use of this fund so that everybody in the House understands – I want to make sure the Members opposite can hear; I know there's some chatter going on in the House and I'm sensing that the Members opposite can't hear.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible)

MS. C. BENNETT: Okay, I want to make sure that you can hear me.

CHAIR: Order, please!

As we go through this process today, can I ask Members for their co-operation to try to keep the noise down a little bit because it's like Estimates but it's in the Chamber now with the Members, so it's a little bit more challenging to hear?

Thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: The \$30 million vote for contingency reserve would be used for what would be unforeseen circumstances. There is a process that has been long established as part of the *Financial Administration Act* and other acts governing budget expenditures. This fund will be fully transparent and only used when urgently needed.

The use of this fund requires Lieutenant Governor in Council approval and would be based upon the advice of Treasury Board. It's use would require that any provision or use of the \$30 million would be tabled in the House of Assembly within three days of the approval, or where the House of Assembly was not sitting it shall be tabled as if it were a report of an officer of the House under section 19.1 of the House of Assembly Act.

Just for clarity, any drawdown on this amount, it would be recommended by Treasury Board, would require Lieutenant Governor in Council approval and then would have to be tabled in this House to provide transparency and visibility into that amount.

Contingency reserve has been used in the past. It was last used in 2001-2002. I believe the dollar amount at the time was \$10 million, and in 2000-2001 the amount that was used was \$30 million. So it is not unusual for this particular amount to be kept in reserve as part of the budget and it would allow, as I said earlier, for unforeseen expenditures that would be a result, as an example a natural disaster or something that would be absolutely unforeseen as part of the budgeting process.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thanks, Minister.

Just to confirm, this line item hasn't appeared in the budget, I think you said, since 2001-2002?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, my understanding is that it was last used in 2001-2002. At that time, it was \$10 million. It was also used in 2000-2001, and at that time it was \$30 million.

It is considered to be a prudent practice to have a contingency amount in your budget for unforeseen circumstances. Obviously, the expectation is that the Public Accounts report at the end of the fiscal year that we spend the money we've budgeted for. So if you have any circumstances where you have an unforeseen expense, you have to have a way to be able to cover that expense during the year and that's what the contingency reserve is for.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thanks, Minister.

Just to your point, you mention an example of a natural disaster. Would there be an opportunity during the year where it could be related to funding some operation or activity in the province, some partnership, where you would go to Treasury Board and ask for that transfer to be made, or is it only for things like a natural disaster?

MS. C. BENNETT: The intention with the contingency reserve is to use it for unforeseen situations, situations that have not been anticipated as part of the budget process, and it is to be also fully transparent with the House. According to the approval process, once it is approved that the money would be used for a particular purpose.

We would be required – I would come into the House as the Minister of Finance, if the House is open, and present within three days of the expenditure being approved that we would actually draw down on the contingency reserve. So the transparency around the \$30 million would certainly be very visible to the House of Assembly.

Some other examples that might be unforeseen, maybe to expand on the natural disasters; it could be if there was an unanticipated increase in caseloads that we hadn't anticipated, if there were impacts on communities somehow that we didn't know was going to happen, and I use the

situation of what's going on in Alberta right now with Fort McMurray. Those types of things would be examples that I would consider to be unforeseen.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, thank you.

The other one I'd like to move to now is – there's reference to \$125 million Revenue Risk Adjustment. This number is in the Statement of Operations in the Budget Speech. It's also contained in Statement I, page 2 of the Budget Speech document; however, the number itself is not in the Estimates. Could you explain why the revenue risk adjustment would not be displayed in the Estimates?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes. The risk adjustment number that we discussed as part of the Budget Speech was in the context of the seven-year plan that we had presented as part of the budget to bring us back to surplus. So the intent is to provide a prudence figure in case there are changes to revenue as we look to create this in our seven-year plan.

This budget is only one year of that seven-year plan to get back to surplus. Unlike what happened in the last budget process where in the last budget that was prepared by the former administration there was a – I believe it was a \$150 million amount that was actually removed from expenses, as opposed to budgeting a prudence amount on the revenue side.

If there is something that happens with oil price, with production, with the US dollar that further impacts the revenue line, it provides transparency to the market as to where over the next – the seven-year target gives a little bit more flexibility on the revenue line.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Minister, just to be clear, the \$125 million is that for the seven years or is it actually an annual amount that will be allocated if required?

MS. C. BENNETT: It's a revenue risk adjustment. So we're only voting on the expenditures as it relates to Estimates. That amount is built into our fiscal plan as a revenue risk number. It's not built into Estimates because it's not actually an expense.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I guess it's a line item you have built in and you'll draw down if need be?

MS. C. BENNETT: No, it's a line item that we put into a seven-year fiscal plan. So it's not an Estimates number. It's not an expense number. It's a prudence number that as we forecasted when we thought was reasonable to share with the people of the province and share with other interested stakeholders which would include the markets, et cetera, it was a prudence number that said we are anticipating in our plan on our revenue side an amount that would cover any changes in revenue. Estimates process is about expenditures and a prudence number in a revenue forecast is unrelated to the Estimates. So it's not part of the budget process.

It's not part of the formal Estimates process. It is part of the seven-year plan that we would have presented to the people of the province and certainly the lenders to let them know that we were providing some risk associated with the volatility of the revenue that the province receives from offshore oil royalties.

MR. HUTCHINGS: So in having it used as a prudence number, would you have that set up for each of the seven years of your plan?

MS. C. BENNETT: It's an annual amount in the seven years. It's to provide flexibility in the revenue number. It's not built into the budget process, as I said earlier, because what we're talking about through Estimates and in the Committee of the Whole are the actual expenditures.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, sure.

MS. C. BENNETT: So it's not really something we're spending, it's a number that when we communicate a seven-year plan on the revenues we're getting in, the expenses we're sending out, it's an amount of money that we anticipate we need to be careful about because we are not sure where the revenues are going to go.

I mean, in the last week we've seen oil prices move up significantly in a two-day period because of what happened in Fort McMurray and then the next day, we saw oil prices drop because there was a change in leadership in

Saudi Arabia. So because so much of our revenue is volatile, we felt that it was prudent, as we put a plan in place to get back to surplus, that we include an amount on the revenue side because the oil royalty revenue, as history has proven, has been so volatile.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Indeed.

Just a final question: With that number of \$125 million if it's not required on the revenue side, will it still proceed for future years and still be there as part of the requirement as a prudence number?

MS. C. BENNETT: I want to be clear. The budget that we are voting on is the expenses and the spending that government undertakes. The \$125 million risk adjustment that you're speaking about is a number that we have put into a fiscal forecast. So when we show the bond rating agencies and the people of the province a path to surplus, it demonstrates that we are understanding that oil royalties and other income that's based on commodity pricing can be volatile for a province such as ours that has a significant amount of money coming in related to volatile commodity prices or production issues, or US dollar impacts.

When I had the opportunity to review this with the bond rating agencies, as well as, in particular, the banks, it was considered to be a prudent approach in the fiscal plan, but it doesn't have anything to do with the spending. It's related to a forecast for revenue. It's related to the money that we are forecasting we will collect over the next seven years, and it is not related to the expenditures that we're talking about today. It's related to the long-term fiscal plan.

I'm not sure if that clarifies it for the Member opposite.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, good.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Okay.

Now seeing the clock, we'll move over to the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

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

Minister, I'm going to go to line items, starting with the Premier's Office. It's section 2.1.01, and I'll give you time to get your papers there.

Under Salaries, there was a big drop between the budget last year and the revised figure; \$518,400 more was spent, and this year we're back down to \$1.5 million, which is closer to what was budgeted last year. Could we have an explanation for that increase last year?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

The increase in the Salaries in the Premier's Office from the original budget last year reflect –

MS. MICHAEL: One thing has to happen, Madam Chair – I'm sorry, if there is speaking – I actually have a hearing problem and if there's speaking going on I can't hear; when there's no speaking I can hear clearly.

CHAIR: Order, please!

Could we have co-operation from the Members to keep the side conversations down as we move through this Estimates process here?

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

AN HON. MEMBER: Madam Chair, I was wondering what heading we're on.

CHAIR: 2.1.01.

MS. C. BENNETT: The amount of \$518,400 reflects an overrun due to severance costs as a result of staff changes from the former administration to the current administration. That was also offset by vacancy savings within the office. That explains the \$518,400.

MS. MICHAEL: Severance costs, how many employees was that for, Minister?

MS. C. BENNETT: I'll have to get the officials to give me the exact number, but it would have been for – I'm guessing, everybody that would have been in the office before the election compared to everybody who wasn't in there.

MS. MICHAEL: Understood. Okay.

The variation from the estimate this year and last year's estimated budget, is that a vacancy or a position gone?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes. The variation from last year's budget to this year's budget is actually the removal of funding associated with the direction that parliamentary assistants are no longer paid, and that parliamentary assistants would no longer receive departmental funding.

To answer your previous question, there would have been eight employees that would have received severance as a result of the election.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

Coming down to 2.2.01, under Professional Services, \$120,000 was budgeted, \$2,180,200 was the revision and then this year it's down to \$12,600. So I guess an explanation of what came under Professional Services and why it was \$2.1 million last year.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

That overrun of \$2 million, from what I understand, relates to the Lower Churchill oversight committee that the former administration would have had in place. As we discussed in the Finance Estimates, Finance now holds a block for that going forward and we'll be transferring that into Cabinet Secretariat as needed.

This also includes monies that were spent on a HR policy review. You'll remember that the former administration had to complete a report on harassment in the workplace. Also, this would have included some of the initial costs associated in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year related to the Government Renewal Initiative expenses.

MS. MICHAEL: Right. Minister, when such a large sum of money was expended and not really planned for, did that have to come from outside of the budget that had been approved for the Cabinet Secretariat do you know?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question.

The expenses that are booked here under the \$2 million were the ones that I just referenced.

MS. MICHAEL: No, no, I realize that. My question is when a line item like that has to go up so significantly, because it was only \$120,000 that was estimated – that was the budget estimate, \$120,000. Then when the line item had to go up by more than \$2 million, did Cabinet Secretariat or the Premier's Office have to find that money within the budget that was already there?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yeah.

MS. MICHAEL: Or did that money come from outside of the budget?

MS. C. BENNETT: It would have come from Finance, and some would have come from OCIO and some from other areas in Cabinet Secretariat. So it would have been a transfer of activities into the Executive Support line of Cabinet Secretariat to be able to cover that.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MS. C. BENNETT: Because we're not allowed to spend more money than is approved in the House.

MS. MICHAEL: Well, that's why I'm asking, wondering how they get the money when it's such a large amount.

MS. C. BENNETT: Right.

MS. MICHAEL: On one level it's not a large amount, but for an individual budget it's a large amount.

MS. C. BENNETT: Right. So you would remember in the Finance Estimates when we spoke about – there was an amount of money there that we talked about that we would be transferring out this year.

MS. MICHAEL: Yes, I remember that.

MS. C. BENNETT: Next year you'll see that come up in Cabinet Secretariat when it's drawn down on and approvals.

MS. MICHAEL: When they draw down, right. Thank you.

Coming over to 2.2.02, under Salaries, last year the budget line was \$784,800. Then the revision was \$606,300. Now this year it's down by \$284,000 approximately. Can we have a breakdown of what's happened there?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure. The projected revised to '15-'16, that reflects savings from the 2015-2016 budget related to vacancies that weren't filled.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MS. C. BENNETT: The change down to \$500,000 reflects a reduction from the budget last year to this year related to savings from the Government Renewal Initiative.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. So those vacancies haven't been filled, I take it, so you have fewer positions.

MS. C. BENNETT: That's correct.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay.

How many, Minister, please?

MS. C. BENNETT: I will check with officials to see if they can provide the details as we go through and I'll get the answer for you.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry, they're already on it. That would be three positions.

MS. MICHAEL: Three.

Thank you.

Your staff are following closely.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, they are.

MS. MICHAEL: Under 2.2.03, just beneath that one, probably a similar answer but the variation from the budget to the projected revision. There's a big jump but then this year we're back up to almost what the budget was.

Could you explain what happened last year, please?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure. The difference of \$208,000 less than was budgeted last year reflects the fact that salaries weren't spent due to vacancies. The \$769,500 reflects a decrease in the budget, that's attributed to attrition targets. That's the difference from this year to last year.

MS. MICHAEL: It looks like there were no positions lost in this division.

MS. C. BENNETT: That's correct, but there could be a change in who is actually working the positions. So the combination of the salaries would have provided for a \$12,400 savings.

MS. MICHAEL: That's right. I understand.

Thank you.

2.3.01.

MS. C. BENNETT: I'm sorry, that was 2.3 –?

MS. MICHAEL: 2.3.01, the Communications Branch.

Both in Professional Services and in Purchased Services there are variations in both. So if you could just explain those two line items, please.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure. I'll start with Purchased Services.

Purchased Services, under the projected revised was \$142,500 less than budgeted. That reflected savings that were due to lower requirements, as well as the results of a discretionary spending freeze that we brought in in December.

The Purchased Services planned for this year's budget reflects a \$132,500 decrease over the last budget. That's related to the line by line review that we did through Estimates. Specifically, that line item pays for, my understanding, is things like media buys.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member is having difficulty hearing here. If you have sidebar conversations, can you take them outside the Chamber, please?

MS. C. BENNETT: That line item, my understanding from speaking to officials, is typically where there may be some media purchases. It was the decision of government, as we worked through the Estimates process to prepare the budget that we wanted to lower that amount of money. We thought it was fiscally prudent.

MS. MICHAEL: When you say media purchases, are you talking about advertising or media services?

MS. C. BENNETT: That would be some media, actually purchases.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. So advertising, marketing.

Okay, thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: The other item you asked about is the Professional Services. Professional Services, that amount of money is for the agency of record for the government. That contract would have been in place prior to our government being in place, and my understanding is that contract doesn't end until 2017. That would be what the dollar amount is associated with Professional Services.

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you.

I'll turn it back now; my time is up.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I could, minister, I have a question on term debt.

MS. C. BENNETT: Just to confirm, you are back in Consolidated Fund Services, right?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, sorry.

MS. C. BENNETT: No problem.

The heading number?

MR. HUTCHINGS: It's related to one of the appendixes. Appendix IV, Consolidated Revenue Fund Estimated Interest And Debt Retirement 2016-17.

CHAIR: What page are you on?

MR. HUTCHINGS: It's Appendix IV. It's in the back of the Estimates document.

CHAIR: Yes, is it the A-5.1?

MR. HUTCHINGS: A-4 is the page, and the appendix is IV.

MS. C. BENNETT: Okay. I think I'm on the same page.

MR. HUTCHINGS: It has the list of outstanding interest and debt retirement. I'm just inquiring – it indicates there are two bonds that are due in 2019.

MS. C. BENNETT: Right.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I'm just wondering, in your long-term forecast what's the plan in regard to 2019? Do you have a forecast to retire that debt at that point or would you roll it over? Do you have a plan at this time in terms of the fiscal management with them coming due?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yeah, the plan would be – because of the \$1.8 billion deficit we have this year, we need to continue to borrow based on the plans that have been in – the results of the fact that we're going to be short cash. As bonds come due, as Members opposite would, I'm sure, be aware of – if the province is unable to pay a lump sum down on the debt, which we don't anticipate we're going to do over the next number of years, we would have to re-establish –

MR. HUTCHINGS: Finance.

MS. C. BENNETT: – refinance that amount of money. So I guess that answers your question.

MR. HUTCHINGS: That's the plan. Yes, okay.

Thank you.

Minister, still with Consolidated Fund Services, Servicing of the Public Debt, 1.1.01, Temporary Borrowings.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I understand this allows for debt servicing costs, interest charges for using of line of credit. Is the line of credit still set at \$200 million, I think is the number that would be in this area?

MS. C. BENNETT: Under the Temporary – you’re talking, just to make sure I’m on the same page. It’s 1.1.01, Temporary Borrowings?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: This activity provides for the interest expense on the temporary bank borrowings by the province. So it would represent the interest costs on things like lines of credit or temporary shortfalls.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: Like the overdraft you might have on your chequing account, would be the best way to explain it.

MR. HUTCHINGS: So this would be to pay that interest, whatever is outstanding?

MS. C. BENNETT: On the –

MR. HUTCHINGS: Line of credit.

MS. C. BENNETT: On a credit line.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: So that credit line, what would that be now? Is that \$200 million or?

MS. C. BENNETT: I’ll get officials to message me the exact number.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, and maybe the interest rate on the credit line –

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, it would be.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Two hundred?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, 200.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Is that credit line in use now, or do you plan to use it going forward?

MS. C. BENNETT: The credit line is used for cash management.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: I’ll let officials let me know if it’s – it’s \$200 million, as you indicated, and we’ll get the – the interest rate depends, I guess, on the time we borrowed. I’m not sure there’s a fixed interest rate, but officials will let me know in a second.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

If I could move to the next heading, 1.1.02, Treasury Bills.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: What’s the current rate on the T-bill program right now? I think it was 0.75 of a per cent last year. Is that similar now?

MS. C. BENNETT: It depends on what the –

MR. HUTCHINGS: At the point in time?

MS. C. BENNETT: At the point in time and it depends on what the deal is, so to speak, when we actually do the deal.

On treasury bills, the amount of money that would have been in treasury bills towards the end of Q3 would have been substantial, as we’ve talked about in the House last year. We’ve been able to bring that borrowing back down to normal levels, as a result of the long-term borrowing we’ve been able to put in place.

MR. HUTCHINGS: It’s transferred over.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: Well, I’m not sure I’d use the term transferred over. To get long-term debt

is a significantly different effort and different risks associated with the cost.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yeah.

MS. C. BENNETT: But we've been able to move that into long-term debt.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: I think you were asking the rate on the credit line. It's 0.67 per cent. The 0.67 per cent, that's for T-bills, my apologies.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay. Last year, it was 0.75 per cent.

Thank you.

Short-term borrowing, Minister, if I can ask you in regard to that.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry, could you provide the heading, please?

MR. HUTCHINGS: I don't have an exact heading. I guess it's under Consolidated Fund Services, a general question in regard to short-term borrowing. I think there was an increase in the program of short-term borrowing to \$3.5 billion in January, if I remember correctly.

MS. C. BENNETT: Are you talking about the borrowing related to the *Loan Act* in last year's budget?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, the *Loan Act* that we put through here.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Has that balance been maxed at \$3.5 billion?

MS. C. BENNETT: The consolidated amount for the loan bills from last year's budget, in addition to the loan bill that we did in anticipation of the deficit this year, we have not used the full amount.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: We do expect in the next number of days we will be bringing in a revision

to the *Loan Act*, the one that we brought in early for this year. We will bring in the amount that we need to borrow for this year and make sure that is fully transparent to people in the province and, most importantly, to the people here in the House.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay. Thank you.

MS. C. BENNETT: Just for clarity, you mentioned a question about – I want to make sure I'm not confusing long-term borrowing with short term because I think that was where you started your question; you wanted to ask about Treasury Bills. Am I correct?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, that's correct.

MS. C. BENNETT: The treasury bill, normally, is about \$780 million. Last year, I can't speak to what happened before December 14, but I can say that we're in a situation where we had \$2.7 to \$2.8 billion, potentially in treasury bills. As I mentioned earlier, that's been brought back down to the normal range which is \$780 million.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay. Thank you.

Just a general question, in Estimates you indicated about entering the US markets. It has been a little while since we've done that – quite a while, actually, maybe in the '90s.

Just give thoughts on – is there increased risk, in your view, in going to the US and into that market, based on the exchange rate?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, there are increased costs associated. Part of the reason we would need to go to a borrowing program that would include US dollars is the fact there are capacity and competition issues in Canada for provincial bonds. So there has been a need to look at how we borrow the money we need to borrow, and do that outside of just the domestic market because of the cost of borrowing. So going into the US market will allow us the opportunity to continue to keep our interest rates low.

We have \$3.4 billion worth of borrowing to do as a result of this year's budget and decisions and requirements that we have to do. There will be costs associated with registering for being able to borrow in the US. Certainly, the US

dollar will provide an opportunity for us to make sure we have the expertise in-house and we are able to properly manage the borrowing through the US program to make sure it's the least risky that we can make it.

The opportunity to lower our interest rate costs by expanding where we borrow money is an important consideration because we have to look at continuing to provide every dollar, every penny we can into public services. As opposed to into interest rates that we continue to climb if we were in a smaller marketplace.

MR. HUTCHINGS: This is my final question before I move on. The US exchange-rate assumption, what would we be using for this year? What would our expectation be?

MS. C. BENNETT: Are you talking about on the revenue side or are you talking about the borrowing side?

MR. HUTCHINGS: The borrowing side.

MS. C. BENNETT: The borrowing – until there is an actual deal done for US dollars and we do an analysis of whether that deal makes sense for us, as a province, that's when we analyze the risk associated with that.

So you wouldn't have a forecast of US dollar impacts on borrowing because you'd assess that at the time you are going to do the deal.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: At this stage, we have not entered the US market.

MR. HUTCHINGS: So you're not in the market looking to finance right now, at this time?

MS. C. BENNETT: No, we're anticipating doing that later this year –

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: – but until we are registered and we have the correct things in place, as other provinces have in place, we are not currently in the US market. It is our intention that we will need, and expect that we will need

to move into the US market to provide an opportunity to keep interest rates down on the borrowing.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay. So in regard –

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry, you had asked me earlier – the credit line interest rate is prime less a half a per cent.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: The exchange assumptions we use as part of the budget – according to officials – is \$1.2965 CAD.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, that's the Canadian assumption, right?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, I won't have to ask you the next question, there you go.

Under the Consolidated Fund Services, the ones we were on page 1.3, 1.1.05, Temporary Investments. My understanding is this shows money the province generates in interest earnings.

In 2015-2016 –

MS. C. BENNETT: Sorry, just to make sure I'm on – you're at 1.1.05?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, that's where we were before.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, sorry.

MR. HUTCHINGS: We're at the bottom of the page there now, the Temporary Investments.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. HUTCHINGS: The 2015-2016 budget we see the numbers there in the revised and then it shoots up this year in the Estimates. Just explain to me, is that additional return on our investments? What exactly that is, the increase?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

The difference, which is \$4.849 million, is an increase in revenue. The estimate reflects the expectation that average cash balances are expected to be significantly higher than in the previous year.

Last year, cash balances were in the negative because the money wasn't on hand to actually pay the bills. So the borrowing will provide the cash on hand.

MR. HUTCHINGS: But that's not part of this. This is the return on your temporary investments, is it?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes. This is the cash balances. This would be based on the cash flows that we have throughout the year.

MR. HUTCHINGS: My question is: Why has it increased so much from last year to this?

MS. C. BENNETT: Part of it is that in '15-'16 the plan for cash flow management, in my opinion, was flawed and the number of 9.2 reflects more accurately the flow of cash and what's going to actually be in the bank.

As I said earlier, it's the expectation that the average cash balances will be expected to be significantly higher than they were in the previous year.

MR. BRAZIL: Minister, I'm just going to ask a few questions around some line items.

Under 1.1.06, the Consolidated Fund Services, I have a couple of questions there. I'll just give you a chance to get to that.

MS. C. BENNETT: That would be the Recoveries on Loans and Advances.

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, on interest, exactly.

Under revenues, the \$4,500, I'm just curious – and I had some conversations with the Minister of AES – is that in any way related to any student loan recovery interest?

MS. C. BENNETT: The decrease from the prior year was \$147,400 and the decrease in revenue is – the estimate relates to projected

interest from the Student Loan Corporation and only the Student Loan Corporation.

The 2016-17 estimate is lower than '15-'16 due to the regular quarterly repayments of the principal. So there's a declining principal balance and thereby that reduces the amount of interest revenue received.

For continuity, if you want to refer to the schedule in 1.2.01, you'll see the recoveries of loans and investments on the capital side. That connects to this interest amount.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

With the change that we had gone through – the former administration went from a loans program to a grants program, which obviously would have changed the recovered interest. Going back to a loans process also, do you anticipate extra revenues being generated from an interest point of view? Is that built into any of your bottom lines?

MS. C. BENNETT: No, for clarity – and I'll double check with officials; I want to make sure I give you the right amount. This interest paid – and as well, if you look at 1.2.01, loans capital, these relate to the Student Loan Corporation and the remaining balance that's been outstanding for a period of years.

So for example, the closing balance in the Student Loan Corporation in March 2012 was \$102 million. In March 2016 it was down to \$1.8 million. I'm not sure I'm answering your question, but it's a declining balance. That's why those interest amounts continue to decline.

MR. BRAZIL: Yes, fair enough.

Do you anticipate it going back up again with the change of a new system?

MS. C. BENNETT: No.

MR. BRAZIL: It's not captured under that.

MS. C. BENNETT: What you're talking about wouldn't have anything to do with the Student Loan Corporation. The grants to loans, for example, that's wasn't part of the Student Loan Corporation. What's in here is the corporation's

loan to government. It's what they owe us. So no, I wouldn't anticipate that these two items, either on the interest or on the capital side, would be impacted by that.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

I know you alluded to it here and touched on it, 1.2.01. The \$1.8 million, can you give me a little bit more explanation of what that will entail, the interest generated from that, please.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure, officials will provide some information in a second and I'll answer that question for you then.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

Can I ask you some questions around Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs?

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure, just let me get to that. If you can provide the heading, that would be fantastic.

MR. BRAZIL: That's under 2.6.01, under Office of the Executive Council.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, go ahead.

MR. BRAZIL: I do realize, obviously, the salary for the Minister's Office doesn't exist there. Travel to Labrador, would that now fall under a budget line in the Premier's Office himself?

MS. C. BENNETT: No, if you look at 2.6.02, under Transportation and Communications, there's a transportation amount there for \$123,000. That amount has been allocated to cover some of the Premier's travel, but also travel from the executive team as well for travel to Labrador.

MR. BRAZIL: Fair enough.

I was going to ask the question, budgeted \$130,000, \$58,000 and then why up to \$123,000 again, so that's where that is captured as part of that.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes.

MR. BRAZIL: Is the ministerial office open in Labrador? Was that closed with the change of the ministers? The minister's office themselves – I know the Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs office would be open.

MS. C. BENNETT: I've been in the Premier's office in that building. I can confidently say that it's functioning.

MR. BRAZIL: It is still operational, fair enough.

Looking here under Salaries, Labrador Affairs – and I know it's a minimal amount of money and it's not enough to be a full salary base and if it was up by \$20,000 I'd say that's the increases normally. Under Salaries, 2.6.03, what would be the salary base there? What's the difference? Is there any change in staffing, starting off at lower levels or ...?

MS. C. BENNETT: 2.6.03, right?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: You're wondering about the salaries. The difference between the original budget – or I should say last year's budget to this year's budget is \$29,300. That reflects a decrease. There was \$34,500 that would have been saved through attrition and attrition targets. Then that would have been offset by an increase in expenses of \$5,200 related to the JES funding restatement for this particular department.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

I'm going to ask a question, if I could, about the cancellation of the Airlift Food Subsidy and the savings there. Even if I could more, more of the rationale of how that's going to be of benefit to the people of Labrador but particularly the first question is: What amount are we saving by eliminating that subsidy?

MS. C. BENNETT: Just for clarity, are you asking a question about the 2.6.03, under Grants and Subsidies?

MR. BRAZIL: Yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: Okay.

So this particular line reflects a decrease of the monies related to the Black Tickle fuel supply – sorry, last year it saw an increase – my apologies – in the Black Tickle fuel issue, a decrease in the elimination of some miscellaneous Aboriginal grants and the elimination of the food subsidy, as you referenced. That’s been replaced with \$50,000 of new funding for the new Labrador Aboriginal nutrition and artist program.

The food subsidy opportunities, to be able to continue to do what needs to be done, there is money allocated and certainly in other areas depending on what the reality is.

Last year, as you can tell from the Estimates, there was a substantial increase in the subsidy related to Air Foodlift Subsidy. It was about \$30,000. Certainly, if that is required, as part of this year, we will be able to transfer funds in from other departments, or be able to do what we need to do to make sure those people in the community have what they need when they need it. That would obviously happen in a crisis situation and an emergency situation, as I’m sure you’re aware.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, just so we’re clear.

It is still available in emergency needs, if necessary?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes, and certainly the Air Foodlift Subsidy program is continuing to be supported, as the money is budgeted in this line item.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay, fair enough.

Thank you, Minister.

MS. C. BENNETT: Like last year, when there were increases due to unusual circumstances and there was money allocated from other departments to cover that. That same process is available this year, if need be.

MR. BRAZIL: Okay.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I just remind Members now that the time that’s allotted, the 50 minutes, have now expired. So if there’s no objection we’ll call for the vote.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: The time has expired, the 50 minutes allotted, but the Opposition House Leader still has questions.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Well, with the agreement of all parties, I would make a motion, if it is acceptable to the other side, that we can extend this for 15 minutes to allow for clue up.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. A. PARSONS: The time has expired but I understand the Member opposite has some clue up. Again, we can allow – I have to make a motion. We can’t just continue on. So with leave of the other parties, I will make that motion.

AN HON. MEMBER: Okay.

CHAIR: Okay.

I just acknowledge the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, she has a comment she wants to make before I acknowledge the Opposition House Leader.

MS. C. BENNETT: I appreciate the Members’ opposite patience. I know the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island asked me a question a couple of minutes ago about the Student Loan Corporation. I just want to make sure I provide that information for him.

That \$1.8 million, there is an outstanding loan owing by the Student Loan Corporation to the province. Final payments are expected June 30. The principal payment is \$1.8 million, with interest of \$4,500. So I just wanted to make sure that was clear. If he has any more questions, officials can certainly provide that.

I want to make sure I clarify the question on the food subsidy because I wasn’t clear and trying to read notes that somebody prepared for me. So I appreciate his patience and his indulgence as we

work through the many lines of the Estimates to get to the information that needs to be provided.

The Air Foodlift Subsidy, as it was last year, is not in place. There is a new approach. So I stand corrected. I wanted to make sure I provided that information to him. The idea is that money will be provided to Aboriginal governments as opposed to retailers. So the old program, we weren't sure that the actual retailers – I'm sure most were ethical and were passing that on to residents, but there certainly has been concern and question as to whether that has been the case.

The intention now is to make sure that there are funds available for the Aboriginal governments to be able to provide supports around issues related to food and now those interest groups will pass that directly on to their members.

That's what officials are clarifying for me, so I appreciate your patience. If you have any questions I can certainly provide that information.

CHAIR: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, I just go to, again, under Consolidated Fund Services, page 1.5, under the heading 1.4.02, Issues Under Guarantee. I just had a question on that.

I know we spoke the other day to a motion in regard to the Stephenville Airport. Have there been any more guarantees since December 1 in that regard?

MS. C. BENNETT: Are you asking if there have been any new guarantees?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Sorry, yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: Since the election?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

MS. C. BENNETT: No problem. I'll ask for officials to provide clarity and I'll give you that answer in one second.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay, great. Thanks very much.

To continue on to 1.5.01, under Professional Services there, we've seen a significant increase to what was budgeted last year, the revised, and it's up to \$23,800,000 this year. I just want to get an explanation on that, please.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

You've heard me reference that there are some increase in costs related to the activity of borrowing. So this increase is a provision made for underwriting commissions and management fees on projected new capital market borrowing of \$3.4 billion. The budget is based on projected new capital market borrowings of \$2.4 billion for that fiscal year. So that's the difference there.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Is that the market fees, the syndicate fees, what –?

MS. C. BENNETT: That would be the underwriting commissions, as well as management fees associated with that.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: To answer your previous question, there have been no new guarantees since the election, just the ones that were established prior to December 14.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay. Thank you.

1.5.02, General Expenses; again, if you could speak to Professional Services under that heading. It seems to have increased significantly, in excess of \$4 million.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

That increase of \$3.9 million includes projects for the establishment of the US borrowing program, as well as the enhanced investor relations activity, as well as the cost associated with capital market borrowing, along with paying the agency and banking fees for interest and redemption payments on outstanding issues and other expenses associated with servicing the public debt.

It's one of the reasons why we need to get our borrowing under control because the more you borrow, not only do you spend money on interest, but you spend money on fees associated with borrowing.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Minister, would that involve bond-rating agencies and bringing them in and that kind of thing?

MS. C. BENNETT: We haven't had any discussions with rating agencies where we have – we will not, and haven't had any discussions with bond-rating agencies or banks where we are picking up the tab for them.

We have had conversations on the phone. We will continue to make sure that what we do with the lenders is done in the most frugal way, but there are costs associated with – as I mentioned in the Estimates for Finance – entering a US borrowing program and registering, so that you can register those securities and the things you need to do to be able to participate.

Some of these costs in the \$3.9 million that I referenced, would be one-time setup costs. Then some of this would be fees that would have to be maintained on an annual basis should we continue to use a US borrowing program.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay. Thank you.

That's good.

MS. MICHAEL: (Inaudible) the questions that I was going to ask so I won't repeat those. I'll check Hansard for the questions and answers on that. I still do have a couple of questions with regard to Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs.

I'm looking through the savings document we have. I would just like a little bit more information. You have the drop of \$21,500 in the Air Foodlift Subsidy, that's what was saved, and another one, \$21,500 saved when it came to the grant for the YC NL to support the youth from Labrador. In both cases – and you were talking about this when I came back, sorry that I had to leave. The money that is being left in those two categories is “reinvested in a new program to promote nutritional and artistic endeavours of Aboriginal Governments/Organizations in Labrador.”

Could we have some more detail on that, please? Obviously, the program is not set up yet. Could we get an idea, and part of that would be to ask, are you working with Aboriginal governments and organizations in Labrador with regard to this new program?

MS. C. BENNETT: Not being the minister for that department, and as you have also just acknowledged, it hasn't been set up yet. I'm unable to provide those details to you today.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay. So we just will have to keep following that to see when it happens.

I just want to check figures because you had the salary drop from the Minister's Office under Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs Office, 2.6.01. The salary has been removed from there because of the melding of the two things now, Labrador and Aboriginal with one office, correct? It used to be two separate offices. Once upon a time there were two ministers, actually.

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes. So the amount that was in last year's budget that is now down to zero in the Minister's Office reflects the fact that the Minister's Office doesn't have a Cabinet expense.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MS. C. BENNETT: Because the Premier is the minister. So he is paid through the Premier's Office.

MS. MICHAEL: That's right.

MS. C. BENNETT: So that's the reason. That's not abnormal. In the past, that's typically –

MS. MICHAEL: No, no, I just want to get things clear in my mind.

MS. C. BENNETT: Sure.

MS. MICHAEL: Because it pertains to what I'm going to ask. In the savings document, all that's showing in savings is the \$21,500 with regard to the Foodlift, \$21,500 with regard to the grant to YC NL, and then only a savings of \$16,700 in the line by line operational savings. It would seem to me that with this change there

must have been more than that in the operational savings.

MS. C. BENNETT: The Minister's Office would have been reflected in this Estimates process. I think the sheet you're actually referring to would not have been itemized in some of the minister's offices because most of the minister's offices were definitely lower than last year but there was still an operating cost.

MS. MICHAEL: Right.

MS. C. BENNETT: The total amount of the salary would not have been reflected in that document because that document –

MS. MICHAEL: Oh, I understand. I can see that. Yes, I'm looking at that now.

Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: Did you have a question on 2.6.02 Executive Support or just the Minister's Office?

MS. MICHAEL: No, I was looking at both of them. I don't have a question on the Executive Support. I do understand that the Transportation and Communication's line is reflecting travel.

MS. C. BENNETT: Okay. I think as well – what I'm being told by officials is if you look at that document that's in your hand online, they're telling me there is a hyperlink to the online document and the total savings, including the minister's – the no ministerial salary would be reflected by the line by line in Lab and Ab Affairs.

MS. MICHAEL: That's online?

MS. C. BENNETT: It should be. Yes, it should detail that.

MS. MICHAEL: Okay, great.

Thank you very much.

I think that's all I have – yes.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, Newfoundland and Labrador, Statement II, Consolidated Revenue Fund, Provincial and Federal Revenues.

MS. C. BENNETT: Could you give me the heading, please.

MR. HUTCHINGS: It's Roman numeral V in the front of the book.

MS. C. BENNETT: Okay.

MR. HUTCHINGS: That's the best I can do, sorry.

MS. C. BENNETT: That's good. I have two binders and a large book.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes, I know.

MS. C. BENNETT: I want to make sure that I'm driving where you're driving.

MR. HUTCHINGS: No problem.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you.

Okay. So you're on Roman numeral V.

MR. HUTCHINGS: I don't have my glasses but I think that's what it is.

MS. C. BENNETT: Okay. It looks like this right?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Yes.

It is Statement II, Newfoundland and Labrador Consolidated Revenue Fund. I just have a question, if you come down to Government of Canada and there are statutory subsidies. For 2015-2016 there's \$33,386,000. Could you explain to me, would that be from the stabilization fund? Is that money that would have been transferred for that reason?

MS. C. BENNETT: Officials are going to let me know in one second and I will provide that answer.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Okay.

MS. C. BENNETT: Is there another question?

MR. HUTCHINGS: No, I think that's pretty well it.

MS. C. BENNETT: The \$33 million includes the receipt of the fiscal stabilization. That is what I am being told.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Could you give me any idea of when it would have been received, that it would have been approved, please?

MS. C. BENNETT: Yes sure.

I want to say I remember in it March, but I'll wait till they –

MR. HUTCHINGS: Sure.

MS. C. BENNETT: There it came. I was right; it was received in March.

MR. HUTCHINGS: March, there you go, good memory.

Thanks very much, Minister, and to your staff as well.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you.

Can I quote you on the good memory one?

MR. HUTCHINGS: Sure.

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you.

CHAIR: We'll now call for the vote.

CLERK: The Contingency Reserve.

CHAIR: Shall the Contingency Reserve carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: Consolidated Fund Services, 1.1.01 through 2.2.02 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall the Consolidated Fund Services, 1.1.01 to 2.2.02, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 2.2.02 carried.

CLERK: The totals.

CHAIR: Shall the totals carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Contingency Fund and Consolidated Fund Services, total heads, carried.

CLERK: Executive Council, the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01.

CHAIR: Executive Council, the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01, shall it carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

CLERK: Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.2.03, inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 carried.

CLERK: Office of the Executive Council, 2.2.05 through 2.4.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall Office of the Executive Council, 2.2.05 through 2.4.01 inclusive, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.2.05 through 2.4.01 carried.

CLERK: Intergovernmental Affairs, 2.5.01 and 2.5.02.

CHAIR: Shall Intergovernmental Affairs, 2.5.01 and 2.5.02, carry?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.5.01 through 2.5.02 carried.

CLERK: Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs Office, 2.6.01 through 2.6.04 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, 2.6.01 through 2.6.04 inclusive, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.6.01 through 2.6.04 carried.

CLERK: The totals.

CHAIR: Shall the totals carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, Office of the Executive Council, Intergovernmental Affairs and Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, total heads, carried.

CLERK: The Legislature, 1.1.01 through 6.1.01 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall the Legislature, 1.1.01 to 6.1.01, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 6.1.01 carried.

CLERK: The totals.

CHAIR: Shall I report the totals carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Legislature, total heads, carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the total Estimates carried without amendment for Contingency Reserve, Consolidated Revenue Fund, the

Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, Office of the Executive Council, Intergovernmental Affairs, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs and the Legislature carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of Contingency Reserve, Consolidated Revenue Fund, the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, Office of the Executive Council, Intergovernmental Affairs, Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs and the Legislature carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, I move the Committee rise and report having passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Committee of the Whole.

CHAIR: It has been moved that I do now report the Estimates carried without amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

CHAIR: Division has been called.

Division

CHAIR: Order, please!

Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour, please stand.

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

CHAIR: All those opposed.

CLERK: Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Brazil, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Michael.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report the following, passed without amendment: Contingency Reserve; Consolidated Fund Services; the following activities of the Executive Council: the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01; Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 inclusive, 2.2.05 through 2.4.01 inclusive; Intergovernmental Affairs, 2.5.01 and 2.5.02; Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, 2.6.01 through 2.6.04 inclusive and the Legislature, and ask leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Contingency Reserve; Consolidated Fund Services; the Lieutenant Governor's Establishment, 1.1.01; Office of the Executive Council, 2.1.01 through 2.2.03 inclusive, 2.2.05 through 2.4.01 inclusive; Intergovernmental Affairs, 2.5.01 and 2.5.02; Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, 2.6.01 through 2.6.04 inclusive and the Legislature.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development on a point of order.

MR. KIRBY: Standing Order 48.

MR. SPEAKER: Standing Order 48 or 49?

MR. KIRBY: 49, yes.

During Question Period, I enthusiastically claimed that my department is funding the Kids Eat Smart program and much to my chagrin, I've been advised by the Minister of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development that it's indeed her department. So I just wanted to clarify that for the record.

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

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

Given the hour of the day, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources, that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

The House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 in the afternoon.

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