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Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

We would like to welcome to the visitor's gallery today Dina Shehata and her mother, Samar Ali. Ms. Shehata is the subject of a Member's statement today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today we have the Members for the Districts of Ferryland, Mount Pearl North, Burin – Grand Bank, Torngat Mountains and St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

The Member for the District of Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House today to recognize the Goulds 39th Charter Night. I would like to take this opportunity to thank and recognize all members of the Goulds Lions Club, past and present, for the outstanding contribution they make to their community.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are well known for the amount of volunteer work contributed each year in our province, indeed we lead the country in our hours of volunteerism. This is exemplified no better than with the Lions Club from the Goulds. I've had many opportunities to work with the Lions and see their tremendous efforts in all they do.

I want to commend the Goulds Lions for all the great work the club has done in the past 40 years and I'm sure this important community role will continue in the future. The Goulds is a better place because of their tireless efforts.

I would like to ask all Members of the House to join me in congratulating the Goulds Lions and all the wonderful work they have done in the past 30 years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to congratulate and recognize the Members of the Mount Pearl Senior High Robotics Team, who took first place at the Regional Robotics Competition recently.

Underwater Robotics is an extracurricular activity for students who are interested in building remotely operated vehicles that will compete at the Marine Institute. The group meets regularly from January to May to prepare for this competition. When competing, the students are also required to prepare a technical report, a poster display and an engineering presentation as well. All of that is presented to the judges.

The Mount Pearl Senior High Robotics Club consists of 19 students and two mentors. I would like to recognize team members: Alex Hayes, Aloysius Ducey, Andrew Pye, Brady Chaulk, Carley Froggatt, Connor Hynes, Daniel Drodge, Jessica Hynes, Kevin Verge, Kyle Curtis, Kyle Edison, Mary Pike, Mitchell Tuck, Randy Russell, Ryan Hayes, Sean Purchase, Tyler Purchase, Zachary Anstey, Khafra Pike and mentors Paul King and Cameron Williams.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the Mount Pearl Senior High Robotics Team and wish them the best of luck as they travel to Houston Texas for the International Competition in June.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 1988, Newfoundland and Labrador experienced a first when 35-year-old Ellen Mary Kearney joined the Lawn Volunteer Fire Department, becoming the first female firefighter in the province.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, on Friday of last week, surrounded by her loving family, this remarkable woman passed away at the age of 63.

Ellen Mary Kearney's volunteer work extended far beyond her time as a firefighter, Mr. Speaker; she will also be remembered as a person who was there to help out whenever needed, whether it was with the Come Home Year Committee, her local parish, or with any of the other organizations that help keep Lawn a vibrant town.

Mr. Speaker, I know all Members join me in sending condolences to Mrs. Kearney's family – her husband Michael, daughter Denise, son Michael, grandchildren John and Patrick, and siblings Martha, Blanche, Mike and Andy.

Mrs. Kearney truly made a difference in the lives of others, Mr. Speaker – her family and friends, her town, and indeed to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole.

Thank you.

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 the victims and survivors of residential schooling.

Hundreds of individuals from Labrador have been impacted by the forcible removal from their family life that defined this cruel policy. They were forced to travel hundreds of miles from home to attend school. They spent months away and were subjected to degradation, institutionalized racism, and in extreme situations, even mental, physical and sexual abuse.

In my own family, Mr. Speaker, most are survivors of residential schooling. My

grandmother is 98-years-old and, if I am correct, is the oldest living survivor of residential schooling from Nunatsiavut. My older sisters are the last generation of residential school survivors.

The pain and suffering that students went through will not go away, but being recognized and finally included in this recognition, I sincerely hope, will ease the long-lasting impacts of this dark chapter in our history.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in officially recognizing the survivors and the victims of residential schooling.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise today to celebrate the academic accomplishments of Dina Shehata, a Level II student at Holy Heart High School in St. John's East – Quidi Vidi.

Dina is this year's winner of the provincial \$80,000 Lester B. Pearson Scholarship and, in September, will travel to Victoria to commence two years of pre-university study at Pearson College.

The Pearson Scholarship is just the latest academic accomplishment for Dina. In her two years at Holy Heart, her scientific research has earned her much attention.

With help from her mentor Dr. Andrew Smith of Memorial University, Dina has created a more affordable version of a gel mimicking human tissue that health trainees can use for practising procedures. She won the top prize at the Eastern regionals of Sanofi Biogenius Canada, and at that competition's national fair in early May, Dina became the first Atlantic Canadian to earn the competition's Commercialism prize, recognizing the project with the most commercial potential and viability.

Today, Dina is freshly back from the Canada Wide Science Fair, where she won the National Bronze Medal for her project.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the wonderful Dina Shehata and wishing her all the best in her future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 Placentia – St. Mary's.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: 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 or the Royal Newfoundland Naval Reserve. This will be followed by a moment of silence.

Lest we forget: Loyal Randell, Marcus Randell, Peter Randell, Ralph Randell, Fredrick Raynes, Alexander A. Read, Charles A. Read, Alexander Reader, John Reader, Edgar Rees, William E. Rees, Maxwell Reeves, Alfred Reid, Allan R. Reid, Carl Reid, Charles Reid, Charles Reid, Ellwood Reid, Joseph H. Reid, Robert Bruce Reid, Samuel S. Reid, William Frederick Reid, William Joseph Reid, Peter Reilly, Arthur James Rendell, Clifford Rendell, Ernest John Rendell, Herbert Rendell, Frederick Bennett Rice, John Joseph Rice, David Richards, Frank Richardson, Patrick Richardson, George Ricketts, Thomas Ricketts, Simon Ricks, Ford Rideout, Keywood Rideout, Pierce Rideout, Thomas Rideout.

(Moment of silence.)

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge May as Better Hearing and Speech Month.

Earlier this month, I joined representatives of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association – Newfoundland and Labrador, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists and the Hearing Instrument Practitioners Association, to officially proclaim May as Better Hearing and Speech Month in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Communication disabilities, such as hearing loss and speech-language disabilities, affect thousands of people in our province. It is important that we continue to work with community-based organizations to advance inclusion throughout our province.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association – Newfoundland and Labrador is a non-profit, charitable organization which provides a variety of programs and services to support people who are hard of hearing.

Through *Budget 2016* investments, our government will continue to promote inclusion and, as Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, I will continue working with community stakeholders to promote a more inclusive province and review existing legislation and regulations with a goal of enacting a new inclusion-based Disabilities Act.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in recognizing May as Better Hearing and Speech Month in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just received this a couple of seconds ago, so I'd like to say our party certainly commends the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association – Newfoundland and Labrador and the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists for the work they do in trying to ensure their people are well represented in the province, Mr. Speaker.

The cuts by the Liberal government to the inclusion grants, the cuts to the age-friendly transportation grants, cuts to the adult dental, we certainly have a long ways to go and I doubt there's much confidence that people have in the Liberal government for things they're going to do to improve things for people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations to all those associations and organizations who work towards better hearing and speech for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Many people cannot afford hearing aids at \$5,000, especially our seniors on limited and fixed incomes. They are so important in order to live independently and out of isolation.

I also raise the very serious problem of children waiting way too long to see speech language pathologists. Early intervention, as we know, is the key to successful treatment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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, Liberal backbenchers contend they're lobbying their government tirelessly to have budget decisions reversed; however, as soon as one speaks out against the budget, he's kicked out. The Premier takes no responsibility, no ownership, no leadership for his actions, and again we hear the Premier saying it wasn't me. Again, it was somebody else. But this time, Mr. Speaker, while MHAs aren't permitted to speak outside of caucus, he's throwing them under the bus.

So I ask the Premier: Any Liberal Members willing to stand up for their districts and speak out against your budget, will they be banished from your caucus too?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the former premier, when you look at taking responsibility for their actions, he always reminds us that he was not responsible for anything that we have to deal with today – at least, he does not want to accept responsibility for this.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2016-2017, there were certainly lots of tough choices to be made. People on this side of the House, MHAs that represent the many communities in our province, they realize the impacts that are there. But they also know that if we do not take corrective measures, the future of Newfoundland and Labrador will not be sustainable based on the record that we've seen and that we've had to inherit.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a great discussion within our caucus about where we are in our province. We've put in many corrective measures, there have been tough decisions that have been made, but these decisions are made with one reason in mind – that is to protect the future of our province, not to destroy it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

That wasn't the question I asked. The question is about choices and is about choices that this government has made and choices that MHAs in his own caucus are saying. So we know Liberal caucus Members are advocating for change to your budget, Premier. They're presenting petitions; they're speaking publicly against your budget. We now know there's a \$30 million slush fund that's been tucked away in the Department of Finance.

As people's voices to reverse your budget choices are left unanswered, I ask the Premier: Was your caucus made aware of this \$30 million that's quietly poked away? Did they become aware of it on budget day like the rest of your caucus or have they only found out about it since then?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not surprised at all that the former premier would want to call it a contingency fund. A contingency fund is really for things that would happen in the future that are unforeseen, so you actually prepare for things. It's kind of in some ways like buying insurance.

If the former premier had put in place contingencies and put in place economic diversification plans, we would not be in the position that we're in today. What he wants to call a slush fund, it is – really what it is it's a contingency fund preparing for things that could happen in our province.

So it's not about a political slush fund at all, it's about preparing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians so that we do not have to go back and dip into the pockets of the next generation, Mr. Speaker. It's about being prepared and it's about better planning. That's the kind of fund that we are talking about. Those are the measures that we have put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind both sides of the House again, when a Member is stood and recognized to speak, I'd ask all Members to respect that Member who's recognized to speak.

The hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Just for the record, it's the Premier's words that it's a political slush fund, not mine. It's him who just said that, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know if that's very similar to the additional \$400 million in program spending that they have budgeted for this year – \$400 million over last year, Mr. Speaker. As libraries are being closed, health care services reduced, cuts in education that parents are irate about throughout the province, especially rural parts of our province which is targeted, there's still a \$30 million slush fund which can be used today to reverse some of these terrible decisions.

I ask the Premier: Your budget is a disaster, it's an attack on people, if this \$30 million fund is for a crisis, is your budget not a crisis for people? When will you put people first and reverse those decisions?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Talking about a budget of crisis, it was the one that was delivered in this House of Assembly just a year ago. That was a budget of crisis in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the former premier mentioned about the extra \$400,000 in increased programming –

AN HON. MEMBER: Million.

PREMIER BALL: – \$400 million increase in programming in this budget. Do you know what that was for, Mr. Speaker? That was to secure pensions for the NLTA. It was as a result of the job evaluation system where people had to – based on the system that was put in place so that we saw some wage increases. We were preparing for them.

Is the former premier suggesting that we should not have taken care of those pensions? Is the former premier suggesting that we should not honour the JES system that they facilitated and

helped put in place? Is that the decision that you would have made?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm glad the Premier has raised it because we worked very hard to look after the public servants in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DAVIS: Yes, and I thank him for raising it because it was good work, it was hard work and it was the right thing to do, and we do stand by that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Liberal caucus opposite are getting their daily pep talks. We know they are pep talks. They are being called into meetings with Cabinet ministers. They're comparing these rough times to back when Wells upset the public service in '91 and Tobin devastated the nurses in 1999. Remember those sayings –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: We remember those sayings: Nurses will never forget.

They are being told that people will forget. Well, I say to the Premier, instead of pep talks, why don't you begin listening to your own backbench? Why don't you listen to what they're saying and make changes to your budget? Will you finally put people first and revisit these terrible decisions that you made in this budget?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure you that this government does indeed put people first. What we will do, we're

going to help people. We're going to help low-income earners in our province. We have a \$76.4 million low-income supplement. That is to help people. That is to help seniors. It's to help the most vulnerable in our society right now, Mr. Speaker.

Right now, based on the history and the things that we inherited from this past administration – he talks about smothering the economy, Mr. Speaker. The former premier talks about you're smothering the economy. What he is not talking about is what debt would do to our province right now. The impact it is having on our GDP. The impact that debt would have on our economy. The impact that the debt would have on our health care system.

Is the former premier suggesting that the \$105 million investment that we are making into education infrastructure, is that a choice that he would not have made? Is he suggesting now that we should go into his own district, remove and not do the work that they have committed to do in the past?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's really interesting the Premier brings that up because day after day he stands up and he criticizes us for making infrastructure spending, yet they're making infrastructure spending more than we ever made, Mr. Speaker, and they're proud to stand here and say it. So it's wrong for us but it was good for them.

Mr. Speaker, very recently in the House the Minister of Justice and Public Safety indicated that it would cost \$300,000 a year to keep the Harbour Grace court open.

I ask the minister: Can you explain these numbers?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here and speak to the courts in this province. As we all know, the court in Harbour Grace was actually held in the historic building out there until it was moved last year due to the fact that the building is dilapidated, rotten and unsafe to go in, requiring a cost of somewhere in the range of \$5 million to \$10 million.

After that, the department entered into a lease with a new building, private building, for I think it is \$280,000. That is not including the cost to maintain all the staff and everything that goes with maintaining a court. Again, those are the costs to provide the court in Harbour Grace.

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.

What we've learned from the landlord himself in Harbour Grace is that the government assessment is based on the current short-term lease of 11,600 square feet, when they only needed 7,000 square feet. It's a short-term lease. The landlord wouldn't lease 7,000 for a short period of time.

What the landlord is indicating, Mr. Speaker, is that the government hasn't even asked for an estimated cost of what it would be for a long-term lease for the 7,000 they need, instead of 11,600.

I ask the minister: Why haven't you done your due diligence to assess the real cost of Harbour Grace courthouse over a long period of time?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly happy to stand here and continue to speak to this. The fact is we had all hoped that the court would remain in the historic courthouse in Harbour Grace where it served for a number of years, decades; but, the fact is it couldn't

because the previous administration let it rot where it stood to the point where it is unable to be entered now. It is structurally unsafe for people to go into.

The department, along with Transportation and Works, were forced to take decisions to make short-term accommodations in order to have a court. The fact is that there is a lease right now for \$280,000 to accommodate this. But like we're finding with a number of leases and arrangements across this province, the fact is that the previous administration made absolutely terrible deals – ones that we're trying to fix so that we can provide the services at the most cost-efficient manner to the people of this province.

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.

Well, the minister should check because this lease expired the end of March. There is no reason why they can't go to the market and seek a long-term lease for 7,000 square feet. They have no idea what the cost may be. This \$280,000 is simply based on a short-term lease of space they are not even using, 11,600 square feet, much larger than what they need.

I will ask the minister again: Why have you not done your due diligence? Your own Member is lobbying to keep the courthouse open. You allege it is \$280,000 that it is going to cost you a year, when you know and I know that is not accurate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The fact is that the department is forced to make decisions – in many cases, decisions that were made before we ever got here. The fact is that as we continue forward, we had to sign a short-

term arrangement in order to ensure that we could continue the court.

The Member opposite should know this. Again, I would question a lot of decisions that they've had to make, but in this case we were left with a situation where we had a lease that is costing \$280,000 a year, plus the associated cost that go along.

The fact is we are looking across this department and every other department to find ways that we can have more efficiencies, as there are not just courts but there are services that go with courts, whether it is Victim Services, Legal Aid, Crown attorneys. The fact is across this department and every other department we're looking at ways to make sure that we can provide services at the best cost to the taxpayers of the province.

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.

Well, it's becoming quite clear, the minister and department have not done their work. It's not \$280,000 a year. That was based on a short-term lease. They don't know what it would cost for a long-term lease, Mr. Speaker.

I've asked the minister in Estimates, and I'll ask again today: What assessment have you done to determine the additional costs on policing now that police officers will have to drive from Conception Bay North to court in St. John's on a daily basis to attend court? What assessment have you done on that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Yes, the Member did ask the question – I was sat down for four hours during Estimates and answered every question the Member put

forward, and certainly happy to stand here and answer him in the House.

The fact is we had to make some very difficult decisions when it comes to not just Justice, but a number of departments, all based on the fact that we were left with a fiscal mess by the previous administration. The fact is that there are going to be some difficulties that we face – nobody's talked about the fact that doing this makes the system better. The fact is that we had to make very tough decisions based on the situation that we found ourselves in.

We're working with the judiciary and we're working with policing services and everything else to make sure that we can provide the best services going forward to the people of this province. Just today, I had a meeting with lawyers from that area; I look forward to more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. P. DAVIS: So, Mr. Speaker, it's become quite clear. The minister doesn't even know if there's going to be a savings, if there's going to be a reduction in cost or an increase in costs. The minister doesn't even know the answer. He's made that quite clear. He likes to talk about the past and the former administration, but when asked a simple question he can't answer it. He doesn't know. He made a rash decision without having evidence to support it.

It's absolutely shameful, Mr. Speaker, at a time when they're making an evidence-based approach, it is obvious there is no evidence here. Closing the courthouse in Harbour Grace has brought a scathing response from mayors and councils and local residents, the legal community – even their own backbencher, their MHA for the area, agrees it's the wrong decision.

Can you inform the House, Minister: Is this a done deal, or is there a chance to have this decision reversed?

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

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

One thing that I've noticed, actually, going through this process, everybody I talk to, whether it's mayors, policing, MHAs, is the fact that they were never asked a question by the previous administration once. They were never asked to consult; they were never brought in to anything. Again, maybe that's why we're in the situation we find ourselves in.

In fact, I commend the MHA for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave, because she's standing up for her constituents, and we encourage that on this side. We encourage them to speak up.

So I look forward to continuing to work on the situation. The fact is, we're always willing to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. A. PARSONS: Again, it's hard to hear through the heckling, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is we're always willing to listen to constituents. We're always willing to listen to mayors and the individuals of this province so that we can make the best decisions going forward. In this case, we made the best decision based on the evidence we had and the situation we were left in by the Member opposite.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I remind hon. Members again that the Member who is identified to speak is the only Member who should be speaking during Question Period.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I hope, as the Minister of Justice indicates, he will listen to his colleagues who are protesting about some of the cuts.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier, could he clarify: Did the former CEO of Nalcor leave voluntarily or was he indeed fired?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The former CEO, Mr. Ed Martin, made a decision to step aside from his role as CEO at Nalcor back in late April, April 20. It was the board that had made the decision then – based on the information they had, they made the decision to dismiss or to terminate the employment without cause of the former CEO.

It was Mr. Martin's decision to step aside from his position at Nalcor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify: Did he resign or did the board dismiss him without cause?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Martin made a decision to step aside. Then through the interpretation, it was the board – because the contract of the CEO is with the board. It was the board then that made a decision to terminate without cause. That is what triggered the severance.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, if the Premier could clarify. He's saying terminate without cause, but in the public you had said that he voluntarily left.

Did you have dialogue with the board leading up from Sunday to Tuesday when the decision was made?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Martin made the decision to step aside on April 20. We did the public announcement of that. Mr. Martin actually then reinforced that with his own announcement.

It was the board – the contract with the CEO is with the board of directors. The board that just left, actually. So they made a decision then to – this is what triggered the severance in this particular case – terminate without cause.

So we've taken this information that we have right now, that has been made available to us – we were not part of the details around the severance package at all. We were not part of that. That was left exclusively to the board.

We have now engaged the Department of Justice to review all the information that we have become aware of and then that will determine the appropriateness of the severance.

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, that's very different from what the Premier had indicated in public. If the individual, as the Premier indicated, voluntarily left and resigned or left his position, the Premier had no knowledge of this or did he check with the board before he did this?

Why would you come out and say that without checking with the board and checking with Nalcor first?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was Mr. Martin who stepped aside. We had a meeting the night before this, on Tuesday night. Coming from that meeting, Mr. Martin made a decision, the former CEO made a decision to step aside. It was then – because that contract was with the board of directors of Nalcor. It was then that board made that decision to actually terminate Mr. Martin without cause. That was not something that the office – we did not negotiate any of the details. Those details were exclusively with the former board of directors of Nalcor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier had stated that his government had no control over the former CEO's payout due to contractual obligations. The CEO's contract suggests the financial package would not be necessary if the Nalcor CEO voluntarily resigns.

I ask the Premier: Did Mr. Martin resign, or was he fired? Why was the severance required?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What happened is the former board of directors of Nalcor made a decision without cause after he stepped aside. They made this decision. They sought a legal opinion on this.

We are now reviewing all the information that was available to us. We became aware of the details of the severance package early May. May 5, I think, was the date. These details were put in place; the severance package was determined by the outgoing board of Nalcor. We are now taking this information and we're reviewing this to see that the appropriate – that this indeed was the appropriate action that was taken by the former board, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, the Premier had said in public that severance was required as part of the contract. He said that publicly.

On what basis did you make that determination?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The severance package or any of the contractual commitments that was in – with the CEO as part of his employment contract; what we said is that we would honour or we would ask the board of directors of Nalcor. They're responsible to actually honour the commitments and the details

and the conditions that would be part of that contractual arrangement with the former CEO.

The former CEO was the employee of the board of directors of Nalcor. They made the decision to determine the details around the severance pay that was paid to Mr. Martin. Right now, we have our own Department of Justice that's reviewing this information, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: Was there a resolution of the board of Nalcor stating that the former CEO of Nalcor voluntarily left the position? Was there direction given on what to be paid?

There seems there's new information here that has come to light that the Premier's talking now because your story has changed. Was there a resolution from Nalcor suggesting what you're saying today?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

May 5 is when I became aware of the details around the severance package that the former board of directors had given to the former CEO. So the resolution at the board level then becomes part of the decision-making process. They sought legal opinion about the termination without cause of Mr. Martin. It was then that they based their decision, as I understand it, to put in place a severance package.

On April 20, Mr. Martin made a decision to step aside from his position as CEO of Nalcor. Mr. Speaker, it was outgoing board of directors that made the decision – they made the decision to terminate without cause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The former head of MUN's Grenfell Campus labels the Liberal plan to close over 50 per cent of the province's libraries as disgraceful, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Fowler goes on to say it's unrealistic to expect municipalities to take over these libraries.

I ask the Minister of Education: Is this simply yet another reputable academic who cannot comprehend the minister's education plan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KIRBY: Mr. Speaker, there was no way we could sustain the previous libraries model based on the amounts of money that either the previous administration had or the amounts of money we have access to.

Let's face it; we're trying to borrow now – our bond rating is somewhere a couple of levels above junk status, more or less; we're a couple of notches above junk in the bond market. So that's where we are financially. That's the state this crowd left us in. So I don't know how it is that they expect us to operate when we're a couple of notches above junk. That's where they left the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the vast majority of our food is shipped into the province through roadway and ferry, why would the Premier foolishly suggest that the additional fuel tax and the increase to the HST will not be downloaded to the consumer? Does he still believe that to be the case?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the difficult choices that had to be made – and when we did the Government Renewal Initiative, many people in this province reached out and told us that in this particular case, when you look at the price of gas and fuel in our province right now, when you compare it to where it was last year, that, indeed, many people told us that they would be prepared to accept an increase in the price of fuel and gas, as an example, until oil reaches a point where we can actually get the revenue that is generated from the oil royalties.

This was something that clearly came up in just about every meeting that we intended. People understood this, but they also knew that there were tough choices that had to be made in our province right now. Therefore, they helped us look for ways to generate revenue in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the Premier didn't answer my question.

Does he believe that this budget will drive food prices up while it drives more people into poverty, yes or no?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One thing that I do know, when you look at driving prices up and when you look at impacting services that we depend on in Newfoundland and Labrador is that if you do not get your own fiscal financial house in order, one thing that will drive prices up in our province and will reduce critical services in our province is when you go swimming in debt, and when you're relying on the tax revenue, when you rely on revenue of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to pay interest.

Mr. Speaker, we've just heard comments from the Members opposite talk about, oh, you can't say that. What it is, they do not want to accept the responsibility for the reality they left this province in. I would be ashamed to hear it too if I sat in those chairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, the chair the Premier now sits in is the Premier's chair and it's time for him to show some leadership.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, in budget documents the Liberal government admits that its budget will be 40 to 50 per cent responsible for aspects of economic downturn in the next five years.

I ask the Premier: What are you doing to offset this? You promised in your election platform to create new revenue streams. Tell us specifically what you've done to do so in the last six months you've been in office.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite, the former deputy premier opposite. Again, it seems to be that he does not want to live up or take his share of the responsibility for where we are today.

When you look at budget 2016-2017, there are a number of initiatives that we have in this budget. There's \$570 million in infrastructure spending, Mr. Speaker. We have well over \$100 million when you look at infrastructure in schools.

Is he suggesting right now that as a province we should not leverage the infrastructure spending which we could leverage that with communities, leverage that with private interest and leverage that with the federal government, Mr. Speaker? That will create jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Is he suggesting we should not be doing that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

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

The Premier said publicly the payment of approximately \$1.3 million in severance payments to the former Nalcor CEO was dictated by the contractual agreement between the former CEO and Nalcor. The terms of that agreement are now in the public domain.

I ask the Premier: What specific provision of that executive employment agreement can he point to that led him to the contention that Mr. Martin was entitled to severance pay in the event of his resignation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's nothing in the employment contract in terms of a severance package that would have been paid out under the person just resigning or stepping aside. It was the board of directors at Nalcor – the board of directors at Nalcor – that made the decision to terminate the former CEO, to terminate his employment without cause.

They then took the employment agreement that was put in place and through their interpretation – I understand they had legal opinion on that too, Mr. Speaker, but they made the decision. It wasn't the Premier's office; it was the former board at Nalcor. They made the decision to terminate the former CEO without cause and it is in their interpretation that they made the determination to pay the severance to the former CEO.

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.

Well, then I want to ask the Premier: Didn't he ever speak to the board of directors to find out that this was not in the contract? He said publicly it was dictated by the contract.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I became aware of the details of the severance package that was given to the former CEO – keep in mind, this board, they resigned. They were the board that resigned en masse after they made this decision. I became aware of the details of the severance package early May – May 5, I think, the date was. It was then that I became aware of this. It was the former board of Nalcor that made this decision to grant and pay severance to the former CEO.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives conducted a gender based analysis of the impact of *NL Budget 2016* on women and girls and found that it definitely hurts women and girls disproportionately. The Minister of Finance also said that she did a gender analysis of the budget.

I ask the minister: Did her gender analysis have the same findings?

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

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

There's nobody I think, certainly on this side of the House, who would argue that this budget is a very difficult budget for the people of the province, men and women included. The analysis that was done for all areas, particularly

for women, was recognized that the budget is very difficult.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of the reasons why when we looked at implementing the Newfoundland Income Supplement that would allow us to help offset some of the costs, particularly for low-income women. Elderly women in our community make up – who are not part of an economic family, have the third-lowest medium after tax income amongst any provinces and have from 2003 to 2013. That's why we implemented that program, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, gender analysis showed disproportionate negative effects on women and girls.

I ask the minister: As the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women and Finance, why didn't she take corrective measures to address these disproportionate negative effects on women and girls? Why wouldn't she?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, we did recognize, and that's one of the reasons why we implemented a Newfoundland Income Supplement. As I said in a previous answer, this budget has a very – it's very difficult for all people in our province, men and women included.

Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite certainly knows that our province is faced with what would have been a fiscal crisis had we not taken action. I don't think there's any Member of this House, collectively, all 40 of us, that want to be in the situation that our province is faced, but in the absence of action, losing control over the critical services of health and education is something that could happen. I don't believe that any man or woman in this province would want that to happen to our province.

MR. SPEAKER: There is about 15 to 20 seconds for a question and 15 to 20 seconds for an answer.

MS. ROGERS: Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance yet again: Why will she not table her gender analysis that she said she did on the budget, her specific gender analysis report? I have one here from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, all of the decisions that were made as part of the budget process, particularly those that were undertaken under the Government Renewal Initiative, were put through the gender lens and certainly those were information that we took into Cabinet to make the decisions that we did, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 63, I move, seconded by the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, that the private Member's resolution to be debated on Wednesday is:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the government's proposal to provide the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit a refundable tax credit for low income seniors, which this year is providing some

42,000 seniors in our province with payments of up to \$971 – the highest amount ever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Pursuant to Standing Order 63, the private Member's resolution just entered by the Member will be the one to be debated tomorrow, Wednesday.

Thank you.

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 move the following resolution.

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Assembly as follow:

WHEREAS the Lieutenant Governor in Council appointed a tribunal under Section 20 of the *Provincial Court Act, 1991* to make recommendations on the salaries and benefits of the judges and chief judge; and

WHEREAS the tribunal submitted its recommendations to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety on December 21, 2015; and

WHEREAS the *Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal Report* was tabled in this hon. House on March 17, 2016, as required by section 28.2 of the act; and

WHEREAS the House of Assembly is required to approve, vary or reject the report within the period of time referred to in that section; and

WHEREAS government has decided to ask this hon. House to accept all but one of the recommendations of the tribunal as contained in its report of December 21, 2015; and

WHEREAS government has decided to ask this hon. House to reject one of the recommendations;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House accept the recommendations of the 2015 *Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal* set out in Schedule A; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House reject the recommendations set out in Schedule B for the reasons given; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recommendations of the tribunal that this hon. House accepts and rejects as set out in Schedules A and B be implemented effective April 1, 2013.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS government states in the 2016 provincial budget that the personal income tax

schedule needs to be revised and promises to do so;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to ensure that the Deficit Reduction Levy be eliminated and any replacement measure be based on progressive taxation principles, and that an independent review of Newfoundland and Labrador's 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 am astounded yet again that the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who is also the minister responsible for Finance, has not answered me outright, directly about whether or not a very specific, concrete gender analysis tool was used on the budget. She hints at it, but we don't know for sure. I have asked her a number of times to table that report. She has not said yes or no, but we still have not seen it.

Here I have the report of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives who did a very specific analysis of the budget using a specific gender analysis tool that government is supposed to be doing as well on all policy, on all legislation, to look at what are the negative effects on women who are a disadvantaged group in our society. I have their report here and we have no idea whatsoever what this government did, whether the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women actually had the Women's Policy Office do that very concrete, specific gender analysis on the budget and also on the Independent Appointments Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I can only assume it's not been done. I don't know what else to assume because we haven't seen the report. We've asked for it. I've put in an access to information request for it. Maybe that's the only way we're going to get it, if it exists.

It would be my hope that it does exist. If it does, I'm sure it comes up with the same kind of analysis that the Centre for Policy Alternatives have come up with. If that's the case, why did

the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who is also the Minister of Finance, not take corrective measures?

It's so clear how disproportionately negatively affected women and girls are by this very regressive budget that reflects a philosophy of austerity which the Nobel Peace Prize economist knows – economists from all over the globe have said that austerity budgets don't work.

So how could the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who has so much power as the Minister of Finance, not take any corrective measures to look at how this budget disproportionately affects women? Mr. Speaker, 67 per cent of women in Newfoundland and Labrador are working age, between the age of 25 and 54. Yet, this budget is cutting jobs, predominantly jobs occupied by women.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for the District of Fortune Bay – Cape Lune.

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A petition to the hon. House of Assembly of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS the people of Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune need to have access to adequate health care; and

WHEREAS the local clinics in rural areas are the main source of medical assistance for our people; and

WHEREAS the government has reduced funding and closed the Hermitage clinic and downgraded services in all of the isolated communities;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the services to health care in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I'm rising on a regular basis to present this petition in the House because I am

in shock at the complete devastation the Liberal government has imposed on rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Be it education, be it libraries, be it health care, the very core principles and fundamentals of a decent quality of life. And the Liberals are ripping it away from rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

One thing I'd like to be able to stand here in the House today and assure the people – 2019, don't ever forget what has happened with this budget and what has happened to rural Newfoundland, what has happened to education, health care and libraries. I have confidence that successive governments will correct it, Mr. Speaker, if this government doesn't come to its senses and make some corrective action before the budget passes.

This is absolutely devastating. To look at a rural, remote area like the Coast of Bays, which is geographically isolated, where there is no snow clearing after 6 o'clock in the wintertime – we have to really get to Grand Falls for any type of advanced medical care at all. And to save a life, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that we have front-line services directly in the communities.

In the absence of that, Mr. Speaker, I dread to think what will happen to our people unnecessarily. I fear gravely that lives will be lost and whatever we can do to reverse this decision must be done. Rural Newfoundland and Labrador deserves better.

One of the things that I heard over and over and over again in the election: people matter. Well, it is time to start showing that people matter, Mr. Speaker. And time for the government to reverse some of these terrible decisions that have been made in *Budget 2016*.

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 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 operations and cost of libraries;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pay 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, your petitioners will ever pray.

I'm pleased this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to present this petition which comes mainly from petitioners from CBS, St. John's, Paradise and Bay Bulls. I think it's important to point out that people in the greater St. John's area and all of these people are concerned about what's happening in rural Newfoundland and Labrador because that is who is being impacted by the closure of the 54 libraries.

Government's contention is that it's okay to close them and get into what they're doing because people are no more than 30 minutes away from their next library. Then point out when you say to them, well, some people are a lot further way, their answer is it's only 15 per cent of those who don't have access to the library, who are further away. Well, how is that an answer to the Mayor of Cartwright, for example, who has pointed out that the next library to them is a five-hour drive away over not a four-lane highway? As he says, it might as well be in Toronto for people, especially low-income people and seniors in Cartwright.

The fact that this government has such lack of concern for what's happening to individuals that oh, it's only 15 per cent is supposed to make it

all right, but it's not all right. These libraries should not be closing. And more and more I'm continuing to get emails and Facebook messages about people who, as they learn about the closures of libraries in this province, are absolutely shocked.

Nothing seems to shake this government, Mr. Speaker. I know that more petitions are going to be coming and I will continue standing here to try to get this government to see some sense. The excuses that are being given by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development do not wash. They just don't. The need for community libraries is urgent.

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.

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 as a result of *Budget 2016* X-ray services at the Bonavista Peninsula Community Health Centre will be closed after 4 p.m. until 8 a.m.; and

WHEREAS this will mean that anyone needing an X-ray after 4 p.m. will have to travel elsewhere via ambulance; and

WHEREAS as a result of *Budget 2016* laundry services will also be cut, resulting in laundry being transferred to St. John's;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately direct Eastern Health to reverse cuts to X-ray and laundry services at the Bonavista Peninsula Community Health Centre.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I'm presenting today, I continue to receive them from the Bonavista Peninsula. The petition I present today is signed by many residents of Bonavista and Elliston, as well as Birchy Cove. Residents of the Bonavista Peninsula are very concerned about how this budget, as the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune was saying a few minutes ago, is an attack on rural regions and rural communities.

These particular cuts to health care services in the Bonavista region will have a real impact on people. I heard from one parent who is very concerned about the impact it will have on his own family. He believes there will be no cost savings at all. He says one certified X-ray technician position, for the sake of lives, isn't saying money when I'll have to pay for an ambulance which government subsidizes, a nurse and/or a doctor to travel to Clarenville as well, an hour and half away from Bonavista, which is time enough to determine whether or not my son lives or not. He goes on to explain why he believes this move will not, in fact, save any money.

So we've asked before and we'll ask again: Is there any proof, is there any evidence to suggest that reducing these services will actually result in cost savings? Even if it does, it still may not be the right thing to do. But residents are saying, show us the proof that these moves will actually result in cost savings.

There's also a concern being expressed by residents of the Bonavista Peninsula about the availability of physicians. One resident says physicians will no longer want to come here to work with no diagnostic testing available on evenings and weekends. Locum physicians will also be reluctant to come here during physician shortages. Nurses are already working tremendous amounts of overtime and extra hours. The lack of X-ray services will result in increased workload with transfers to other facilities, usually paid at a higher rate for travel, increased stress for nurses monitoring patients that don't have a diagnosis.

This is a major patient safety issue, Mr. Speaker. X-ray is used as a diagnostic tool to rule out many different types of potentially life-threatening conditions. So this will affect residents all over the Bonavista Peninsula. It's

why hundreds of residents are signing petitions, and it's why we'll continue to raise this issue in in the House of Assembly, even if their own MHA won't.

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 people of Bell Island deserve to have access to services that will assist them to gain employment; and

WHEREAS their services have provided proven results to the people of our province; and

WHEREAS decisions made in this budget by the current government have removed the Advanced Education and Skills office from Bell Island;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to reinstate the office of Advanced Education and Skills on Bell Island.

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

Mr. Speaker, I've presented this a number of times, but last night I had a gathering to discuss some of the issues on the budget and had a number of citizens who are only now realizing, as the office closed the beginning of May, that these services no longer are at their disposal, that they no longer can avail of those services that they took for granted. They were services that they needed for everyday life, for enhancing their academics, for enhancing their employability, for providing for particular services – some around health care, some around mental health, some around some inclusion processes.

What I might note, too, that it's not only Bell Island that lost its AES office, it is other remote and isolated communities in this province,

particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Baie Verte, for example, again, very reliant, and it's only the last couple of weeks that I'm getting emails, as the critic, from community members in those respective communities. They, like the residents of Bell Island, are realizing the service is gone. We no longer have access to those types of services that we rely on and we need.

Now they're sort of saying we're left in limbo. They're saying go to your nearest service centre which, in some cases, is hundreds of kilometres away. In some cases, it's so remote when I go through the list, that it's almost impossible, unless you own your own plane or in the middle of winter you take your Ski-Doo 300 or 400 kilometres.

Baie Verte is one I've gotten numerous emails from people asking, how do we reinstate these services? How do we access the services that we're always reliant on and need? Bonavista, again – and we've noticed a number of cuts in the Bonavista area. This is another obviously devastating issue for people there. How do they avail of those services? Particularly in communities that are very vulnerable when it comes to their economy.

One year it may be up because the fishing industry or mining industry or another manufacturing industry may be very fluent and working very well. The markets may change. There may be devastation in those communities and all of a sudden the one centre they could go to get some supports and some guidance doesn't exist. Norris Point is another isolated area. Twillingate, another key area that is the hub for all that area, has lost its office.

Let's talk about Labrador; Hopedale, Nain and Mary's Harbour. You just can't go down to the nearest – you can't walk down the street, get a ride down, go in and get your services, explain your situation to the AES worker and then get the service you need and get guided somewhere else. It doesn't exist that way. Those services don't exist.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to put these petitions, not only from my own community and my own district, but the other seven offices that have closed in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Orders of the Day

MR. A. PARSONS: I would move – number 10 on the Order Paper – pursuant to Standing Order 11 that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, May 24, and number 11 on the Order Paper, pursuant to Standing Order 11 that the House not adjourn at 10 p.m. today, Tuesday, May 24, 2016.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

We haven't traditionally voted on these, but it is my understanding that I've been overlooking this. There are two motions to the floor; a motion that the House not adjourn at 5:30 o'clock today.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

A motion that the House do not adjourn at 10 o'clock today.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider resolution number six on the Order Paper, that the House resolve itself into

Committee to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on gasoline, Bill 20.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

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 considering Bill 20, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3."

Resolution

"That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on gasoline."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

MS. C. BENNETT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Happy birthday on behalf of all of us in the House. We'd like to wish you a really lovely birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. C. BENNETT: Madam Chair, it is a privilege every day I get the opportunity to stand in this House and today certainly is no different.

Today I'm going to speak to an important piece of legislation, Bill 20, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3.

Our government has made the first difficult but necessary steps to protect the future of our province, Madam Chair. Some of those decisions, like this gas tax, are temporary and will be reviewed as part of the supplemental budget. Others, like personal income taxes, were necessary to undo some of the revenue reductions put into motion by the previous administration which lacked foresight, as they were simply unsustainable.

Through *Budget 2016*, we have identified savings of \$282 million. We will invest \$76.4 million for responsible decisions like our Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement to help our most vulnerable.

Madam Chair, we were forced to make these difficult decisions because of the spending growth allowed by the former administration. They allowed their expenses to grow some \$600 million in one year, including banking on savings that they never actually had a plan on how they would actually save the money.

As part of the difficult decisions made in *Budget 2016*, an increase in gasoline tax is being introduced. Effective June 2, 2016, the tax on gasoline will move from 16.5 cents per litre to 33 cents per litre. As we said in the budget, this tax will be reviewed ahead of the fall 2016 supplemental budget. The tax rate on diesel products will increase by 5 cents per litre. The tax rate for aviation fuel will increase by 1.8 cents per litre.

This is a measure that was identified during the public Government Renewal Initiative consultations as a method to address the dire fiscal situation that our province faces. People suggested they were used to paying a higher rate for a litre of gas and that as a temporary revenue measure government could increase the gas tax, while keeping prices in line with recent price highs.

Those increases in the gasoline tax are estimated to provide \$142.8 million annually. It is important to keep in mind that the gas tax changes of an increase of 16.5 cents per litre will

be reviewed every six months. In the event the price of oil increases and leads to a substantial increase in the price of gas, that amount will be reduced.

Our government does recognize that a part of this province requires special consideration. That is why a separate bill introduces a reduction of gasoline tax of 10 cents per litre provided for gasoline purchased at retail sales and used in motor vehicles in the Labrador boarder zones. This applies to Labrador West, which includes Labrador City and Wabush and the South Coast of Labrador, from the border of the Province of Quebec to and including the community of Red Bay.

The purpose of this program is to ensure that gas prices in Labrador remain competitive with the prices in Quebec. By partially alleviating the gas tax on the border zones, the price of gas will be comparable in both jurisdictions. This would remove any price incentive for cross-border shopping and impact on local retailers.

Increasing taxes is not something our government wants to do, but it must be done to address the deficit created by the lack of planning by the former administration.

Madam Chair, we made it clear, as part of *Budget 2016*, that the increases in gasoline tax will be temporary. We have also indicated that we expect to make a further announcement this coming fall in our supplemental budget. As I've said earlier, the increase in gas tax is clearly outlined in the budget and we have been very transparent about that increase; the tax will be 33 cents a litre.

I want to assure the Members of this House, as well as those listening at home, that there are mechanisms available to the Minister of Finance that would allow me, if necessary, to remit or rebate a portion of the additional 16½ cents per litre on gas tax, should the price of oil rise and the price of gasoline fall. We will continue to monitor monthly the price of gasoline and, as noted, we continue to plan to review this tax as part of the fall supplemental budget.

This was a measure that was identified during the public Government Renewal Initiative

consultations as a method to address what is a dire fiscal situation for our province.

Madam Chair, the increase in gasoline tax is estimated to provide \$142.8 million annually. And as I've said, it is important to keep in mind that this tax increase will be reviewed every six months in the event the price of oil increases and leads to a substantial increase in the price of gas so we can make the adjustments as needed.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is certainly a pleasure for me to rise in this hon. House today to speak on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it gives me no pleasure whatsoever to speak to yet another bill that imposes yet another tax on the fine folks of Newfoundland and Labrador, Madam Chair. And I can state unequivocally that I will not be supporting this bill. I'm going to outline my reasons for that, Madam Chair, because I am absolutely baffled at the measures this government has introduced which will leave this province in a far worse state than it has ever been.

We can look back to the '90s. Times were rough then. Our GDP-to-debt ratio was much higher in the '90s than what it is in fact, Madam Chair, today. Yet, no drastic measures were taken by the Liberal government of that era. What we see today, people in the province are still in shock and still reeling from the imposition of tax after tax after tax which, as I said when I got up last week, will kill job after job after job after job.

The minister, when she spoke, just said that \$142 million will be raised by the introduction of this tax. I'm left with the question: What are you going to lose on the other end? How many jobs are going to fall out of the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador because of this tax? What are we going to lose in tourism revenue?

Your projections that you have in the budget documents in terms of revenue that will be earned from the industry, will they be on target when we get to sit in this House next year in April, or will they be way off, Madam Chair, because the price of gas was so high that the rubber-tire traffic just didn't bother to come to Newfoundland and Labrador? That is my great fear.

There's an expression in Newfoundland and Labrador – there's a saying people can cut off their nose to spite their face. I think there's measure after measure after measure in this budget that the line of thinking somewhere was that it will benefit the province when, in actual fact, we are going to see the proof will be in the pudding. We're going to be far worse off than we ever were before.

Let's talk about the impact on tourism, Madam Chair. How many people are really going to jump aboard their mobile homes and come to Newfoundland and Labrador where they will be paying the highest price in all of Canada for gas? As I was driving home last Friday, I listened to *Open Line*. Right now, we're about sixth place in Canada. Come June 1, the cost of gas in Newfoundland and Labrador will be the highest for all of Canada. Think about that. That, in turn, translates to we will have the worst tourism industry in all of Canada because people will not bother to come.

What are the impacts going to be on people? When I did my petition a little while ago I talked about how during the election all we heard was people matter, #people matter. Every speech in the House, you look in Hansard, people matter.

Well, how quickly did you forget about people once the election was over on November 30? There is not one iota in this budget that can prove to me or anyone else in Newfoundland and Labrador that you actually care about people. This is a slap in the face to the people of this province who had the trust and the confidence in you for something better. Well, they got change. It was change in the worst kind of way, Madam Chair.

If all else fails, in 2019, I will keep saying, people please do not forget how we were misled and mistreated during this election campaign.

What a letdown we have all been experiencing, Madam Chair.

Let's talk about the impact on businesses. So you own a transport company, you own an aquaculture business, you own a grocery store, you own a hardware store. The increase cost that the business owner incurs is going to be passed on to the consumer. Now, all of a sudden, we're paying more for gas. We're paying more for that piece of lumber. We're paying more for that food we want to buy. We're paying more to go visit our grandchildren. We're paying more for health care.

Let's talk about health care. Regionalization – I'm picking up that this government is going to move on regionalization in the biggest kind of way, to the detriment once again of the people of this province and especially to the detriment of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

What's going to happen? These people now – you can't get the services in your community; you have to drive 100 kilometres away. You have to drive for an hour to get there and an hour to get back, and guess what? You're paying for it out of your own pocket. Yet again, the people of rural Newfoundland and Labrador are hit because all of these measures have a trickle-down impact.

You shut down the Hermitage clinic. People in Seal Cove and Hermitage and Gaultois and McCallum now are all going to have to drive to Harbour Breton. All of a sudden, it's going to cost them \$60 to go see a doctor. It is absolutely outrageous, Madam Chair, what this budget is doing to the people of the province and, in particular, the people of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I just heard in the opening preamble, the minister said it's not something this Liberal government wanted to do. So I ask the question: Why did you do it then, because you do have other options? You can get up and get on with as much rhetoric as you like in Question Period, the fact remains there are other options.

There's a \$30 million slush fund. There's a \$20 million fund with Fire and Emergency Services for unforeseen circumstances and unforeseen emergencies. There's a federal government we

can go to if there's an unforeseen emergency, Madam Chair. We can call a special meeting of the people's House to ask for additional monies if there's an extenuating disaster. So why do we have to park a \$30 million slush fund, lose our health care, lose our libraries, and face increases in taxes and gasoline to the tune that we're seeing in this budget? It is absolutely outrageous and unbelievable. There are other options.

Why are you adding an extra \$30 million in line by line expenditures year over year for all-day kindergarten if we're at such a time of crisis, as you say in your rhetoric that you get up with as a Liberal government? Why are you adding \$30 million to the bottom line for all-day kindergarten? Why now? Yes, we all agree it's a good idea. Why now? Why not wait until next year?

Why not let people keep some of this money in their pockets to try to adapt to the changes you're bringing in? At least give them some time to make some changes to their spending habits, to their household expenditures, to decide where they want to live, given that this will be the most expensive place in all of Canada for anyone to live. Give people time. Phase it in slowly if you absolutely must do it – and I disagree that you must, because as I just outlined, a few of the options that you have to consider.

Madam Chair, as I was driving home, another thing I heard on *Open Line*. The host of *Backtalk* had a little add on, and it referred to the budget as an amateur hour piece of work. I have to say I agree with it wholeheartedly, because no seasoned politician would inflict this kind of pain and misery on its people, the people they say they want to give a better tomorrow to. Well, if we're going to get to that better tomorrow we have to survive today. How are we going to survive today with the budget measures that are introduced in *Budget 2016*? I have no idea.

This budget is destroying business confidence. It is destroying consumer confidence, Madam Chair. We're going to be a long time trying to recover from the economic downturn that will be triggered as a result of the regressive measures introduced in this budget.

Madam Chair, if you look at the bills we're bringing in and the bills on the Order Paper – and anyone from the public can go on to the House of Assembly website and see the Order Paper and what motions are in place – you see motion after motion to increase tax after tax after tax. What are all of these measures? Who are they impacting the most?

They are impacting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the people this government tried to say they cared about in their #peoplematter hashtag that we haven't heard once since they got elected. Not once have we heard them say people matter, because they can't say it. They can't say it on the one hand and then act on the other hand the way they have with this budget, which clearly demonstrates their actions. I've always been a strong believer, Madam Chair, that actions speak far louder than words. We certainly know that any words that come out across the way we can't trust these days, and that's a fact.

People matter. With people matter, we need to eliminate these taxes. We need to get back to the drawing board with this budget and make some changes. You do have some room. There are some areas you can manoeuvre. Your backbench does have the strength and the ability to do it by banding together. You do have much more strength. I recognize many of you are rookies but the power you have is unbelievable to effect change, and you can effect that change behind closed doors but you have the power to do it in your hands. It's right there.

Madam Chair, when we look at the budget calculator – and there have been a number of versions of the budget calculator. The one from the Department of Finance, in my opinion, is the weakest one that's out there. It doesn't include what all of these motions we see on the Order Paper, it doesn't include the impact of them. Yes, it looks at what the change in your income tax is going to be and it looks at you're losing the Home Heating Rebate. We've taken that away from you but we're giving you – if you're on the low income end of the scale, we're putting back \$76 million.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask for Members' co-operation to keep the noise levels down a little bit.

MS. PERRY: Well, that takes care of some people, Madam Chair. It still doesn't look at the additional monies that are coming out of the people on all ends of the spectrum, whether you make \$15,000 or \$150,000. It doesn't count the increase in insurance that you're going to be paying. It doesn't count the increase in gas tax that you're going to be paying.

It doesn't count the increase in expenses you are going to have to incur, because if you want to borrow a book from a library it's going to cost you \$60 to drive over an hour to get to the library. If you want to go to the doctor it's going to cost you \$60 to fill up your tank to drive over an hour to get to the next clinic. That's the impact of what these measures in this budget are, Madam Chair. It doesn't factor in what you're going to pay in the additional cost to your groceries, because your groceries are going up because the price of gas is going up.

I certainly am delighted to have come to my feet on this speech to raise these issues and to implore once again with the Liberal caucus: you really do have the ability to effect change on this budget. You can do it before it's too late, before this budget comes down, before the draconian measures rip the life out of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Another thing, Madam Chair, we haven't talked about is the mental anguish that this budget is causing on people and the stress and the anxiety. I do believe that the Members opposite also campaigned on doing what it can for mental health in this province. This budget has severely worsened the stress and anxiety levels of people in this province.

I gravely fear we're going to see an increase, Madam Chair – we're going to see an increase in mental health. We're going to see an increase in depression. We're going to see an increase in people who really can't cope with the pressures of day-to-day life because this government has made day-to-day life worse for the vast majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We talk about the price of oil. This budget was based on oil at \$40 a barrel. Well, oil has been

trading, as we all know, much higher than \$40 a barrel for the last few weeks. I do believe today it's somewhere in the vicinity of \$48 a barrel. What's going to happen with all that additional money?

Is it really necessary that you tear apart rural Newfoundland and Labrador at this juncture? Is it really necessary that you impose this kind of additional stress on families and people of Newfoundland and Labrador? Is it really necessary that you dig into their pockets to pay for your study?

You criticized our government for doing studies. I agree, there should be a study on Labrador, no problem with the concept, but now, at this point in time, when we're in a financial crisis? That \$750,000 could keep libraries open. Where are your priorities?

Madam Chair, \$30 million for all-day kindergarten. What did I hear when I was home this weekend. We're paying \$30 million so we can have two or three additional hours of play-based learning at a time when we're not going to be able to buy groceries or heat our homes.

Madam Chair, there are other decisions that can be made. You, as a Liberal caucus, have the ability to effect that change. Get together, band together, speak to your executive and tell them the things that you feel need to be changed. Let's make change happen.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Business, Tourism, Culture and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to be on my feet to actually speak in response to the Member opposite. Certainly, when we look at Newfoundland and Labrador, people do matter. For the Member opposite to make such comments insinuating otherwise is shameful.

The budget 2016-2017 had to take some extraordinary measures to raise revenue, and increasing the gas tax as a temporary measure is one of those, where 16½ cents will be added to the gas tax.

When we did the Government Renewal Initiative and I held a session in St. Anthony, this was something that was raised time and time again by a number of residents in the room. That they did not mind paying more, given the lower price of gas we were experiencing because it was a means of which more revenue could be raised to help out with the serious fiscal crisis that was happening because of the mismanagement of the previous administration.

I do want to say that for her to put out the commentary that tourism is going to be destroyed and because of this impact – I would say that I would like to see the facts and the information of where are those cancellations and bookings for hotels and for accommodations and bus travel. Because all indications point that 2016-2017 will see an increase in visitation in tourism; bookings are up when it comes to accommodators across this province; interest is higher on our website; and we have a tremendous amount of motor coach traffic that has booked. There is no indication in any way, shape or form that we will see such a reduction in tourism as the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune has prophesied, or pontificated, or however she's put forward this information.

She's put forward another thing about the libraries, about having to spend \$60 to go to a library. People won't have to spend \$1 to go to a library or to access books in Newfoundland and Labrador because under the regional model, \$652,000 will be reinvested into being able to provide more books, more electronic books and the ability to enhance books by mail so people can get books delivered right to their door. It doesn't have to cost one penny – one penny – to leave your house. They can be delivered directly to you through the mail system.

And if we look at the commentary of saying that Fire and Emergency Services has a \$20 million slush fund – seriously, that's really shameful when you're talking about emergencies that happen. This fund that she's actually talking about is not within Fire and Emergency

Services. It's a contingency fund of \$30 million to deal with things that are contingent. If there are emergencies like forest fires, then this money would get utilized and it has to go to the House of Assembly to get passed. It would be tabled – the expense – so it would be open and transparent. This is in no way, shape or form any type of slush fund. This is about being responsible.

I say to the Member opposite that we have a \$1.8 billion deficit, so if there are no contingencies of which this fund needs to be used, it will not be spent. This is not about taking every single dollar, as your administration did, every single bit and then some and many more, and maxed out credit cards and spent and spent and spent so that we can't afford the things and that we're in this situation where we have to put 16½ cents temporarily on gas because of your mismanagement. It's a bit rich for anyone on the other side to make any commentary otherwise.

When you talk about choosing between groceries and heat – what the Member opposite was talking about that it's going to cost \$60 because of this measure. If you have a small car that burns six litres per 100 kilometres, if you drive 100 kilometres, return, that's about \$1, with 16½ cents more. That's what you're paying, about \$1 more to drive 100 kilometres.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do the math.

MR. MITCHELMORE: You talk about math. It's amazing. With that kind of math, it's no wonder we have the deficit that has ballooned and out of control because this is the type of math and spending that they do –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: It's absolutely outrageous. I have to say that when you look at what's coming out of the other side, saying that they're concerned about money right now. They weren't concerned about money for the last number of years, and now we're in a position where we have raise revenues so that we can pay the bills and provide services to people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to make commentary about the Member opposite because there are measures, though, to help offset when you look at the gas tax for business – because she talked about how this is going to impact business. Gasoline that is consumed by fishing, farming, logging, manufacturing and processing, transportation by boat, locomotive, the generation of electricity and household fuels can be exempted from this complete increase in gas tax through the Department of Finance because of the measures that exist.

So not everybody will be paying this gas tax. This will not drive the price of everything out of control as the Member opposite is saying. There are measures of which we have taken to look at making sure that those who are vulnerable in society are protected, that there are mitigating impacts such as having an enhanced Seniors' Benefit, having the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement where there is \$76.4 million that will go back to people, individuals, families, people with disabilities, seniors that are earning up to \$45,000 where they will be able to see an offset, where they will be able to have income for any mitigating impact.

If we look at the situation that we're faced here in the province, this is a measure that must be taken. The price of fuel is lower now than what it's been in quite some time. With the addition of the tax, we would be on par with where we were last year and we've paid more. We've paid more per litre for fuel. That is something that when fuel was higher it did not, in my view, impact – when the fuel was at 80 cents or 90 cents or a dollar recently, did we see drastic drops in the price of groceries or other items because fuel was lower? Have we seen airline tickets drop significantly because jet fuel is lower?

Things are driven by economics. If we look at the transportation of goods and services, we're seeing in areas where transportation is increasing. We're finding ways to be competitive in business where we're looking at new ways to make sure that we're finding those efficiencies. We work with businesses all the time to make sure that they are more competitive, that they're looking at opportunities and that they can find ways to reduce their costs so we can be competitive in Newfoundland and

Labrador to make sure that our cost of goods and services that are produced here.

Another thing we're working at with the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency is we're developing a new food security strategy and agricultural growth strategy. We're seeing where new products are growing here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We've had the ability to plant canola for the very first time. We've been planting winter wheat, doing soybean. We've been growing grapes here in Newfoundland and Labrador. So there are a lot of things that we can do as a province if we remain focused.

We have to be focused on the renewable sectors that we have such as the agricultural sector, our fishery, our forestry. Look at where those natural resources – we have tremendous riches here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I would say to the Members opposite that if we could work together on matters rather than make the commentary and the banter that the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune has put forward, it's completely inaccurate. The statements and the fear mongering that she's putting out there around looking at tourism and looking at saying it's going to cost \$60 because of this 16.5 cent increase in the price of gas is completely wrong. I had to stand up and correct the record.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Warr): I remind all hon. Members when the Member is making his remarks, I'd ask all hon. Members to respect order and decorum in the House.

Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I definitely need that protection.

Mr. Chair, I just listened to the minister get up and talk about the 16.5 cents a litre. He said what the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune had to say was shameful. I'd say it's

shameful if you're not listening to the people in your district –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: – because let me tell you something, Minister – I can state, and I am sure I can say for every one of the Members over there – if you're not listening to the people in your area it is shameful, because people are talking, people are concerned about this budget.

I happened this weekend to be in the district belonging to the Member for Placentia – St. Mary's. I was in her district this weekend. I stopped in talking to a bunch of gentlemen who were there. They were real good friends of my family for years. We were talking about the fishery and everything else there. I spoke to them. It was amazing because you haven't seen them in a while, and the conversation came up right away about the budget and what effect it's having on ordinary Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

You got to be listening. That's what people want you to do. People in your districts want you to listen to them. They've been talking. They've been asking you. They've been pleading with you to listen to them.

As a politician – I've been here for eight years. I go to different events and I listen to people. Sometimes I'll agree with them, sometimes I won't agree with them, but what the minister just got up and said that time was crazy, because he's not listening to the people. You're not listening to people in your districts.

There is not one of you over there who can tell me that you're not getting it from everyone in your district saying this is a bad budget and telling you the effects it's having on them. I know it, because everybody out there is talking about it. They're talking about the effects of this budget. How it's affecting them. How it's affecting their lives, and it is.

This 16.5 cents a litre has a huge effect on them. It's going to make things more expensive.

AN HON. MEMBER: Huge.

MR. K. PARSONS: Huge. It really is. It's going to affect the cost of food. It's going to affect what people are going to be paying in the stores.

Most people are on a fixed income. Most people have their cheque come in for that month and they can tell you what they're going to do – they can say, listen, this is X number of dollars I make and here's what I have to do with it. That's how people live. That's how hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want to provide for their family, that's how they live. That's how I lived for years and years. People want to make sure they have a budget put out so they know exactly where every dollar is going to.

You charge 16.5 cents a litre and the minister gets up and says it will cost you a dollar to go somewhere. Well, every time you jump in your car it costs you a dollar? That adds up over a month – that adds up.

Tell people in rural Newfoundland when they go to the grocery store the extra, extra expense it's going to cost on their groceries. That adds up, and it's adding up. All you're doing is adding up.

How about the impact it has on insurance for their cars.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: You're chirping over there, you're chirping over there.

I hope everyone of ye get up and talk about how good this 16.5 cents is – then chirp. You come in this House of Assembly and you talk about things, you get up and talk about them. Get up and talk and tell the people in your district why 16.5 cents a litre is really good. That's a good thing to do. Tell them why the expense on their food – tell the seniors in your district the extra cost they have to pay for their food is good. Tell them it's great. You're over there chirping.

Well, I tell you, the cost of 16.5 cents, what it has – it may be a dollar. It may be a dollar here or a dollar there on a trip, but that all adds up. It

adds up to people who are working hard; people who are trying to provide for their families.

You all just went home for a long weekend. You all went back to your districts and everything else, just like I did. I listen to the people. I listen to the people in my district, and this budget is a hard budget.

The Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune said the backbenchers can make a difference. You can make a difference. Stand up, stand up. You have to stand up and say listen, this is hard on the people in my district. This is hard on the people in Harbour Main. This is hard on the people in Exploits. This is hard on the people in Stephenville. Talk to them.

There are changes that can be. There are choices. This budget is all about choices, and choices you made. The 16.5 cents a litre you're going to charge extra on gas is all about choices.

Now, the Minister of Tourism got up that time and talked about, well, I talk to people in my district. They tell me, listen, this is going to be hard on us, this is going to be hard. I plan to go – myself, I love to visit different parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. My favourite trip I'll make is to Millertown, up to my moose hunting trip every year, and that's what people do.

We love our province. We love Newfoundland and Labrador. A lot of people travel all around the province, but put the extra cost of 16.5 – and people will make decisions. People might make the decision on how far they go, because it is cost. There are a lot of costs related to it.

You look at last week when it came out that it's the most expensive place to drive a car. The most expensive place in all of Canada to drive a car, and it's not only because of the gas price. It's the extra 15 per cent people are going to pay for their insurance. It's the extra HST. It's the extra over 300 new fees that were increased in this budget.

AN HON. MEMBER: To licence a vehicle.

MR. K. PARSONS: Licence a vehicle. All that added up. Nowhere else in Canada – and we're telling them that's a good thing. That's a great

thing, yeah. Nowhere else in Canada is it more expensive to operate a vehicle than here in Newfoundland and Labrador. If the minister wants to say something that's shameful. Well, that's shameful. That's shameful.

I go back to the same thing my Members said there. There are choices to be made in this budget. There are choices we have to make, and the choices you made are really affecting hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. You're not listening to the people who elected you. You're not listening to what they're saying.

What they're telling you is that this budget is too hard. It's too much, too fast. Most of them realize we're in a financial bind. They realize that. Most of the people in your districts realize that, but you just can't suck it all out at once. You just can't take it out all at once on them, and that's what you're doing.

People have to look at the expenses they have and look at what it's going to cost them. After July 1, it's going to be unbelievable. It's a lot of hardship on people who are working hard, people who want to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. Young people who want to build homes, young people who want to stay here, and they're our future.

The things we're doing to our seniors. I am going to get up again a couple of times hopefully and I'll talk about different areas that affect us. You really have to think about this. You really have to think about what the people in your districts are saying to you. I ask every one of you to get up over there and tell us why the people in your district believe that 16.5 cents is a good thing – with no cap on it.

The minister says it's temporary. Yes, it's temporary. When is it going to be cancelled? What's the cap? Is there any cap on it? If the price of gas goes up to a \$1.60, is there a cap? Is it \$1.30? Is it \$1.20? What's the cap?

There is no plan in place. This was just brought in with absolutely no planning. Understanding the effect it has on hardworking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with no plan. You never looked at it and said okay, once the gas gets to \$1.20 a litre then we'll reduce this

tax. That's what the plan should have been. There should have been some kind of a plan put in place. That's what I'd plan.

A lady asked me what my plan was. I would have planned. If I was going to increase the gas I would have had a cap on it so that it wouldn't go too high for people. That would be a plan. That's a plan, but you have no plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Absolutely no plan in place. That's what we'd plan. That would be a simple thing to do. That's what your constituents would like you to do. They had hoped that you'd have a plan so that they wouldn't be with all this extra expense that you're putting on them, the extra costs.

The Member says oh, it's only \$1 that it's going to cost to go anywhere.

MS. PERRY: Terrible. It is shameful.

MR. K. PARSONS: It is shameful because how about the cost that it is for that business person in small communities that has to go get all of his fuel, bring it back and run his business. He's got an added cost. Who do you think is going to pay for the added cost?

AN HON. MEMBER: Pass it on.

MR. K. PARSONS: Pass it on is right. Pass it on to the same person that you're putting 15 per cent on their insurance, 16.5 cents you're doing to the extra gas they're paying. Pass it on to all the hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because that's exactly what you're doing. That's what this budget is doing. It's making the hard-working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pay for it. They don't mind paying for it. They don't mind at all. They don't mind.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Chair, I just want to stand for a few minutes to correct a few things. I know the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune just made a mistake when she was saying that there was fund in emergency NL for \$20 million. I spoke to her outside after and I explained to her that there's no such thing as an emergency \$20 million fund in emergency NL. I just wanted to let her know that there's no such fund.

I just heard the speaker and a few other people speak. There's absolutely no doubt that this is a budget that no one wishes they had to bring in. Then again, we all said it and we all said it before that a lot of these measures are temporary, and a lot of these measures have to be put in place to stabilize the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador, to stabilize the fiscal imbalance in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Chair.

I hear the Members opposite saying: Why didn't you do this? I ask the Members opposite: Why didn't you make decisions five, six or seven years ago that would have improved the fiscal situation of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They stand up here on a regular basis and say, here is what you should have done. Why did you spend \$30 million down on Parsons Pond to do some drilling, \$30 million? There's a lot of the levy gone there. Why didn't you do your homework on the \$200 million out in Abitibi? There's a lot of your funds there, Mr. Chair. How about the \$11 million down in Roddickton, where they gave \$11 million for a project and they wouldn't even put a wharf there? They had no market and they spent \$11 million. So we're up to \$240 million now.

I understand it's a tough budget – I understand – but don't go standing over there preaching when you're on that side and you spent like drunken sailors. I apologize to drunken sailors because there's no way in the world they could spend that much money in that quick a time. At least they spend their own.

I understand it's a tough budget, but I can tell you one thing, when we went up in the district there last Friday and we announced \$24 million, I didn't hear anybody say you shouldn't be spending that. I didn't hear anybody say the

Members opposite, the Member up there for CBS, I didn't see him up there saying, b'y, you shouldn't have spent any money up there. You shouldn't be spending the money up there.

I heard the mayor standing up and saying, yes b'y, this is great. It's a great improvement. There are going to be great improvements. So you get this impression that everything is being done. We had a meeting – I think it was the Conception Bay North town council last Wednesday night, myself and the Minister of Transportation and Works. Do you know what they said? The Northeast Avalon –

AN HON. MEMBER: Joint Council.

MR. JOYCE: – Joint Council. Do you know what they said? Finally we had a minister to sit down and discuss this. Not only did we have one, we had two. We have other meetings arranged around that, Mr. Chair. That's what they said.

Just the other day, we announced \$24 million spread all around the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Do you hear any complaints and say, oh b'y, that's a waste of money? Of course you never. Is everything in this budget good? Of course not, I'll be the first one to say it's not. It's actually not.

The other thing about it, Mr. Chair, there's a lot more money coming in infrastructure – a lot more money coming. That's how we're going to improve our towns. When you stand up and you say, oh well, this is bad – increasing the gas tax, yes, it's bad. Can we do anything about it right now? No, we're hoping that once we get the revenues, we're going to eliminate that. That is part of what you call a budget.

I hear the Members opposite – and I know the Member was just up saying you hear it in your district, you hear it, putting us on the spot. How about Bill 29 when you rammed it through? How about Bill 29 when you all stood up proudly and said you have to stand up on Bill 29. How many of you over there – I will even give up my time. Tell me how many of ye stood up over there then and listened to your constituents. Go ahead.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Chair, I'd like to inform the hon. Member that I had no constituents of mine call me on Bill 29.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Service NL.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Chair, I can tell you one thing, if he had no constituents calling him on Bill 29, I don't know why they put closure on it, if it was such a great bill. I don't know why they put closure on such a great bill. Muskrat Falls was another one. Muskrat Falls pushed through the House of Assembly. Here we are now putting everything here on through the House of Assembly, laying it on the table, letting everybody speak. Any time they had a contentious bill, they rammed in on through.

The former transportation and works minister – I can't get over this one, when he's talking about Coley's Point school. I just can't get over that one. The Member – I don't even know the name of his district, Mr. Chair.

AN HON. MEMBER: Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. JOYCE: Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

Mr. Speaker, there's something I have to tell the residents out in Coley's Point and out in the surrounding area for the school. There's something I have to tell them. Before you can start your school and put it out, you have to do a design.

The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island was the minister of Transportation and Works who refused to do the design of the building that was in there for four years – announced for four years. Four years that school was announced. We stood up in this House and he read it out, for four years. He stands up now and tries to put the Member here on the spot, when that Member sitting right there – you can stand up now. If I'm saying anything wrong,

stand up and say I'm saying something wrong. That Member didn't even do the design of the building. He wouldn't do the design and he got the audacity to stand up here now and say: Where's Coley's Point school?

If he really feels that it is strong, walk out and tell the residents in the area: I didn't do the design. We announced it but the Member –

AN HON. MEMBER: Nothing to tender.

MR. JOYCE: Nothing to tender. So that's the kind of stuff we are listening to here. We understand it's a bad budget. We understand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: If they Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island wants to be the hero and if he wants to turn around and say to everybody here we were so good and you're so bad, walk out and have a public meeting. Let him stand up if I'm saying anything wrong, Mr. Chair. Let him stand.

Let him go out and explain why they announced it for four years. Glenn Littlejohn stood up there and he voted for every budget the Coley's Point school wasn't in – every budget, Glenn Littlejohn voted for. Did you hear any of those Members say: You can't vote for the budget because the Coley's Point school is not there? Did you hear him? He never did it. Do you know why, Mr. Chair? He didn't have the guts to do it. Now the Members opposite are saying if you vote against the budget, you vote against Coley's Point school.

Let me tell you something. Let the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island go out and have a public meeting. Let them explain why for four years it was announced and why, as the minister, he didn't do the design work to get it to tender. Here's an opportunity – here's a great opportunity.

I have no problem with the budget that we had, Mr. Chair – I have no problem standing up and saying, yeah, there are difficult decisions. I will be the first to admit it. I have absolutely no problem standing up and saying we had to make

difficult decisions. We had lots of opportunities to do it.

I can tell you one thing – here is the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island over there laughing now. Why don't you go out and laugh at the people in Coley's Point. Why don't you go out and tell them how much you're laughing? Why don't you go out and tell – he is over there laughing –

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. JOYCE: He is over there laughing at the people. You know what he's laughing for? Because he knows, Mr. Chair, that he had the opportunity to do the design.

I can tell you something else. If you want to talk about wasting money, let's just talk about some waste of money. There's an extra ferry that they got built down in Romania – an extra ferry down in Romania. Do you know why it's in Romania? Do you know why they are down there trying to charge us docking fees? Because this Member, Transportation and Works, ordered a new ferry, got a new ferry built but didn't build the dock enough so he could dock the boat.

They are down there now trying to charge us \$50,000 a month for docking fees because this Member, the same one who wouldn't do Coley Point school, the same one who wanted the ferry for Bell Island, the same one who didn't have the foresight to go and say we have to put a dock in here so this ferry can dock – it's down in Romania. They are trying to charge the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador \$50,000 a month for docking fees because that government never had things prepared.

Now if we had \$50,000 a month, Mr. Chair, every month, three or four libraries open. Thirty million dollars for Parsons Pond when you wanted to be in the oil business, you wanted to become Jed Clampett, \$30 million; you just think about how many infrastructure projects we could have had here, how many things that we didn't have to do.

Talk about the \$200 million for Abitibi, just think about that. Just think about the funds we could have had, Mr. Chair, yet now we are being

vilified because we have a correct the mistakes of the past. We are being vilified.

Mr. Chair, when you want to look at some of the things of the past, they say oh, we can't talk about the past. Let's not talk about the past. Mr. Chair, let's talk about the future. Let's talk about \$50,000 a month of ferries being docked in Romania because they didn't do their work.

They have the audacity – that same minister is over there laughing at the people from Coley's Point about not doing the design. Let him go over and meet the people in Coley's Point. See if he has the guts to go over and say I was the minister of Transportation and Works and I wouldn't do the design work. We announced it, but I wouldn't do the design work. Let's just see it. I'll even arrange the meeting. Mr. Chair. Guess what? We know it's a bad budget. We know it's a tough budget. We wish we did not have to make –

CHAIR: I would remind the hon. Member –

MR. JOYCE: By leave?

CHAIR: – his time is expired.

MR. JOYCE: Time's up, okay.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: I'm very happy to stand and to speak to this bill.

The previous speaker before me, the Member for Humber – Bay of Islands, said that really what we need to do is stabilize the economy. What I would say, Mr. Chair, in fact what that this budget does is destabilize the economy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. ROGERS: We do not just have a revenue problem, which was started by the former

administration, by the tax cuts we saw over the years, but we also have an employment crisis. What this government has done is this government is cutting jobs. They know for sure that they are cutting 650 jobs in the public service, and we know that for every job cut in the public service that has an unintended consequence but very concrete consequence of loss of jobs in the private sector as well.

But there are also jobs being lost through attrition. We're going to see the roll-out of a number of other job cuts, and then this government again it's doing their one-two punch and we know that they are looking at job cuts come September. So the effect that has had is further destabilizing the economy. People are sitting on their wallets, understandably so. People are probably cancelling summer vacations because they don't know if they will have a job after the next mini-budget. These are the realities. I would think that the Government Renewal Initiative has measures that they are employing, and I would call them grim. This is the grim news of a Government Renewal Initiative in terms of the effects on the province.

So I again posit that the minister is wrong. This is not stabilizing the economy, but in fact this budget is destabilizing the economy. The effect of job losses is unemployment. The effect of job losses is not stabilization; it's further unemployment. Already we have the highest unemployment in the country, and we are looking at further increases in unemployment – again, total destabilization of the economy. Trying to balance the books is not about stabilizing the economy.

I would like to say, also, Mr. Chair, that perhaps those most affected by these job losses, which will destabilize our economy, are the last ones in. It's our youth, our young people, many of them who are well educated, many of them who got their education with in mind serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We lost a number of them when the Conservatives were in power, when they had their steep job cuts in 2013. We lost people with Ph.Ds. who specifically went to school so that they could work in a public service to serve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. What a noble thing. They could have gone off to other

provinces and made more money, but no, they wanted to be here to work in the public service here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, as we know, the Status of Women Councils, women centres all over the province have a day of action today, and there will be more activities in the next few days following. They are looking at what would happen if women centres close down, what would happen if women went on a general strike. Because we know that happened in Iceland; women went on a general strike. We know that women are over 50 per cent of the population and do a lot of the public service jobs. A lot of the jobs in health are held by women.

I don't know if people here in this House know that 80 per cent of people employed in the public health care sector are women. Those jobs are held by women. So predominantly, we have women who are healing our sick, who are caring for our sick, caring for our seniors. Also, the majority of teachers in our province are women. This is where we're seeing some of the cuts. But imagine if women went on strike. If mothers, home care workers, paid home care workers, imagine what would happen if they just said I'm out of this for now. I'm just out of this for now because we're not being treated fairly.

So what I would like to do also, Mr. Chair, is refer a little bit to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, who did a gender analysis using a very specific gender analysis tool that is also used by the United Nations to look at how budgets or any kind of fiscal measurements affect women. They do affect women differently because women are proportionately more economically vulnerable than men are. I'll get a little bit to that.

This was released today, and I think it's quite interesting that this was released during the day of action that women's centres all across the province are taking. We all know how hard the women of Newfoundland and Labrador work. Many of us know of a Newfoundland saying of women in Newfoundland and Labrador, that women work from stars in the sky morning to stars in the sky night. Meaning they're up before the sun, and they go to bed and they finish their work after the sun goes down. So women work

from stars in the sky morning and stars in the sky night.

Rhonda Payne, a beloved theatre writer, director, and actor in the province who passed away a number of years ago, wrote a play call *Stars in the Sky Morning*, which was about the work that women do.

We know women have a big hand in the fishery in the province as well, hence working from stars in the sky morning to stars in the sky night. They made sure everybody had something to eat. They made sure the fishermen's lunch pail was packed, to help their partners when their partners were going out on the water. They processed the fish on shore. They cared for the children. They taught the children. They nursed their communities. So women have played an incredible role in the economic prosperity of this province; have played, undeniably, an incredible role.

Now, 67 per cent of women in Newfoundland and Labrador – this was a new statistic for me. I had never quite seen it this way, but 67 per cent of women in Newfoundland and Labrador are working age between the ages 25 and 54 years old. I didn't know that. I hadn't seen that specific, that kind of demographic isolated in that way.

What we have here is a budget that kills jobs. We know there's going to be a cut in jobs in the health care sector, in the education sector. Again, the majority of workers in those sectors are women, and this budget is killing those jobs. So we're affecting a large group of women.

What this budget, in fact, should be doing, if the budget was truly to stabilize the economy, is to create jobs. That's not what's happening. This budget is not creating jobs at all. What women want – again, 67 per cent of women in Newfoundland and Labrador are working age between 25 and 54, and they want real jobs. They don't want to rely on the social safety nets, but some women, a lot more women than men, are in precarious jobs and also temporary part-time jobs. So we do need those social safety nets, but women want real jobs. We know women in Newfoundland and Labrador are ready to work from stars in the sky morning to stars in the sky night.

When we see the closure of schools, who does that most affect? Women. When we see teacher layoffs, who does that most affect? Women. We see 80 per cent of health care workers in our province are women.

We also know the average wage for a working woman full-time in Newfoundland and Labrador is \$30,000 a year, the lowest in Canada. The average wage for a woman in Newfoundland and Labrador working full-time is \$30,000. Imagine, our women who are working so hard are making the least amount in all of Newfoundland and Labrador; yet, they will still have to pay the levy, which is interesting. They will be hit disproportionately by a number of the fees, by a number of the grim measures undertaken by this budget.

It was worked out that the average financial hit for women in this category, because of the budget, will be \$687. For somebody who's making \$30,000 a year, \$687 is a lot of money to come up with. That might mean whether or not you get a new fridge if you need one, or whether or not you get a new stove or a washer and dryer if you need one to care for your family. Then the other part is whether or not you can put anything in the fridge. Those are scary figures.

Mr. Chair, I'm looking forward – I will get up again and I will talk about some of the specifics in this report. This report is done very thoroughly and has a fabulous gender analysis on how the budget affects women.

I look forward to getting into the meat of it.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

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

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to get up and have a few words today on the proposed gas tax that is being implemented as part of *Budget 2016*.

Yes, it is tough times and we have to make some tough decisions, but what I'm really glad about is this government has recognized that if you implement a 16.5 cent tax on gasoline on the border, you're really putting businesses and communities at risk. That's been brought to my attention on several occasions.

It's not only gas, because we have the same program in place with regard to tobacco. What we're trying to do by doing that is making it more equitable across the border into Fermont, Quebec where a lot of people go. It's only 27 kilometres away, so it's not a long ways to go. It's just a nice little drive. If you have reasons for people to go over there to buy tobacco and gas and whatever, they're going to buy other things. So that's why we need to try to entice people to stay in the community and buy their goods there.

That's why in this budget we see on the Labrador border, both in Labrador West and the Straits from L'Anse au Clair to Red Bay, in the district of my colleague for Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, is that this government is providing a 10-cent rebate on the gasoline tax so that at the pumps rather than a 16.5-cent increase, we will see a 6.5-cent increase in taxes for Labrador City, Wabush and the communities in the Labrador Straits.

Now, 6.5 cents is still an increase, and we admit that. Nobody likes to see an increase but it's certainly good when we see that this government has recognized what a 16.5-cent increase in gasoline tax could do to the towns on the border of Quebec. I've met with the Minister of Finance on this and other issues. We will monitor that very closely. What we need to see is that we need to have as close as possible the price of gas in Labrador West and in the Labrador Straits as it is across the border into Quebec, into Fermont and on the North Shore of Quebec – the Quebec North Shore.

Just to go back, it was the previous administration that actually had the audacity to remove the tobacco tax in – I don't remember which budget it was but it was in one of their budgets over the last 12 years. They actually removed the tobacco tax rebate for Labrador West, and there was quite an outcry. I know two years ago or three years ago we put forward –

we being the Opposition at the time – a petition in this House to reinstate the tobacco tax, which did happen.

It was this past administration that actually did not recognize what was happening on the border towns of Labrador City, Wabush and the Labrador Straits. They removed the rebate that was in place for tobacco. When they get up and talk today about how we're not listening to the people, obviously, they didn't at the time either.

That caused quite an uproar. It caused quite a bit of cross-border shopping actually. It took us quite some time to convince the previous administration that this was an issue that was very important to the people of Labrador West and the people of the Labrador Straits. For them to sit across there and say we're not listening, let's be fair about this. Obviously, they didn't listen either.

I'm pleased that the Minister of Finance and the officials in the Department of Finance saw the need to address this issue when it came forward. They've been involved in the rebates in the past with tobacco and other issues and certainly they recognized right away that 16.5 cents on gasoline in Labrador towns, the border towns, was not acceptable.

I want to move on to an issue that's near and dear to my heart. It has always been, ever since the '90s probably when I first got involved in municipal politics and on the Combined Councils of Labrador. I hear from across the way that it's not the right time to update the feasibility study for a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle.

My question to them would be: When is the right time? By the way, what people fail to recognize is that a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle is not as big a benefit to Labrador as it is to the Island portion of the province. For people to say the \$750,000 we're investing to bring the feasibility study up to scratch is a waste of money at this time, we could better spend our dollars, well, that's depends on who you talk to.

I tell you, if you tell the Mayor of the Town of L'Anse au Clair that, he'll have an answer for you, that it's not a waste of money. You ask the

Mayor of St. Anthony if it's a waste of money and you'll get your answer. Everybody on the other side who's saying it's a waste of money can go and ask them. I can give them their phone numbers to call this afternoon if they want to and get their opinion on the \$750,000 that we're investing into the fixed link feasibility study, because for them it's not a waste of money.

Not only to them, you ask the Mayor of Blanc Sablon who is part of the committee with the Labrador Straits mayors and the mayors on the Northern Peninsula, Neighbours without Borders; you ask them if the \$750,000 is a waste of money and you'll get it in both languages – the answer – because it's not a waste of money. It's very important to the future.

They get up and they say there's nothing for diversification in this budget. There's nothing in this budget for diversification. What a better way to promote diversification than to have a fixed link.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. LETTO: Yes, it is a means of diversification, I tell the Member for St. John's Centre.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: It's because you don't understand Labrador. You don't understand Labrador and what a fixed link would mean to Labrador and the Great Northern Peninsula of this wonderful province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: You don't understand.

I've been involved in Labrador politics for quite some time and the fixed link has been on the agenda for quite some time. We can go back to the late '80s and the early '90s to gentleman like

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AN HON. MEMBER: Before that.

MR. LETTO: Or even before that, absolutely.

But we were too busy fighting for a highway across Labrador to put too much attention on the

tunnel. We wanted a highway. Well, we're getting the highway. We're getting there and there will be a highway down Route 138 on Quebec's North Shore as well that will enhance the need for a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle.

I've been involved, like I said, in this issue for quite some time and it's been debated around many, many tables in Labrador, and it continues to be. At the municipal symposium just last month in Gander, I spoke to both the Mayor of the Town of L'Anse au Clair and the Mayor of the Town of St. Anthony about this particular issue.

AN HON. MEMBER: He thinks it's funny.

MR. LETTO: Well, they may think it is, but is not funny to the mayors on the Great Northern Peninsula and the Labrador Straits or anywhere in Labrador for that matter.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Member to direct his comments to the Chair.

MR. LETTO: It's not funny because it's an issue that they believe in, and that they believe should happen. There are many people in this province who believes it should happen.

And when you say that the timing is not right, well it hasn't been right for the past 50 years. So when is it going to be right? It hasn't been right for 50 years. Do we wait another 50 years before it is right? I say not. And I commend the Premier, the Cabinet and the Minister of Finance for recognizing that a fixed link to Labrador is very important to the future of this province – not the future of Labrador only, to the future of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It certainly is a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. Mr. Chair, I know when I speak, I speak not just for myself but I speak for my leader, I speak for my caucus and I'm pretty sure I speak for the people of my district.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: Mr. Chair, this bill, as we know, is relating to raising the gas tax from 16½ cents per litre to 33 cents per litre. So basically what we're going to be doing here, if this bill passes, is we're going to be doubling the gas tax.

Mr. Chair, I think it's fair to say we can exaggerate on all sides of the House. We see that all the time. Lots of times we see exaggeration. The reality from my perspective and the people I've spoken to is that it's really not about the 16½ cents per se, not alone, that's not what it's about. Of course, we do know that 16½ cents is probably going to be more like 18 cents because there's going to be tax on it. It's not about that alone, but it's going to have an impact on the overall picture.

What I keep hearing from the people in my district is that their concern is not about the gas per se, it's about the cumulative effect of all the taxation. That's really what the issue is here. This is just one example of it.

If we were simply going to vote on raising gas alone and nothing more, probably we could all support it. Or if we were going to raise the price of gas to a certain degree, then we were going to have to increase income tax to a reasonable degree, then probably we all could do it. I think that the people would be supportive of that.

Certainly, the people I have spoken to recognize that we are in serious financial difficulty. We all know that. The people don't have their head buried in the sand. They really don't. Nobody over on that side of the House does and nobody on this side of the House does. We all understand that there's a problem. We all get

that. Everybody gets it. The issue is about the degree to which we try to deal with the problem, the degree to which we try to tax and that combined with some of the choices that have been made. To look at it and say, well, if certain choices weren't made or if certain things were delayed maybe we wouldn't have to tax to the degree that's being proposed.

What it comes down to is a reasonable balance. Nobody wants to see the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in financial ruin. Nobody wants to see that, but by the same token, we also don't want to see the people who are living within Newfoundland and Labrador, our citizens, we don't want to see them in financial ruin either.

So it basically comes down to striking a balance which recognizes the financial circumstances of the province, recognizes the problem we legitimately have and by the same token, it recognizes critical services that are required and it recognizes people's ability to roll up their sleeves and chip in, their ability to pay. That's basically the message I've received from just about everybody I've spoken to.

Now, there is no doubt that some people would argue, their issue is the gas tax. There are some people their issue is the tax on insurance. A lot of people that I speak to at least, it's about the levy. I know that has really become the lightning rod in this whole debate, in this whole budget. I don't think it ever was intended to. I'm not sure if it's the name, the levy. If it's the concept of a levy, which has been referred to as many colourful things, a head tax, a cover charge and so on, but at the end of the day, that seems to be the one that's getting the most traction.

It's not about the levy either. It's about that cumulative effect and what people can be reasonably expected to pay and contribute in order to get us out of the financial situation we're in. What I hear from people, what I've heard from people here on this side of the House, what I've heard from citizens, what I've seen in emails and Facebook messages – and I know Members across the way have seen the same thing – is that people say it's just too much, too fast. That's what they are saying. People are saying we are willing to pay our

share but there's only so far we can reasonably go.

Now, depending on the individual and their personal circumstances, their financial situation, the income they make, the number of bills they have, because sometimes it's pretty easy to get caught up in this concept of, well, because somebody lives in a \$400,000 home – which is really a common home in the St. John's metro area, that's what you're paying for a house. You can certainly go over to Southlands for \$400,000, \$500,000. That's a normal home over there. Sometimes you can get caught up in, well, if they're living in a home like that and they have a couple of cars and whatever, they're making a good income. So they can afford to pay more.

The reality of it is that people, rightly or wrongly, live within their means. Sometimes they live beyond their means. Many people are bordering. There are lots of people living in nice looking houses and they have a couple of cars and their kids are into dance and all that stuff, and they are literally living paycheque to paycheque. That's a reality. That's just the way it is. Whether it should be that way or it shouldn't be that way, that's life and that's reality. That's just the way it is.

They have a certain amount of expendable income, but they only have so much. So when you start chipping into that with this cumulative effect of all these taxes, then some of these people are legitimately in trouble. Some of them are, and others will be able to absorb it, there's no doubt, but they're going to have to start making decisions around quality of life issues. That's what they're going to have to do.

A lot of people have said to me, and would say to any Member, they get up every day, they go to work. They work hard. They've gotten an education, paid off student loans and so on. They work very hard for the money they have. All of a sudden that bit of expendable income they have is going to be taken away.

Now, they're not going to be forced to go to a food bank – this group I'm talking about. Although, there are a lot of people in my district on the lower end of the income scale that maybe they will be. Actually, that's a reality too. The

group I'm talking about now, they're not going to be forced to go to a food bank but their quality of life issues are going to be severely impacted.

When we talk about their quality of life expenses and so on, we're talking about the ability to put the kids in hockey or skating or ballet or dance, things like that. The ability to go out to a movie. The ability to go out and have a nice dinner every now and then. The ability to be able to take a vacation. My goodness is that such a bad thing, if somebody works hard their whole life and all of a sudden they actually want to take a vacation. People feel they're entitled to their vacation. They work hard for it. There are some people who have said to me this extra \$4,000 or \$5,000, or whatever it is they fall into, you've just taken away my vacation. Thank you. That's what you've done.

Depending on the demographic, depending on the individual circumstance, that's a reality. Some people are in a much worse situation. Some people literally may have to go to the food bank. I've had people tell me they may have to file for bankruptcy. I don't know. I mean I don't know their personal circumstance, but that's what they've told me.

There's no doubt that all of these things are causing various degrees of impact on people. The people in my district are telling me it's too much. They're telling me they cannot support a budget that contains all of these measures.

Based on that, while if we were just talking about 16.5 cents, which a lot of people would consider extreme and it's doubling it up, it's really not about this one. It's about the cumulative effect. Therefore, I can't really support any of the bills related to the budget because the cumulative effect will be too much harm.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member his time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a pleasure once again to get up and speak on Bill 20, on the gas tax. I guess it's all budget related. So it's always a great opportunity to get up and have my few words and speak to the issue.

There are a couple of things across the way there. I heard the Member for Lab West making commentary that the tunnel is a waste of money. I'd like to correct him on that, Mr. Chair. We've never ever said it was a waste of money. I've spoken on it and some of my colleagues – we've all spoken on it. We don't feel right now is the right time for that study based on where \$750,000 is – in the scheme of government, normally on an \$8 billion budget you would say it's not a lot. When we're closing libraries to save a million dollars – and I mean we know from licensing your vehicle, everything is ramped up to try to make money to increase the Treasury.

This is not the right time. No one ever said on this side of the House that it was a waste of money. I know the Member for Lab West said that numerous times. I'd like to put it on record to say no one in the Official Opposition has ever stated that it's a waste of money. If they did, it's not our stance. We feel that now is not the right time. So I'd just like to correct that.

Mr. Chair, as for the gas tax, earlier we heard the Minister of BTCRD – I never get the name right, but the minister responsible for Tourism – speaking on the gas tax increase and kind of downplayed what 16½ cents meant to the consumers.

If you take 16½ cents, you add your HST onto it, you take your 15 per cent on your insurance, you take your increase for licensing, you take your over doubling of entrance to any provincial park, you take the increase on a camp site, you take HST across the board when you are travelling – a billion-dollar industry from tourism, roughly around; I stand to be corrected. It's around \$550 million to \$600 million that comes in-province. Our out-of-province tourism is less than our in-province or it always was. Now, that can be changed, I stand to be corrected, but we're in that vicinity.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are living this budget day to day and they're planning their

summer vacations. They probably have them planned. I've heard the commentary that they've cancelled their in-province holiday this summer to travel across the province for that reason. I have heard that said. I'm sure others will.

The minister rightly points out that tourism numbers are still up, but after being in the Department of Tourism you have to understand something, it's next year you see the result, not this year. This year is the result of last year. Next year will be the result of this year. Next year, those numbers won't be so rosy. Right now, you're going on numbers that are based on last year's budget, last year's ads, last year's investments, all of it is in-province.

Listen, our tourism is something that – as much as the former government was criticized, I think that's one of the greatest investments this former PC government made in tourism. The *Find Yourself* campaign, the staff in that department did a phenomenal job. The marketing people in tourism are to be applauded. They are exceptional staff and they deserve a lot of credit. They were given the funds through budgeting and investment to make our province a place to visit. We weren't Disneyland. We were Newfoundland. You weren't coming here for the theme parks. We are who we are. There was no put on. We marketed ourselves as this is what we are. We berry pick, we fish, we walk the coastlines, the jellybean houses, all of this stuff. It's no put on. It's Newfoundland and Labrador. It's raw.

For years, we always tried to emulate ourselves to be something we weren't. They finally hit the nail on the head with the *Find Yourself* campaign. It's something that we don't say enough, but it should be something that's applauded from the staff. I think it was a smart investment on the former government.

We've turned this into a billion-dollar industry and now we're going to bring tax regimes in that are not going to grow this industry. I mean, people will still travel. People will still go to parks. People will still get on boats, planes – as the saying goes: planes, trains and automobiles. It's going to have an impact. There is no doubt in my mind, you factor in everything.

If you look at tourism, sometimes we think about the destinations or the big-ticket things. Tourism is so much more encompassing. It's from the fast food restaurants – gas bars are regular forever, but still they get their peaks in the summertime. When you travel throughout the province, there is hardly a community in rural Newfoundland that is not geared towards tourism. It is bed and breakfasts. It is the little motels.

I've had the opportunity to go through the province and I have to say it's beautiful. You go to certain areas and it's quite beautiful and something we should all be proud of, but my fear on this budget is that it's going to have a devastating impact on our tourism industry. It's fine sometimes to say that we're fear mongering. One comment they thought it was money in the pockets based on gas – I haven't figured that one out yet.

As the minister responsible for Tourism, it's unfortunate, some of those commentaries, because we on this side of the House, contrary to what may be said, do know a little bit about what we're talking about. We do understand a lot of things. We do understand the effect that this budget is having on not only tourism, but every sector from the low to middle, to seniors, you name it, it is having a devastating impact.

You get your 10 minutes to get up here. We could get up here forever and talk about the impacts if you want to get into what residents of our individual districts ask us – and we hear it loud and clear, as I know all Members opposite hear it because they get a lot of the same emails.

Back to the 16½ cents on the gas tax, Mr. Chair, I know it was said with rough numbers, but you're looking at small vehicle – Madam Chair, sorry – \$10 per tank on an average vehicle; \$20 in a larger vehicle, per fill up. That will add up over the run of a year. So if you are getting a tank of gas a week well, on a small vehicle, that's an extra \$520 a year. Add that to your \$400 or \$500 in insurance.

The problem is now that people haven't seen the full cumulative effect because a lot of these measures haven't taken effect. When their insurance renewal starts coming out in the mail in mid-June, I am fearful you will see a big

outcry when people see the 15 per cent on their insurance and their going to see their gas tax at 16½ cents, and the HST. It's going to be, as the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said, it's just too much, too quick, too fast.

Everybody knows we have a financial situation to deal with. Is it as dire as is being said? Maybe so, but I'll tell you, the saddest commentary, I guess – I could go on, there's lots of notes you could say. I remember about a year or two ago, probably even last year, people had a bounce to their step. They felt good about everything. They were working. They were confident. I used to remember running into people and it was really great to see, they were planning on that trip, they were building a new home, they were happy, they were having another child. It is great Newfoundland finally found her way, what a place to live and their family were returning home. We were, in my mind, a success story and everyone was very happy. They had a real confidence about them. I call it the bounce in their step.

Madam Chair, unfortunately that bounce is not there anymore. As a matter of fact, the other day – to put it in personal context – I was at home and it struck me, and I've said it before but it hit me personally. I was just sitting there, I looked at my wife and said that's the way I've started feeling. It's almost this desperate – like you're looking around, everything is closing around you and you almost have to give yourself that reminder to say things could be worse, obviously, but you get caught up in so much negativity. The hundreds of emails you get, you're reading these emails, you try to respond to them and it does have that impact to bring you down.

But not bring you down to the point of – all of these emails are very valid. It saddens you actually that you're reading those emails from the same people that had a bounce in their step a year ago; a year later, those same people are desperate.

Collectively, I think everybody in this House should take that – to me, that is a serious issue when it comes to our overall psyche in the province based on a budget that got a lot of harsh choices. Government, this government, it is about making choices.

I have to tell you, a lot of these choices are having a detrimental impact. But one of the things that really stuck with me, and I have to say it, was probably that fact that I felt the same desperation that some of those people felt. I started looking around and I was thinking what hope is there. I'm a confident person but when you start feeling that yourself, it's wearing on you – I'm sure it wears on everyone in this House. Again, taxing is not the answer – some, but not taxed to a fault, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much.

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

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

I'm glad to have the opportunity to get up and speak to this resolution, one of the resolutions that comes directly, of course, from the budget, and one of the ones which is very disturbing because it's going to affect so many aspects of people's lives.

A lot of my colleagues already on this side of the House this afternoon have spoken to that, but I want to speak further to it. Especially because the government continues to refuse to acknowledge the cumulative effect of everything that they've put in place in this budget. They keep pooh-poohing it when we point it out. I'm just checking now, I really don't know all the names yet, off by heart of our new districts.

I listened to the Member for St. Barbe – L'Anse aux Meadows talking about how little per 100 kilometres it would be to pay the new tax, to pay the rise in the tax. We already have high gas prices and this rise of 16.5 cents adds quite a bit to the cost of one litre. The minister got up and sort of made it sound insignificant when talking about just 100 kilometres.

Yes, if somebody only drove 100 kilometres a couple of times a year it would be insignificant. The people he's talking about, many of them are people who live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, an area he knows well himself because he knows the distances that have to be travelled on the tip of the Northern Peninsula. He knows that nothing is close. He knows that

so many things are centralized now. Schools are being centralized. Libraries are being centralized. People have to go to one or two centres for everything. To pooh-pooh the amount of money it's going to cost is just unbelievable. I was shocked when I was listening to him do that.

I did some questioning around, asking people who live in rural Newfoundland in particular. I live here in St. John's. I have a very small footprint, actually, when it comes to the use of my car. Unless I go on a trip outside the city, I have a very small footprint. I've sort of been asking around people: How many kilometres do you put on your car a year? I just heard from one person, 20,000. I heard from somebody else, 30,000. For somebody like myself, it's probably only 7,000 or 8,000.

The places where people have no public transportation, the places where they have to travel distances for everything under the sun, then it adds up. It isn't just a dollar here or \$1.50 here and \$1.50 somewhere else. You're talking about hundreds of dollars over the year. That's on top of what they already pay for gas.

I was shocked to hear the minister making light of what the rise of 16.5 cents a litre was going to mean for people. He literally pooh-poohed it and said it was fear mongering. Again, I thought people don't need me or any of my colleagues or any of your MHAs on the other side of this House telling them how that adds up. People know how to take 16.5 cents a litre and multiply it by the amount of gas they use every year, because people keep track of the gas they use. People save their bills. They look at their bills at the end of the year to see how much money they spent on gas.

Most people do keep budgets because they have to, because they live from cheque to cheque. You talk to any middle-class family, any middle-class individual, a single parent, couples, whatever, seniors, so many live from cheque to cheque. They save maybe a small amount of money if they're lucky. So to hear the minister make light of that amount of money was shocking.

Doing this at the same time that they're telling people in 54 communities that if they want to go

to the library they are probably going to have to drive a half hour. So that's insignificant, that doesn't matter. They're going to have to drive a half hour if they want to go to a library, if they're lucky.

Then he pooh-poohed the cumulative effect of the increase on gas regarding the increase on other commodities as if that can't possibly happen. He said it can't affect the cost of food. We already know the cost of food in this province is affected by the cost of gas. Because so much of our food, the vast majority of it, and not only of food but of products that we need for our homes, all get trucked onto this Island and get trucked into Labrador. Those trucks use gas, in case the minister didn't know that.

I'm sure there are some where you have diesel use as well, but there is a lot that isn't diesel. So to say that the cost of food, that the cost of commodities, that the cost of produce, that the cost of things we need just to live is not going to be affected by the doubling of the tax on gas, because it's doubling that particular tax. That particular tax is going from 16.5 cents to 33 cents, adding another 16.5. So to make that disingenuous statement is unbelievable, to think that people don't know how they're going to be impacted.

We come back to what we've talked about many times so far in talking about this budget. Come back to the enhanced Seniors' Benefit, for example. Well, the enhanced Seniors' Benefit is going to have to cover an awful lot, besides covering the making up for the Home Heating Rebate, besides making up for the HST rebate. It's going to have to make up for the increase of 2 per cent on HST. It's going to have to make up for the increase in the cost of gas. It's going to have to make up for the increase in the cost of insurance on one's home, if one owns a home, insurance on one's car.

It's going to have to make up for the cost of seniors having to pay for dental services that many of them right now didn't have to pay for, but in actual fact what will happen is they won't be able to pay for because they don't have the money to pay for it. That was proven when the program was brought in for seniors and the demand for seniors to have dental care was so high. As a matter of fact, when the government

brought in their budget and abolished the program there were 1,600 people on the waiting list.

The thing is that seniors will not actually have to cover the cost of dental care with their seniors' benefit, because they will not be able to afford to cover it; therefore, they will once again continue having teeth rotting in their heads. That's literally what happens, the teeth rot in their heads.

To be putting all of this budget on the table and not acknowledging the cumulative effect, it's not forgivable, really. It really and truly isn't forgivable. Again, I don't know how stupid they think the people of the province are. Now, I am getting emails from people who are saying they feel they're really stupid because they voted for them. I am getting those. I'm getting people who are saying: Ms. Michael, I voted for them; never again. I can't believe I did it. I'm actually getting those comments.

If people are identifying themselves as stupid, it's not because they don't know how to do mathematics. It's not because they don't know how to read the budget. It's because they can't believe they got hoodwinked by this crowd across the way into voting for them and putting them in power so that they could do what they're doing. They say we won't be doing it again.

When it comes to the impact of the budget, they are not stupid and they do not need anybody to fear monger them. As a matter of fact, I get fearful reading some of the emails. The reality of people's lives are so awful that when they write me and tell me what it is they're going to have to face because of this budget, I become filled with fear and rightly so. I'm afraid of what is going to happen to the people in this province.

I don't know how we're going to deal with it. With the rise in unemployment which the budget says will happen, with the rise in the cost of living, we're going to have awfully long lines at those food banks, that's all I know. We're going to have a lot more people sick and in emergency, I know that as well.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member her time for speaking has expired.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 20 this afternoon which is An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3. This has to do with implementing the horrific Liberal budget that will be voted on, I predict, in the next couple of weeks in this House of Assembly.

This is about increasing tax on gasoline and related products. It's timely because these increases will be effective June 2, 2016. I had mistakenly thought it was July 1, like many of the other increases in fees and taxes that are being brought in by the Liberal government, but these increases will actually be effective June 2. So I guess there is some urgency from government's perspective to deal with this matter in the House of Assembly.

It's also what we call in the House of Assembly a money bill, which is why Members can talk about a wide range of subjects during the Committee stage of debate. It's good to have an opportunity to do so.

I raised a petition earlier today, Madam Chair. Before I get into Bill 20, I want to address a matter that came up in the House earlier today. I presented a petition on behalf of residents of the Bonavista Peninsula. They're concerned for a number of reasons. They're concerned about cuts to health care services at the hospital in Bonavista, specifically X-ray services that are being cut. Also, they're concerned about laundry services being eliminated at the Bonavista hospital as well.

You can hear some of the noise across the House. Following the presentation of my petition today, Madam Chair – oh and happy birthday, by the way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I forgot to say that at the beginning. I understand it's your 29th, so happy birthday, Madam Chair.

After I presented the petition, the Member for Bonavista started shouting at me. It's not the first time that's happened in this House, I hate to say. It's not the first time. I'll see if he can contain himself for the next 7½ minutes that I have the floor in this hon. House. I doubt it, based on his track record so far over the last number of months.

He made comments about my career and then he said he wouldn't put up with bull something or other. It was language that wasn't parliamentary, so I won't repeat it while standing in the House this afternoon. I don't know if he thinks that raising concerns on behalf of constituents is –

MR. A. PARSONS: A point of order, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I'm going to stand on a point of order, under Standing Order 49. The Member opposite is making allegations that a minister made unparliamentary comments. Again, he's had an opportunity. He could have stood on a point of order, but you can't stand up and make an accusation of that sort.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There's no point of order because what I'm saying is true and my colleagues heard the remarks as well. They are unfortunate remarks, but they are true remarks nonetheless.

So I have to call the Member on it because it is unprofessional. It's also disrespectful. To show

such disrespect for concerns being brought forward by your constituents – even if another MHA has to stand and raise those concerns on their behalf, that kind of behaviour is not becoming of any MHA.

I know the Town of Bonavista is upset. I know the Chamber of Commerce in the area is upset. And they have reason to be concerned about the future of their communities. It's good that people are speaking out and taking action.

Last week, I believe it was the House Leader for the New Democratic Party who told the story of a lady in Bonavista who had actually used her vehicle to block the doors of the AES office that is closing. The Member made some unkind remarks at that time as well. These are very serious concerns. People are legitimately upset. They are fearful for their futures because of the drastic cuts that are being made by this government through this budget.

As Members have said this afternoon, we understand the province is facing difficult financial circumstances – there is no doubt about it – and difficult decisions have to be made. But the reason we continue to rise and challenge this budget is that we believe the wrong decisions are being made.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. KENT: There they go again, Madam Chair, proving the point, I guess.

The challenge is that you can't look at any of these decisions in isolation. Just like the residents of Bonavista are upset about cuts to health care and closure of the AES office and the future of their college, which their own MHAs called into question, there are residents in every region of the province who have concerns about what's happening in their regions as well.

Yes, difficult decisions have to be made, but you have to look at the total impact of all of those decisions that are being made. This government made an incredible number of promises, they clearly had no plan, and now every community

and every family in this province is going to pay a terrible price for that. That's why people are upset. Yes, we will raise those concerns in the House of Assembly because that's our job. That's what all Members need to do, and we have a responsibility to do so.

To this particular bill, the provincial gas tax, the tax on gasoline, the province's portion of that tax is doubling. This is not a minor increase. This is not a modest increase. It's doubling. Diesel will increase by 5 cents a litre from 16½ cents a litre to 21½ cents a litre. Gasoline will increase by 16½ cents a litre from 16½ cents a litre, which is what it is today, to 33 cents per litre. It's doubling. Gas used in aircraft will increase from 0.7 cents a litre to 2½ cents a litre. Again, these increases will be effective June 2.

The revenue that will be generated is \$142.8 million in annual revenue. Of course the government is saying oh, it's temporary. Just like the levy, it's all temporary and as soon as things get better, all these taxes and fees will magically reverse. Well, I don't believe that to be true and all one would have to do is look at past history to know that's factually incorrect. That's why it needs to be challenged.

The defence and the excuse that hey, it's just temporary, trust us, is a little hard to swallow after dozens and dozens of broken election promises in only a six-month period, Madam Chair.

Now, there's another technical matter addressed in Bill 20. I don't know that's really been discussed much here this afternoon. Clause 2 of the bill corrects an error that was made in drafting a previous version of the legislation. The error had no effect as previously the tax on diesel fuel and gasoline was the same; however, as the rates will no longer be equivalent, this needs to be corrected. So this clause is being backdated to come into effect on May 28, 2009.

Those types of matters happen from time to time. Legislation can be quite complicated, so correcting that error makes sense. The overall approach of this government does not make sense. The attack on virtually every citizen, every individual and every family, every young person and every senior in our province does not make sense.

Even the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has released a report in recent days saying that hidden taxes, when it comes to gasoline, are gouging drivers in Newfoundland and Labrador every time they fill up at the pumps. That's before we even see the provincial portion of the gas tax literally double in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is calling on the federal and the provincial government to stop charging taxes on other taxes for gas. When it comes to gas, there's tax on tax. The HST will also have an impact on the price of gasoline in our province as well. HST is calculated on the price of gas that includes the provincial and federal excise taxes resulting in this tax on tax.

I encourage people to check out the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's report on tax honesty which looks at provincial capitals across Canada. It shows that we are paying more than our fair share. We are paying a significant amount for gasoline and it's about to get much, much worse. That is something all citizens should be concerned about.

We will raise concerns on behalf of constituents throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As an Opposition, that's our job. It's one we take seriously. It's why we're rising today to speak repeatedly about Bill 20 and to express concerns about the role it will play in this devastating Liberal budget.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure of have another opportunity to speak to Bill 20, the gas tax, as we've been talking about it. I want to kind of continue on down the train of thought that I had before I sat down the last time I spoke to this around the cumulative effect. Really, that's what it's all about, Madam Chair.

One point though that – I just heard the Member for Mount Pearl North talk about the temporary

piece to this. The fact that we are hearing on some of these taxes, certainly the levy is supposed to be temporary, possibly the gas tax as oil prices go up, it could be temporary and so on. I think one thing we have to bear in mind, especially as we look at the cumulative effect of all these taxes, is that just because something is temporary for this year or maybe temporary for this year and next, that's not going to do people a whole lot of good if we're eating away all of their expendable income.

If somebody is having difficulty paying their mortgage, for argument's sake, I don't think that they're going to be able to say, well, it's because of all these taxes, but it's only temporary. The bank is going to say, that's okay, you don't need to pay me back until next year or the year after because this extra expense is only temporary. I think if you go to buy groceries for your family, I don't think Dominion or Sobeys or Colemans are going to say that's okay, we'll give you some groceries. You don't have to pay us right now because all your income is eaten away by these taxes, but it's only temporary.

The point is that whether some of these are going to be permanent or whether they're going to be for one year or two years or three years, certainly for the period of time that all these taxes are in play at the one time, whether they're temporary or not, they're still going to have an impact at that time and people still have to live at that time. People still have to pay their bills at that time. They have to buy groceries at that time. Their kids are still going to be in hockey and so on at that – well, maybe they won't be because maybe they won't be able to afford it. Assuming they can stretch it, they're still going to have incur all these expenses at that time. I think it's important we talk about this temporary piece. It all sounds nice, but people are living in the reality of today, what my bills are today.

That brings me into this whole concept of when we hear gas prices are only go to go where they were a year ago or whatever the case might be. When oil prices were high and gas prices were high at the pumps, we're saying we're only going back to what it was a year or two ago. Then we hear with all the taxation we're only going back to where it was in 2007. Then when we talk about insurance tax, well, we had insurance tax back five or six years ago,

whatever it was, and we had a surtax back in 2007.

Well, again, we can all talk about what we had at different points in our history, but the reality of it is that people have a budget today. They have a budget today based on the income coming in the door and the expenses that they have. Many of these are set expenses. While it might be fine to talk about let's go back in time to a time when taxes were lower or we didn't have all these expenses, the reality of it is that today I'm making ends meet and tomorrow, you're dumping everything on me that I didn't have all along. You're dumping it all onto my budget – my budget, not the province's budget, my budget. I can't afford it. I cannot afford the cumulative effect of all this taxation.

That's the point I think to some degree seems to be getting lost. I don't understand why it's getting lost. I really don't understand why, because these are the conversations I'm having with people. I'm not going to speak for everyone over on this side of the House, but that's what I'm hearing. That's the emails I'm getting. I know everybody's getting them. I know they are, because a lot of the emails we're getting are coming to all of us, or some of them are coming to just a few of us. I know everybody is getting it, and we're all getting ones specific to our own district.

That's the reason why I'm over here, quite frankly. That's the reason why I'm over here, is because I was getting all that information, like everyone else is getting, and I just simply could not, and I cannot in good conscience vote against the people I represent. I just can't do it. Now, that's what it's all about at the end of the day. There are no hard feelings. It's nothing personal. I know everybody's getting it, I know they are. I'm not going to single people out. I think they're all fine people, every one of you. Every person in this House on all sides came here to do the best for their district, every single one of us did. Nobody's bad here.

What we're seeing is a budget which has been put together by a select group, and that's their role. We all understand that's the role of Cabinet to come up with the budget. They put it together and they did it in the best of intentions too, because they're good people too. They don't

want to hurt anybody. I know they don't, and I mean that sincerely. I know they don't want to do anything to hurt people. It's just a case of making some of the wrong choices – not all of them.

We've all acknowledged that something has to be done. Everybody here acknowledges something has to be done, but it's just gone too far. Some of the choices, you need to go back and revisit them. That's all everybody is saying that I'm talking to.

I'm seriously asking the government Members, the Cabinet in particular because they are the ones who ultimately are going to make the decision, I'm asking you guys to go back and just revisit some of the decisions you've made. You've seen some suggestions from over here. I'm sure you've seen lots of suggestions from people, good suggestions. Something people can live with, something that is reasonable to all. That is all we're asking. It's not too late. We're not voting on the main budget motion yet. There is still time. We don't have to vote on the budget tomorrow or next week or whatever. We have time. We have time to go back and make some amendments.

At the end of the day, I really believe – and I'm very sincere when I say this. I really believe that if the people believed you were actually listening and you made a few changes that people could live with, I think they'd be fine with it. Do you know what? I think they would hold you in much better stead if you admitted we made a few mistakes that we have to change.

If you simply dig your heels in and say we're digging our heels in, we're not changing anything. We're not going to give it to say we changed nothing; we're not going to buckle. I think people would have more respect if you actually said, do you know what? We're just going to rewind and we're going to make a few changes. I really believe that.

I know people on the other side know what I'm saying is true. I know that. We all know that, because you're hearing it too. You know it's true. So I ask everyone, please ponder what you're hearing from the people and make a few changes. Make some reasonable changes. I'm sure the people would agree with it. I'm sure all

Members here would be certainly willing to entertain it.

Like I said, we're talking about gas right now. The big one we hear of course, and we're not on that bill yet. When we get to that one that's probably going to be a much longer debate, I'm hearing. I don't know, but I'm suspecting it's going to be a much longer debate. When we get to the levy in particular, that's something I think most people feel there's some room there to drop it. There's some room there to drop it.

Let's not go ahead with full-day kindergarten this year. We have a \$30 million contingency fund –

AN HON. MEMBER: He's against everything.

MR. LANE: No, I say to the Member. He said: he's against everything. I'm not against everything. I'm not against everything at all.

I believe in full-day kindergarten. I think it's the right thing to do. I believe it's the right thing to do. I really do, but at the end of the day is this the best time?

We hear about the \$30 million contingency. It's a good idea. It's a good concept. I say to the Members, it's a good concept but we've never had it before, ever that I'm aware of. Is this the year to put it in place? Is this the year to do it given our financial circumstances? That's all people are saying. There are other examples too.

Unfortunately, Madam Chair, I'm out of time so I'll take my place.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's indeed a privilege to get in the House again and talk about some of the devastating things that are happening with this budget that has come down. Particularly one that is related to an additional way of picking people's pockets,

particularly the impact it's going to have in every avenue that functions in our society.

I had the privilege last night of holding a public meeting on Bell Island, one of the parts of my community that is hit dramatically hard by this budget. The whole open discussion was around all the 300-plus fee increases, changes to our tax bases, and all of the impacts it is going to have. People were shocked. I shared the information and made sure everybody had a copy of it. There were 100 people in the hall, and I think 600 or 700 other people listened via Radio Bell Island live.

I had a good interaction with people, and ability for people to ask questions and get up and speak to it. The biggest thing – which surprised me – at the end of the day, when people went to talk about what was happening, was about the increase in tax. It wasn't about the levy. I was a little bit taken back about that, but it wasn't about the levy because they really, honestly feel that's going to be dropped.

It's such a foolish tax. It's such a way of punishing everybody in our society. It's such a process of having no plan, no outline of how they're going to deal with our deficit, that people just assume, somewhere along this in the next week or two, that's going to be dropped. That the Members over there will see the light at the end of the tunnel and they'll go back and respond to the emails they're getting from their own constituents, from other people in the province about how ludicrous something like that is.

I give credit; maybe the Bell Island people are a little bit more too trusting or giving too much faith to the Liberal Party because they just assume that's going to be taken care of and we're going to get into the real crux of the impact that things are going to have on them. That's going to be around the tax on gasoline and how that's going to be accumulated, and where we are in our peak periods now when consumption is up and every week you are seeing an increase.

People realized last night when the time frames are there – and I think across this province it is only now hitting people, the impact of all these increases are going to have. That's where we are

with it, but last night they realized come the 2nd of July, we're talking 30-plus cents a litre on gas. Add in the fact that no matter what you do – this is not even about social or recreation. This is about sustainability, earning a living, travel you have to do as part of that process on any given day. Add in the other hits that rural communities, remote communities, particularly communities that are serviced by ferries are being hit by, major increases in rates themselves, changing to scheduling. Obviously, it's going to have an impact.

We realize decisions had to be made, but there are decisions that have to be made and then there's piling decisions and decisions until eventually you do one of three things: you either force people to leave; you force people to become wards of the state and rely on them, because it's not economically viable for them to travel to make small incomes; or the third, you get people so riled up that they're going to send a message.

We've seen that they're riled up now. They're going to get more and more as they get a better understanding of these tax changes here. People are sending emails. You know what's happening on that side over there. You know some people are afraid to go in their own districts because they're being inundated by people questioning why they're not standing up for their respective districts. They know that. I've got it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: There are emails. We're all receiving emails from your own constituents who are saying my Member won't reply, my Member won't respond.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: I can't get information to what's happening. We know that's happening. We see it. It's evident here today.

Every now and then I feel privileged here when the Minister of Municipal Affairs stands up – and he's obviously their attack dog; he's the

defensive mode there. When he's there to protect the backbenchers who are taking some heat, he stands up and tries to deflect it. He'll attack somebody on this side.

I'm fortunate enough that I get picked three or four times and it's great. It gives me some notoriety. It gives me an opportunity then to get back up and really understand what's happening on that side of the House here. Today, I give credit. A couple of weeks ago when he got up and went on in attack mode, I was minister of Transportation for two years. Today I was four. God, I'm moving up the ranks.

It's unfortunate that my pay scale and I guess my pension plan won't reflect that, but I do have to be clear, I was minister for one and I was proud of that one year there. Would I have loved to have another year or more – a number of other things that I would have worked on and improved. We did some good things. Some more things that I know the present Minister of Transportation and Works is working on now to improve, no doubt about that.

I will tell you one of the things that we talked about here is about the heat, obviously, that's being felt by some of the Members, particularly the backbenchers here, there's no doubt about it. Part of it is about ferries and that. I'll take some heat on that in my own district. There's heat coming in other parts of the district. The real heat is going to come the fall when the real impact of the ferry service is going to be met. That's going to be a decision that the Minister of Transportation and the respective Cabinet here are going to make some decisions. Then we'll see where we are.

This is only budget one yet – budget one. We all know the heat that the Liberals are feeling right now. We all know right now the distrust that's going on when people are not sure what's going to happen. They don't know if they're getting the full story. Is there more to come? They know that's happening. How bad is it going to be?

One thing about it, I give credit that nobody is hiding behind it. The Minister of Finance has put it very clearly, there's nothing good about this budget and the worst is yet to come. Obviously, people are getting prepared for that. They're not going to accept it and they're not going to like it.

We do talk about – and even Paddy Daly, one of the commentators today tweeted out: time for the Liberals to move on blaming the former administration. It's time to move on beyond that, guys. You were elected for a reason. You're elected to govern. Your ministers have portfolios. Deal with those portfolios and move things forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask Members to take their conversations outside or keep the noise level down a little bit.

Thank you for your co-operation.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs continuously gets up and wants to point fingers about everything else that was done wrong. Things that we didn't do, but what he's referring to are not things we didn't do. They're things we had in play that the Liberal administration in this budget didn't continue. We know that. They didn't start certain projects that wanted to move forward.

The problem is – because he's the defence dog here – he has to defend the people in the backbenches who are getting heat from their constituents because they didn't make the decisions. They're new people into the system. They inherited the fact that things were moving forward, that the people elected them based on the principle that these projects were going to move forward. It was a benefit. It had been identified by the former administration.

We had identified these were projects that were necessary for the well-being of people, be it around education, health care, infrastructure. That was the move forward. It was that simple, but you tried to divert away from what you didn't do or what you cancelled. It's not what you didn't do. It's even one worse: things that were in play, projects that were in play – I notice the Members over there don't like hearing this because they're obviously getting the heat from their own constituents, why you didn't do certain things. Why isn't it going to continue? That is where we are.

We talked about some school projects. The Minister of Municipal Affairs tried to outline why you didn't do it, when I was minister of Transportation and Works. In my one year there, and my predecessors in their years, did a lot of things. We built numerous schools: 14 brand new ones; 29 other ones; eight other ones that were in play, mainly in Liberal districts. They were there because they were necessary. They were an investment in our education system, an investment in the structure of these communities, an investment in the future, but, obviously, we're taking heat here. We're being blamed. Why didn't you do it?

We did the things we said we were going to do. We put it in play. We invested the money because we saw where it should go. Now, sometimes there's a struggle. In a year, I ran into some issues around how you get land because you have to have the proper site. The site is perhaps your best thing. Your design comes after that. We have a number of designs that fit because we've been doing this for a numbers of year so it's becoming easier and easier to design it properly. The site is the key thing for safety, for access, for expansion, for being able to do these things.

The Member for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Harbour Grace.

MR. BRAZIL: – Harbour Grace – thank you – is noting there and saying: Why didn't we do it? Well, we did do it. I physically went on site and said: Why are we not moving this school forward? They said the person who owns the land wants too much money. I said I can solve that; I'll expropriate it. This is too important of an issue for the people of the Coley's Point. I took the land. I went out, did a site survey, the land was there. We put up a sign that said this is the site of this school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: We did it. I wasn't waiting. I come from an education background. That was too important to the people of that district. It was too important. It didn't make any difference who the Member was; this was something that had to be done and should be done. I'm baffled that it's

not being continued to be done. It's now deferred for three years. That was one we did.

I went to a protest out to Riverside Elementary in Shoal Harbour and the same thing people were saying and the Member was saying: How come you cancelled it? What do you mean cancelled it? I put out a contract before I left, one year now – one year – nine contracts went out for schools and other major projects. Put the contract out, site design, implementation by SNC Lavalin. They went to the market.

I looked at the scoring earlier today of the companies that bid on it. We put it out there. It was approved; \$664,000 to start the process. Do you know what happened in this budget? Not only was it deferred indefinitely – so you have an overcrowded school that I saw two weeks ago, massive amounts of students who need it, because it's a growing community. Something that we had already put in play, the money was there for it to move it to the next level. What happened? It was cancelled indefinitely.

It's an embarrassment around the education system and it is detrimental to the young people in this province.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I am happy to stand once again and speak to this bill. Basically one of the main arguments that I was making the last time I spoke was that rather than this budget stabilizing the economy, I truly believe, considering all the research that has been done specifically on our budget by economists from across the country, by academics from across the country and then by people here in this House and then the opinions of our general population, that in fact this budget destabilizes the economy. The various reasons among them are the fact that there are unfair, regressive taxations. There are job cuts.

There are significant job cuts, with a promise that more job cuts are coming to us in the fall, which again creates an uncertainty and creates an economic insecurity in people's lives. And understandably so because people don't know – and many of the people who don't know are young working families. Because again, oftentimes when we see layoffs, it's the people with the least seniority, our part-time workers, our contract workers who will be the first to go.

Often, Madam Chair, those are our young people, and they are young people who are well-educated. They are young people who may be trying to start a family, who have started a family, and they have mortgages. They have car loans. They have student loans. They're paying exorbitant child care costs. So they are very vulnerable economically, even though they may be making a salary that would appear to be possible to live on, but once you put together the car loans – that's not extravagant – a mortgage, or rent – that's not extravagant, that's a necessity – child care costs. Again, there's nothing in this budget to really address the crisis we have in the situation of child care across the province. All over the province, whether it be in rural Newfoundland and Labrador or in the major urban settings.

Then people have student loans. People were educated because there was a promise. There was a social contract that we want our young people to be educated, and we want our young people to work on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. How many of us have children who've wanted to work here in the province. They've wanted to stay here.

So, Madam Chair, again, I would like to take a look at the impact of the budget on women. As I had stated before, there is a new study that came out today. It was undertaken by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives out of Nova Scotia. The author of this report is Cyndi Brannen, who has a PhD in applied social psychology. Living in rural Nova Scotia, her research focus is on policy to practice evaluation of women's and children's health issues. So everything she is saying here, what she has done is she's applied a gender lens to this recent budget to look at how does it affect women and girls.

Ideally, we would like the report to have said, well, it is a matter of fact, this particular budget is positive for women and girls; but, in fact, she has found quite the opposite. So that's what this report is looking at. I would recommend folks here in the House and folks at home, for people to find this. Again, it's through a gender lens.

It's the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives out of Nova Scotia. It's available online, and it's quite a thorough examination. An examination that we had hoped, that we had expected would have been done by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, who is also the Minister of Finance, that she would have applied this particular type of gender lens analysis to the budget to see, in fact, how the budget is affecting women.

I don't have much time to speak. So what I will do is I will go to the latter part of the report that looks at the impacts on women and the recommendations. Its recommendations going forward for further budgets.

What she found – again, she looked at the demographic. We have the highest percentage of seniors on OAS and GIS in the province. That means we have the highest percentage of seniors living in poverty in the whole country. Many of those are women. Many of those are women who were not in the paid workforce, but who raised children at home, who supported their family, who were the at-home caregivers. They are ones who are really disproportionately affected by this budget.

Also, again, as I had stated before when I spoke, 67 per cent of the women in our province are working age – 67 per cent. So those are aged between 25 and 54 years old. These are women who want to work. These are women who need to work. These are women who need paid employment, who need fairly paid employment.

What this budget is doing is killing jobs. So if it's killing jobs, who is really being most negatively affected by this when we look at – 80 per cent of the workers in the health care sector are women. The majority of our teachers in the province are women. That's where we're seeing cutbacks. That's where we're seeing layoffs. That affects women negatively as well.

Dr. Cyndi Brannen, in some of her sort of concise impacts of the budget on women and girls, says, "The budget only reinforces and worsens the existing gender inequalities in Newfoundland and Labrador." We already have these gender inequalities. We know that women in Newfoundland and Labrador earn about 67 cents for every dollar that a man earns. It's somewhere around that. I don't have that exact number, but I have mentioned it in the House before. Already we have these kinds of inequalities. Women have more precarious work. Women are more of those in part-time work, so already we see those inequalities exist. What the budget is doing is actually exacerbating that situation.

She says, "The cuts to programs and services that will not only mean a reduction in supports, but also several hundred lay-offs impact girls and women as a group. This budget means: Less money in the pockets of female workers; Less services for vulnerable girls and women; Job cuts for women in above-average paying jobs in education and government."

We know, all of us in this House know how important those jobs are, particularly in smaller rural communities where they are well-paying – supposedly secure jobs with benefits. How important those jobs are in our communities. When we see those jobs cut, the impact on the communities is devastating.

We'll see that women will be more disproportionately affected by job cuts in education, by job cuts in health, by job cuts in government services, and also the potential educational deficits for girls. One of the interesting factors in this study shows us that more women have higher education levels than men do in the province, which is kind of interesting. That surprised me. They also more so rely on student loans and student grants. Those are some of the impacts that she says.

"Changes in the education system will mean hundreds of lay-offs for women with well-paying jobs." Again, that really affects our rural communities. "The result will have economic impacts not only for the women and their families," – let's look at this, it's not just the women themselves but their families – "but for the economy of the province."

Again, job losses only lead to unemployment. There is nothing positive about a job loss in rural communities or in the larger cities.

She also says, “The cuts to the public service will result in hundreds of women losing their above-average paying jobs, resulting in economic hardship for themselves and their families, as well as negative economic impacts.”

Madam Chair, I can see I’m running out of time here. This kind of study is what the Minister of Finance, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women should have done. She’s mandated to have that done out of the Women’s Policy Office. The Women’s Policy Office has the tool to do this and one would have expected, and rightfully expected, that this kind of gender analysis would have been done on the budget.

CHAIR: Order, please!

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Topsail – Paradise.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate you recognizing me this afternoon so I can have a few minutes. We get 10 minutes in committee to talk about Bill 20, which is really enacting legislation that allows the government to put the additional taxes, excise tax on fuel for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We’ve done a number of these over the last few days. There are more to come.

We have the levy to come, which I anticipate we’re going to spend a fair bit of time here in the House on, but it’s up to the government when they call these bills and what bills get called at what point in time. Today, they’ve called Bill 20 which is about gasoline. It’s about the price of gasoline that people need to put in their vehicles to go about their day-to-day business and to do the job they do.

Earlier today we heard a number of comments from Members of the governing Liberal Party. During Question Period today I asked the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and also the Premier questions. It’s interesting to see and I kind of chuckle when they do it because they keep going back to history. They keep talking about the history, about what the previous government did and the decisions we took and so on.

I remind Members opposite all the time that people didn’t re-elect us in 2015. They elected them. They elected that party on a whole host, a package of promises and commitments they made to the people of the province. Commitments they made after they did their LEAP. They consulted around the province. They had their summer tour last year on board with – will I use his name – who is now the current Premier. They consulted with their 500,000 advisors.

Then one week before the election, it was the day before the advanced polling day, on a Sunday morning or Sunday afternoon, advanced polling day was on Monday, they finally announced their platform. Madam Chair, very quickly academics, people who are engaged in the political process, political scientists, mathematicians, engaged very quickly and started to have a look at this platform and said this is not real. This can’t be it. This is impossible. This can’t happen.

We’ve heard all the buzz words. They called it a fantasy plan. It was unrealistic and they talked about pixy dust and so on in some of the editorials and comments. That’s people who took the time to read it and go through it. It wasn’t accessible. It wasn’t achievable.

As a matter of fact, this weekend someone sent me a clip of the Premier two days before the election, the Minister of Education was with him – he obviously wasn’t the Minister of Education at that point in time – the Premier talked about it and he said: Just because – he named me – said it can’t be done, it can’t done. We can do this. The HST will help drive the economy, keep it in people’s pockets. It’ll help sustain the economy is what he said. That was two days before the election when I think pretty much everybody in the province understood at that point in time that

we're going to have a new Liberal government. The only question was how many seats.

He actually was asked: What are you going to do? One of the first things I'm going to do is I have to start writing letters to reverse the HST because we have to keep that money in people's pockets to sustain the economy. That's what the Premier said. He said it knowing there was a deficit. For him to say that he didn't know what the circumstances was is a bunch of – May 24 weekend, past weekend, a lot of talk about bologna and that is exactly what I think what he said was, because he knew the circumstances. He knew gas price, the price of fuel or the price of oil had fallen and the impacts that it was having on the economy. He knew every dollar it fell was a \$29 million loss for the province; he knew all that. To say otherwise is just playing politics.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is nonsense.

MR. P. DAVIS: It is nonsense. It is absolutely nonsense.

So two days before the election, the Member, who is now the Premier of this province, said just because people say it can't be done doesn't mean it can't be done, and we're committed to this and so on. It was complete and total nonsense what was sold to the people of the province. He can say well, we toured and we asked people. We did our consultations session and we did it better than anyone ever did it. Well, they did exactly what New Brunswick did. They copied New Brunswick's model in many, many ways.

We don't know when the LEAP is going to come out. We haven't seen that yet. We haven't seen the results of that, but they have done all these consultations and they will say, well, people told us to put up the price of gas, put more taxes on gas. They probably did. I have no doubt at all that people said put a tax on gas. As a matter of fact, we probably would have done the same thing. We would have done it differently, but we would have put an increased tax on gas.

I would have liked the sliding scale; I would have put a cap on it. If the price of fuel goes up, we should collect less taxes so we can keep it

more affordable. If the price of fuel goes down, we could add more taxes so that more revenue is generated for our province and it equalizes the impact on the consumer. That's where I think we would have went.

Members opposite said people told us to put up fuel taxes. There is a lot to be said about that. What they didn't tell you to do – you show me one person who said put up my income tax, put up the HST, which we advocated for. Put up the HST, increase my income tax – it was only increased last year; put that up again – put up the gas tax, increase 300 fees and when you can't tax, find another existing tax, put a levy on it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Insurance.

MR. P. DAVIS: Oh, insurance is a good one. Put taxes back on insurance, which Members opposite say when we lowered taxation on people back a decade ago, that was the wrong thing to do. Well, I'm sure some people agree and some people disagree. Some people disagree and say, I'm glad I had that money in my pocket because I drove the economy. I took that money – I didn't put it in my savings account. I may have put it in a pension plan or somewhere trying to set up education for my children, but I used that money and put it back into the economy is what happened. Well, that's not going to happen today. That's not going to happen with this.

Madam Chair, what was sold to the people is certainly not what was given to them today. We see so many changes. In Question Period today, I was flabbergasted because the Premier is on the record as saying that Mr. Martin resigned. Today, on questions by my colleague here, he said, no, he was terminated. Just a completely different set of information; absolutely blown away.

I was here, I'm sure my mouth was hanging open because I couldn't believe what I was hearing, this completely different version of events that we heard a few weeks ago when he said Mr. Martin resigned. Then he said we have a legal opinion and the legal opinion says that he's entitled to his severance. That's what the Premier said to the people of the province. The legal opinion is we're bound by the contract, he said. We're bound by the contract and he's

entitled to it. We have legal opinion saying he's entitled to his severance. Today, we hear a completely different version of events.

Every now and then they'll send out someone. The Minister of Municipal Affairs is probably the most experienced parliamentarian in the Liberal benches across the way. When they send him out like he came out today, you know he's coming out to attack us and he does a good job of it. That's what he's good at, I'll give him credit. He's well experienced. He knows a lot of the history, knows a lot of the past and he knows how to do it.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) knows about the hospital too (inaudible).

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: There he is again and he knows how to do it. I say to the Member opposite, we'd like nothing more to build a new hospital today. Love to see it built, like to see a new Waterford, like to see a new –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: I'd like to see a new link between Labrador and the Island of Newfoundland. I'd like to see a new courthouse. I'd like to see a new penitentiary. I'd like to see all of that, but the reality is we can't do it. When we said we can't do it, we're the worst in the world. When they say they can't do it, it's a justifiable answer. That's the difference, Madam Chair.

When we make investments in roads and highways and schools – and my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island talked a little bit about it today. He talked about schools and he talked about Coley's Point and so on. We squandered the money is what they say. That's what Members opposite say, we squandered the money. Yet, when they make an announcement, oh, we're going to do \$500 million in infrastructure investments, it's the right decision. It's the best thing in the world. So we constantly hear them talking out of both sides of their mouth, Madam Chair.

I only have a minute left, but I'll get up again this afternoon. When you look at fuel and an increase in fuel, right now we're in the higher end of the middle of the pack I'd say; lower end right now according to today's prices from average metro prices from ontariogasprices.com which is a website that shows comparisons. Manitoba is at the low end of 98 cents, the Northwest Territories is up to \$1.16, Newfoundland and Labrador is \$1.08, Nova Scotia is \$1.07, Quebec is \$1.068, Ontario is \$1.066. That's where they are today, and we know the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has done an analysis to show that we'll be, by far, the highest price in the country after this new tax increase.

Madam Chair, that's the crux of the matter of what we're here to talk about today, is the gas increase and the implications on the people of the Province. While it sounds simple enough, it has complicated and profound impacts. We don't know how much that impact is going to be, but we know it's going to have an implication on food, on goods, on services, on the cost of going to a private business and doing business with private businesses in the province.

We know it's going to have an impact on them as well, but it's going to significantly increase the cost of fuel. It's not going to be good for tourism. It's not going to be good for people who drive their children back and forth to school, or work, or to dance classes, or to whatever their children – their soccer or whatever they happen to be involved in. It's going to have an impact on the people of the entire province.

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. P. DAVIS: I look forward to an opportunity to speak –

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member his time for speaking has expired.

MR. P. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll have a chance to speak a little bit later.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands.

MR. LANE: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair.

It's certainly a pleasure to stand and speak once again to Bill 20. Again, for those who are only tuning in at this point in time, we're talking about the proposal here to raise gas tax from 16 ½ cents up to 33 cents, so essentially doubling the gas tax.

Madam Chair, I spoke earlier about the impacts, the cumulative effect this would have on families and individuals in the province. I just want to spend a little bit of time now speaking about the economy, and potentially the impacts these cumulative measures are going to have on the economy. This again is something I've heard from many constituents, and people outside of my district who've contacted me, is the impact it will have on the economy.

The big thing I hear is how did things change over the last four months? How did things change from November until now from the perspective that four months ago 2 per cent HST hike was considered a job killer, and now we fast-forward to *Budget 2016* and all of a sudden we can do 2 per cent hike on HST, we can raise insurance, we can raise gas tax, we can raise income tax, we can implement a levy. We can increase fees on pretty much most of the fees that are there. Then we're going to implement a bunch of new fees.

How is it that in November 2 per cent is a job killer, detrimental to the economy, but now four months later we can do all these cumulative measures and somehow that's fine? How do you square that circle?

That's a legitimate question people have asked me. I say to them quite frankly, I'm not an economist. I'm really not. I'm no expert on these things but it is hard to explain or justify how you get from scenario (a) to scenario (b) and the extreme is between the two scenarios; yet, it was terrible here when we did one little thing but now we're going to do all these things and somehow it's going to be okay. I can't explain it. I would love for somebody to explain it. I really would. I would certainly encourage that.

Again, it comes down – I guess what people say looking at it from a logical point of view, a common sense point of view, an everyday person's point of view, people would say, well, if I have to pay all of these taxes and fees and so

on, therefore, you are taking away my expendable income. Well, that means I'm not going to be able to go out to that restaurant on a Friday evening. It means I'm not going to be able to go out to the Avalon Mall or wherever, out to a movie, maybe go to Fog City for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Or Smitty's.

MR. LANE: Yeah, or Smitty's, or even swing on into Jungle Jim's, I say to the Member for Mount Pearl North. Perhaps I won't be able to go there and then take in a movie. Perhaps a scattered time on a Friday or Saturday night maybe I might like to go down to George Street and check out O'Reilly's or whatever the case might be, some good Newfoundland music or do some karaoke, somebody said. That's a good idea too. Karaoke Kops, that's a perfect idea.

The point is if they don't have that expendable income, then you can't spend it in restaurants and you can't spend it in bars. You can't spend it in movies. You can't do all these extracurricular things. What impact is that going to have? Well, obviously, it would seem to make logical sense that if people are not going to your restaurants buying your food then basically what that means is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – you are going to need less staff. If you need less staff, you are going to lay people off. Then they are losing their job and then they are not contributing to the economy either. Eventually you will lose enough staff and the business goes under completely. The question is how many businesses are going to be impacted if you take away all of that expendable income?

There are lots of people, for example, in the summertime – the weather is getting better. Someone will say – I know I have to do mine, my patio deck. My patio deck needs to be replaced, so my plan is to replace that this year. There are a lot of people who replace their deck, they replace their fence. They'll buy some paint or whatever to paint their fence, things like that. A lot of people have cabins and they're doing work up at their cabins and so on. If they don't

have the money to go and buy building supplies, buy paint and all that kind of stuff, sure wouldn't it be a reasonable assumption that, that is going to have a negative impact on the stores that are selling all these supplies. That's going to lead to layoffs and possibly the business to shut down.

Certainly here in the St. John's metro area, and in some of the other service centres maybe, like Gander, Grand Falls, Corner Brook and so on, because they have a fairly robust economy I suppose compared to other areas, maybe they can absorb some of it. I'm sure they can absorb some of the hits. Not that it's a good thing for our economy but they probably can absorb some of the hits; but if you're talking some of these small towns and so on, some of these small towns with a very limited population, and some of these towns that depend on tourism, as an example – I know every year usually, we'll take a weekend or whatever, my family and extended family, and we'll go to Terra Nova area.

We go to Eastport. We do it every year religiously, pretty much. We'll go to Eastport and stay for a couple of nights. The place is blocked. You have a job to get a cabin in Eastport, Traytown and those places in the summertime. You absolutely do. It's a beautiful area. It's an absolutely beautiful area.

The question is, will people be able to afford – and I hope they do, I really do. I hope it doesn't have the impact that some people are predicting it's going to have. I really hope it doesn't, but when you take places like that, that are seasonal, they are depending on tourism or whatever. Then if people don't have money to spend, they're not going there. That's going to impact their bottom line. There's no way I can see that it's not going to impact their bottom line.

It's not just the cabins or whatever. I know a lot of times when we go to Eastport you'll stop on up to the little restaurant that's there, the gas bar or up to the store, or whatever the case might be, and you drop a few dollars. It's not big money but it's a multiplier effect and a lot of people do it. Everybody is dropping a few dollars here and a few dollars there that helps that business survive, small business that don't have that concentration, that large population to draw on.

I wonder if it's going to have an even worse effect on those small areas. For them it could mean the difference between being open and being closed. Maybe, and I don't know. I'm not saying it to fear monger. I'm not picking on the Member for Terra Nova's district. That's just an example. It could be Bonavista, Elliston, a beautiful place with the root cellar and the museum and all of that stuff.

It could be anywhere. Beautiful places here in Newfoundland, but I have to believe that if you're taking away expendable income, it's got to have an impact. Now, how much of an impact, whether they can absorb it or not, that's a good question. I hope the answer is that it's business as usual. I really hope that's what happens, but I have a feeling something got to give because if I don't have the same amount of money in my pocket to spend, I can't spend it. I can't spend what I don't have.

These are some of the questions that people have put to me, besides some of the other things I've spoken about, as it relates to the budget and the cumulative effect. Like I said when I was up earlier, the 16½ cents on gas that by itself probably wouldn't be enough to stop somebody from going. Some people, it would, because some people are on that fine line of a budget that that means a lot to them. A lot of people can absorb it, but it's the cumulative effect again of the gas and everything else, all the other taxes combined and all the fees and so on combined, those are the things that are going to have an impact on people and could really have an impact on the economy.

I would love to hear somebody else in the government, maybe the Minister of Finance or –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. LANE: – someone, perhaps the Minister of Tourism, explain how this is not going to impact the economy. I'd love to know that. If he can prove me wrong and all that's wrong, that's a wonderful thing. I look forward to hearing it.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, I'll ask the Clerk to call the resolution.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3." (Bill 20)

CLERK (Ms. Barnes): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 and 3.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 and 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 and 3 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the resolution and Bill 20 carried without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise, report the resolution and Bill 20 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that I do rise and report the resolution and Bill 20 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: Carried.

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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read the first time.

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

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Those against?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read the second time – oh, sorry.

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

“That it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on gasoline.”

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

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

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

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: Seconding reading of the resolution.

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 20, and I further move that the said bill be now read the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader that he shall have leave to introduce Bill 20 and that the said bill shall now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3," carried. (Bill 20)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 20).

On motion, Bill 20 read a first time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 20 be now read the second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 20 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 20)

On motion, Bill 20 read a second time.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 20 be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 20 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

CLERK: Mr. Andrew Parsons, Ms. Coady, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Hawkins, Ms. Cathy Bennett, Mr. Kirby, Mr. Trimper, Ms. Dempster, Mr. Browne, Mr. Mitchelmore, Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Letto, Ms. Haley, Mr. Bernard Davis, Mr. Derek Bennett, Mr. Holloway, Mr. Bragg, Ms. Parsley, Ms. Pam Parsons, Mr. Warr, Mr. Finn, Mr. Reid, Mr. Dean, Mr. King.

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

CLERK: Mr. Paul Davis, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Kent, Mr. Brazil, Ms. Perry, Mr. Kevin Parsons, Mr. Petten, Ms. Michael, Ms. Rogers, Mr. Lane.

Mr. Speaker the ayes: 25; the nays: 10.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 20)

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 Revenue Administration Act No. 3,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 20)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of Bill 29.

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. and well learned Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that Bill 29, An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996, be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded by the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that Bill 29 – sorry, Bill 23?

AN HON. MEMBER: Bill 29.

MR. SPEAKER: That Bill 29 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996.” (Bill 29)

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

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

It would only be natural that you would take umbrage with the notation of Bill 29, given the fact that this is a much kinder, gentler, friendly and more progressive Bill 29 than what the House may have seen in the past. This is An Act to Amend the College Act to allow the College of the North Atlantic, our public college system here in Newfoundland and Labrador, the opportunity to be able to provide applied technical degrees.

The certification will lead to a bachelor’s in applied technology, and I think serves not only the college but each and every one of us here in Newfoundland and Labrador and those who are advocates of post-secondary education. It’s a very welcome change in relief because it really builds on an expanded college, an improved college, a structurally more solid college, but most importantly it builds to the future.

Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation was, indeed, contemplated some nine years ago back in 2007. This is not a new concept. In fact, there are many jurisdictions in Canada that now are offering technical colleges applied degrees, applied technical bachelor’s degrees. They include not only British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, but as well Ontario and Prince Edward Island.

In fact, while the College of the North Atlantic was a leader in advancing curriculum and education opportunities in Canada, there was a time where this would have been extremely

helpful to maintain that progress. However, there was a decision, a request was made by the College of the North Atlantic back many years ago, but was not acted upon. We're very, very pleased that this government today is bringing forward this important piece of legislation to be able to provide that opportunity not only to the school, but as well, most importantly, to our students.

Not only will it be our students, Mr. Speaker, as you are very well aware and this House is very well aware, the College of the North Atlantic has been a leader in providing international studies and opportunities. In fact, you may not be aware that prior to the College of the North Atlantic Qatar campus, CNA, College of the North Atlantic, was involved in providing education opportunities in China some two years earlier, back in 1999.

Of course, we do have a spectacular operation facility in Qatar, which is now not only benefiting the people of Qatar, but benefiting faculty and staff that are originally expats from Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada generally, but most importantly, also providing a great source of revenue to the College of the North Atlantic here at home and augmenting our opportunities.

What is exactly an applied degree and how does it impact on students here at home? Well, Mr. Speaker, an applied degree are degrees that are offered in a variety of fields of applied arts and technology where the more common first credential is a diploma – which is exactly what the College of the North Atlantic offers now, a selection of diplomas and certificates – and those certificates and diplomas being offered from a college or an institute of technology, such as CNA.

Applied degree programs provide enhanced career preparation that normally combines theoretical approaches to learning with elements of practical application. It provides a broader range of career and employment opportunities beyond an entry level, but is key and structured towards industry. Offerings are typically in such areas where the labour market requires more advanced and practical career training than is available in just simply diploma programs; and applied degrees differ from diplomas, as they are

longer – usually two years longer – somewhat more theoretical in nature, and provide advanced level knowledge on a particular topic.

They differ from traditional degrees granted by a university, with the exception of some professional degrees, as they are directly related to occupational skills and occupation requirements, and offer enhanced opportunities for hands-on learning. That's exactly the intent of this particular offering for the college, for our public college, is to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, great things are happening at the College of the North Atlantic now. It wasn't always that way, of course. There were some moments, some times in recent history where things were not moving as well.

It was noted earlier in this House that the College of the North Atlantic, back just three years ago while oil was at \$110 a barrel, had faced a 25 per cent cut in its overall budget. Back in 2012-2013, a 25 per cent cut really restricted the college's ability to be able adapt to new technologies and adapt to new circumstances. There is now greater budget stability.

We've gone and made moves, simply administrative moves, which have made a huge difference. Such as offering advanced acceptances for enrolment completed early. This allows the students, after having applied to the College of the North Atlantic, to be able to know well in advance, before the normal September beginning of an academic year, that they will be accepted. Some of those acceptances went out in early March.

By creating that sense of stability, not only within the students, it also created a sense of stability within the school itself, because enrolment numbers were well-known well in advance. Faculty and staff and the college itself could plan those classes well in advance. That's an important element of this.

We're also moving forward, Mr. Speaker, with having the College of the North Atlantic actively engaged as part of our government's innovation strategy. Having campuses throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, some of which are engaged now, which are becoming somewhat

speciality centres involved in broad and general education components but involved in some speciality sectors, such as power engineering.

In my hometown of Corner Brook, it allows the college system and its faculty to be involved in the innovation agenda, providing opportunities for industry and, as well, for the community at large. Entrepreneurship looms large, Mr. Speaker.

The College of the North Atlantic is a key component of our entrepreneurship strategy. Having these centres, having that capacity in their communities, being able to foster and assist entrepreneurs and the task of entrepreneurship is very, very important.

I'll be spending much of my summer, and in the coming months, really looking at CAN as a centre for innovation, a centre for entrepreneurship. We're going to be looking very hard and making sure that this College of the North Atlantic adapts well to our labour market needs, our labour market projections, and adapts and allows our labour market, those looking to join the workforce, that they have the skills and the talents that meet that need; but, as well, as a collective that our province is ready to meet future challenges as well as current ones.

Community outreach looms large too, Mr. Speaker. Community outreach is something I think the College of the North Atlantic has always had a particular capacity in, making sure the offerings of the college are relevant and available to the community at large. That's something that has drifted away in recent years, Mr. Speaker, but it's something we really do indeed want to bring back.

Enrolment at the College of the North Atlantic remarkably has gone up and continues to go up. It's seen as a trainer of choice by not only our students but by the employers themselves. That's an important credibility factor that allows us to be able to build on that particular growth.

Mr. Speaker, I've introduced the concept of an applied degree. I think we've seen the benefits of it. We know one of the first users of an applied degree, one of the first sources of interest in it, will of course be the College of the North Atlantic in Qatar, where, as our contract

trainer, they've been keenly interested in this. As well, the College of the North Atlantic is looking at expanding its presence in China, in Asia, including Vietnam. I think that's a very relevant point. We look forward to having programs available here in Newfoundland and Labrador in the short term.

I want to provide an assurance to the House, Mr. Speaker, that in terms of the offerings here at home, there is a valuable key role that the board of directors of CNA will indeed advance applied degrees as they establish the curriculum, establish the program. There will be a ministerial completion of that particular exercise to ensure that all of the financial data and the capacity are in sync with the capacity that the College of the North Atlantic has. Then we'll start to see the benefits here at home.

So I'm very, very pleased to be able to bring forward this very important piece of timely legislation. One that will do a great service in not only advancing the College of the North Atlantic but promoting excellence in post-secondary education, excellence in the field of training that's most relevant to employers, to industry and to our province as a whole and to our economy.

I can see great benefit, not only in terms of providing an applied degree in bachelors of business administration or in certain health care sciences. These are the things where employers have said they would really, really appreciate those kinds of programs being offered because that's what they're requiring in their workplaces. I look forward to, and hope to receive, the unanimous support of this House in fostering this particular legislation and making it into law.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to stand and speak to the *College Act*, Bill 29. I'll start off the way I will end it, by saying I wholeheartedly support the amendment. I see the benefit of it.

As the minister has noted, this goes back decades. I remember as a graduate of CNA the discussions years ago – and we're talking 35-plus years ago when I graduated – the concept of how do we get into a degree program, particularly around the trades at the time and the technical parts of it. I do remember there was disconnect, because we had the trade school system. Then we moved to the Eastern College systems or the regional college system. Then we went with one big umbrella system that gave us the ability to coordinate on a better effort.

I know 20 years ago as a civil servant we had these discussions when I worked for the Department of Advanced Education and Skills and everybody was on side. The positive here was the students were on side, the industry of the day were on side, the board of CNA were on board, the federation of students' councils were on board. They saw the benefits here and they saw the fact that these were applied technical degree programs. It would bring us closer to being able to compete on a national and international level.

I do commend that this is moved forward. I know there were some heavy discussions back in the early 2000s with the former administration. The former premier who had come from an education background wanted to move it forward – one of the discussions that I had with him – and we were starting to move it forward.

Obviously then, as we got into the next part of the process and the next administration, there was a slowdown in our economy. It didn't become the priority of the day. Then as we moved into the mid-2000s the economy boomed and people never got the ability to do it, as CNA expanded and it was reaching out for enrolment in the trades and reassessing how you better offer programs in various communities and making some reassessments. It was kept on the backburner, even though I know – I talked to some senior staff and being at the briefing – that it was always back there, they wanted to get to it.

I know only a few years ago it became a heavy discussion again. The board had talked about we need to move it forward, but particularly industry had taken a lead here. Industry had seen the benefits if we moved to an applied degree

program in the trades itself from a technical point of view. They looked at different perspectives. Their project management now is at a higher level than it ever was before, the skill set necessary, but particularly to manage bigger projects and to be able to take our students and be able to make them international tradespeople, but a skill set to be able to take on a project and understand what the variances are, what extra skills you need. So there is a big, heavy set there around how we add in other technical training, around the human resource management, around project management, about accounting. All skills that are relevant to the technical trades you have but would be more addressed through an applied degree program, the extra year or two years, depending on what was necessary.

So I give credit that this has been able to move forward and I compliment the minister for having his officials move that forward. I particularly want to compliment the board of CNA, and I know the students – but particularly how they reached out to industry. I know industry have had a big influence on this. They have looked at exactly how this would benefit not only them but particularly the students and the skillset.

We've moved beyond the norm of just being comfortable with a trade where people will find sustainable employment for periods of time. This is about long-term planning. We have already set the tone here by opening up campuses in other countries and being a template for people coming to us looking for expertise and our specialty and us training other countries and other jurisdictions' instructors and designing exactly the programs and services that they would need to enhance their post-secondary education, particularly around the skill set of the trades.

Taking this to the next level obviously puts us on a better playing field with other parts of this country itself. As I note now, this will make us the seventh province or jurisdiction that would have the ability to do this. It took us a while to catch up. I think the benefit here is – I would venture to say and I would wholeheartedly stand forward and say, our tradespeople are the best around. They are the best trained.

Now we're going to give them another skill set. We are going to get them to be able to take their expertise, what they've learned in their technical trades and add another layer, a layer that puts them at a different level and puts them at a level where they can manage bigger projects. The companies they work for can bid on a different type of dimension of what kind of entities or projects that may be out there. They can move all over the world and be able to do it. They can compete with other jurisdictions. This is a positive that we are doing here.

As the minister mentioned too, the last number of years we've had an increase in the enrolment in CNA. That goes back to prior years of reassessing how you best offer the type of programs that are necessary, particularly in our school system how we trained, through our assessment on career paths, of what people should move towards and what the industry would encompass. But the benefit there was that the industry themselves had a say into it.

Again when you have educators who are open to listening not just around the education, the academic part, but how the academic benefits when we move forward, so that at the end of the day industry benefits from them, but particularly the individuals who are going to be trained in those respective fields.

We've seen what we've produced in our college system all over the world. We've seen what's gone out west and how there's such a demand that they're willing to pay exorbitant amounts of salaries; they're given all kinds of other perks. They're even willing to say you can work for us because you have such a skill set. You've been trained so well, your college system is second to none, that we'll fly you back and forth. That's how much of an asset you are to us.

So they're positive things, but that's a reflection of the college system that we've had. It took decades to be able to design that the way we wanted and have everybody on the same page. The old trade school system was a direct trade concept but didn't look beyond the phase of how you get to another level. The discussions around the applied degree, obviously was there from day one. Now it's become reality.

I'm looking forward to, and I know us on this side are, as big promoters of our post-secondary education system, looking forward to assessing and identifying how we best move this out and letting the rest of the world know we're open for business. You want to attract some additional students here, this is another draw. You want to take the students that we've had, our graduates, our workers who've gone away who now are at a pinnacle part of their education and their careers who'd like to come back and finish off an applied degree so they can use the experience they have, the skill set they learn from our instructors, and now take it to another level with a degree program.

So this, as I see, as a very positive thing for the students in this province. I see it as a very positive thing for the taxpayers, because there'll be a return on the investment here. I see it as a positive for us being able to promote that we've gone to another level in offering post-secondary education to any citizen anywhere in this world. So it will be seen as a good revenue generator, but it also sees that it puts us at an ability to be able to compete with any market anywhere else in the world. So we now have already moved to the point where we are an entity where people want to come and draw from our expertise, this will be another layer that we'll have, another ability for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to take their expertise from an education point of view and pass it on. The experts here will design those programs and services.

I'm looking forward to reading the documentation around how this will be implemented over the phase process, how industry itself will directly be connected, but particularly the students themselves, particularly recent graduates who did a two or three or even a one-year program, but would now be able to say how the next year or two of an applied degree would benefit them in a job market, or being able to assess some of the skill set they didn't have when they took on jobs in certain industries.

So this is a win-win I think for everybody. I think it's a complement to our college system, definitely a complement to our educators, and to the graduates who have the skill set, after using their trade, to come back and do the applied degree.

Mr. Speaker, I have no qualms in saying that we support this. We look forward to this being implemented and seeing the success we're going to have in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 29, An Act to Amend the College Act. I'd like to thank my hon. colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, the Member for Corner Brook, for introducing this piece of legislation and of course the points he's made. I'd like to thank the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island for the very good points he's made there as well.

I have great respect for the College of the North Atlantic and certainly applaud the administration and the staff all across this great province in all of the campuses for the great work they do. I'm also proud to stand and say that I'm a graduate of the College of the North Atlantic program at the campus in Stephenville, and both of my parents were actually teachers there. My father taught at the College of the North Atlantic – which changed its name several time – for 29 years. My mother taught there for 22 years. Being one of five children, I had two sisters who were graduates of the College of the North Atlantic, as well as my younger brother.

The Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island referenced some changes over the years and certainly there were a number of transitions in our college system in our province over the years. It was great to sit down with my mother this weekend and get a bit of a history lesson, if you will, as to how things evolved over the years.

She informed me that prior to 1963, there was only one trade school in the province. Then in '63 we saw the opening of College of Trades and Technology in St. John's and 11 other district vocational schools across the Island. So that was in '63 when things started expanding with respect to our college system here in the province.

There was some rejigging done of the system in '77, again in '87, furthermore again in '92, as the Member opposite alluded to with respect to the technical trades, of course with the demands for trades and technology programs across the Island in various locations. Then in '97 we saw the former incorporation into the College of the North Atlantic. The headquarters of which I'm proud to say is located in Stephenville and has been since that time. It certainly plays a very important role to the local economy there.

The College of the North Atlantic does some great programming right now and has tremendous benefits to students who wish to study and complete diploma programs there. They currently have the ability to transfer into degree programs into a variety of universities across the country.

Transferring credits to universities from a college program is a tremendous benefit to students. It can allow students to complete a degree program in two or three years and perhaps less than the typical four-year degree requirements. It allows students to stay closer to home, families not to move and so on and so forth.

Currently graduates who wish to further their studies can transfer into Cape Breton University, Lakehead University in Ontario, University of New Brunswick, Okanagan College in British Columbia, Memorial University, just to name a few. So it is certainly a tremendous benefit there in providing our graduates of the College of the North Atlantic every opportunity to further their education.

I think this bill today speaks volumes to accessing further educational opportunities for students in the province. With this legislation, we're going to be able to develop and grant applied degrees, which are going to assist in expanding of programming, essentially increasing enrolment and tuition revenue ideally would be increased as a result of expansion of programs. It will allow us to be competitive on a national stage and as well as on an international stage, as the Member for Corner Brook had mentioned with respect to the College of the North Atlantic campuses in Qatar.

The College of the North Atlantic delivering these programs, in addition to increasing educational opportunities, it will give us a competitive edge. It is certainly going to prepare our graduates for the challenges of an ever evolving labour market, and we all know how the labour market evolves very quickly. Of course just a short time ago, with a high demand on trades and then some downturns in the economy, changed the way that dynamic plays out for graduates and those seeking employment, particularly with whatever background they would have studied.

By offering applied degrees, applied degrees are generally in areas of business, science, technology. They are a little more in-depth, if you will, a little more theoretical in nature. Applied degrees are often sought out by established professionals already working in a variety of occupations that wish to bring their technical education up to a degree level, to enhance their employment prospects and their leadership capabilities.

This proposed change to the *College Act* is again allowing us to remain competitive. We are not doing something new here. We are doing something that is being done right now in six other provinces in the country: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Prince Edward Island. It is allowing us to be competitive with the other provinces with respect to our educational opportunities.

Ideally as well, in addition to increasing enrolment, it will help sustain enrolment here in the province by expanding the programs and the potential for further studies. That's important right now as we see declining population enrolling in our K to 12 system.

Also this particular piece of legislation is a bit of testament as well to our government's commitment to expanding opportunities and looking at other ways to generate revenue. It is certainly something that was brought up during the Government Renewal Initiative process. Even as the Member opposite mentioned, although it's not a new idea, as has been certainly discussed before, it's with great pleasure that I'm able to stand here and say that our government will currently be introducing this legislation.

I don't have much to add other than that, Mr. Speaker. I think it's pretty straightforward. It's a positive news story for the college system. It is a positive news story for the students of our province and those looking to receive education here, and certainly a positive news story for those who are currently employed and looking to further their studies as well. So I certainly suspect we'll receive some co-operation from the Members opposite.

I'd like to thank my colleague, the Member for Corner Brook, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, for introducing this bill and look forward to what the Third Party has to say as well.

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'm pleased to rise in the House today and speak in support of this bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: I think it's a good piece of legislation. We often get criticized for being negative for the sake of being negative. There are multiple occasions in this House where government will bring forward legislation and the Opposition Parties of the day will support it. This is one of those instances where I believe the government is doing the right thing. This is a sensible piece of legislation. It is amendments to the *College Act* and it allows applied degree programs at the College of the North Atlantic.

I think that will mean good things for our students and good things for the public college system in Newfoundland and Labrador. So I'm also pleased to note that the college has advocated for these changes. They were also consulted going through the process of preparing for this legislation. So I think it's a change that makes sense. It will benefit all of the campus locations in Newfoundland and Labrador, I hope. I think it's important that we have a good, strong public college system. I think there's a

really valuable role and an important role for our private colleges to play as well, and they do great things to educate many citizens of our province also.

As I think previous speakers have indicated, we will be the seventh Canadian province to adopt and apply a degrees program in our college system. It's good that we're not the last, and it's good that it's happening relatively soon. These changes will apparently come into effect for fall 2018.

It's good legislation. It will strengthen our public college system in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I'm pleased to join with my colleagues in supporting it. I want to thank the government for bringing forward this legislation today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I don't have a lot to say about this. I am, of course, supporting it. The minister first and then my other colleagues have spoken rather thoroughly to what the bill is about.

It's about time. As has been indicated, we're growing up I think. This is something that's well overdue. I think it's really important for people who go to the College of the North Atlantic in some extremely important program areas that this is happening for all the reasons that have been said, but also because it brings the programs at the college to a new professional level. I think that gives a sense of achievement and pride as well to those who do the four-year program at the college, when it becomes that, and actually have a degree.

Even though the degree doesn't have the same degree of academic background as a degree at the university, it is a solid degree, an applied degree. We need these degrees as well as we need straight academic degrees, so I'm really glad to see it.

I do know, from some of the research that we've done, that there have been problems in some of the provinces with the universities, barriers to syncing the new degrees in the colleges with university programs. Especially if somebody gets a degree from the college and then wants to go on and do graduate school at the university, having had an applied degree from the college. So there is a level of which I think that the university and the college, when this begins, are going to have to work together.

I don't see that addressed in the bill anywhere, but I would be interested in the minister responding to this point and responding to a question that I'm asking which is: Has the university been involved at all in this discussion to see the implications for that? That's one thing I would like some information on. Not to say I'm going to vote against the bill, I'm not, but it would be good to know what is happening with regard to the university and the college because of these problems that have occurred.

There's one piece in the legislation that I do have a question about. Before doing that, just talking once again about the college and the university, I have looked at the act with regard to Memorial. There is a section in that act which talks about all the different rights and responsibilities, et cetera of the university. It talks about the university being able to affiliate a college in the province to the university. In actual fact, that could be something that could work down the road.

I'm sure that's not something that could happen right away, but I'm just wondering if those kinds of things are being thought about at all because this is a wonderful step forward. I think there are other steps that can come after this to make sure that we do have a synchronization going on between the college and the university, and to look at other models which have been followed in the other six provinces where colleges have applied degree programs. I hope the minister might be able to fill me in on that a bit.

The other point I'd like to raise has to do with section 2(3) it's says, "Section 15 of the Act is amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) the following: (3) Notwithstanding paragraph (1)(c), the board shall obtain the written approval of the minister before approving an

applied degree program to be provided in the province.”

Section 1(c) says the college can offer applied degrees from the college. They have that in their power, but even though they have that in their power, according to this section 2(3), if they are going to put an applied degree program into the college it has to have written approval of the minister.

I'd just like to have a little bit of an explanation of why that's there because I can't find anything in the act which rules a university that says a new program or a new degree has to be approved from outside of the university. So I look forward to the minister giving a bit of explanation of that when he stands.

He has signaled that he's on top of it and will be doing so. I'm glad of that.

Having said all that, I think, as I said, this is timely. We need it. I'm glad it's happening. I note the areas that the college is currently looking at for applied degrees are places where they really have made grand steps forward. I think we can be really proud of what is happening there.

One is the medical sector. The medical lab sciences want people to be trained at the college to be able to take leadership roles when they go outside of the college. I think having an applied degree in these areas would be wonderful. We know they're doing a good job with regard to the medical lab sciences at the college.

Another place where they are looking at the applied degree is the engineering technology. We also know they are doing a wonderful job, too, in the engineering field, in the engineering technology.

I know when I was the executive director of Women in Resource Development, a number of the women who after they did the orientation to the trades and technology program, chose the engineering technology program at the college and have been quite successful having done it. So I think it's great to know that's one of the areas they are looking at.

Another one is culinary arts. That's another place where the college is also shining, actually. They really are graduating some –

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

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

The culinary arts, as I was saying, is another area where the college is shining and really is graduating some great people. So having students come out with an applied degree where they could also have management training is really wonderful.

Yes, I am supporting this bill. We are supporting this bill. I think it will be a good thing for the college. I look forward to hearing the minister address a couple of the issues that I've raised.

Thank you.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take very long. I just wanted to say for the record, I guess, on behalf of my caucus of one, that I do support this particular Bill 29.

Mr. Speaker, I think we all realize that Memorial University is a wonderful organization. There are many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and certainly people from away who take advantage of what MUN has to offer, but Memorial University is not for everybody. That's why it's so important that we have a good, solid college system here in the province for our young people – not just our young people, people of all ages, certainly – to have another option in addition to Memorial University.

From my perspective, Mr. Speaker, anything that we can do to enhance the educational opportunities at the College of the North Atlantic – and of course here we're talking about applied degrees. Anything we can do like that, that's going to enhance the learning opportunities for Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians, I think we would all be in support of. That was basically all I wanted to say to the bill, just to say that for the record I do support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills speaks now he shall close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

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

The government is delighted to hear that there appears to be unanimous consent or approval of the legislation in principle. Allow me to address some of the questions that have been offered by the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi which I think are very succinct and pointed questions that deserve an answer.

Let me just recap here. The Member asked about the involvement of Memorial University of Newfoundland with some of the planning. Of having our public technical college offer applied bachelor's degrees and, potentially, applied master's degrees – but at this moment, obviously, applied bachelor's degrees – and the impact that this may have on the offerings of Memorial University of Newfoundland, and whether or not there's a potential for overlap, duplication or cross-interests in that field.

Memorial University of Newfoundland was, indeed, consulted on this. In fact, Memorial was, at one point in time, invited to participate in our Qatar project to be able to offer applied degrees in that particular jurisdiction. It was a good discussion, but it was resolved by Memorial at that point in time that that was not a role they saw themselves entering into.

Here's where – and this is an important point, Mr. Speaker. This is where the controls are most important and this is where the Member is referring to section 15(1)(c). There is a specific legislative role for the board of governors of the College of the North Atlantic. They do, indeed, need the statutory authority to be able to engage in preparing, promoting and developing applied degrees which, without that statutory authority,

if they were to engage in that field of endeavour in that enterprise, they would be acting outside of the act which would be ultra vires of their duties, of their responsibilities.

This act enables the board of governors to be able to do that, but there's a two-step process as well. The amendments to the act also allow the minister to provide some oversight, so there is an assurance that there would not be inefficient or undue duplication or overlap between other offerings by our public university. The College of the North Atlantic would have the authority to prepare the applied degree, to prepare its curriculum and to present it. That's very important. Then, of course, the offering would be presented to the minister and that provides again the interaction. So it's a two-step, double-check process to ensure that that happens.

The Member raised a very good point about the current Memorial University of Newfoundland Act, providing an opportunity to affiliate with a college to the university. Articulation agreements are already occurring not only between Memorial University of Newfoundland and other mainland institutions, but here is an important point which I've mentioned on the floor of the House in the past, but I'll re-emphasize today, is that the College of the North Atlantic already has an articulation agreement with Memorial University of Newfoundland on its business programs.

In fact, a student of the College of the North Atlantic studying business at the college can indeed articulate those credits, that program, to the Grenfell campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland and be able to offer that and articulate those. There is already that affiliation that Memorial University of Newfoundland has offered. We have a solid foundation of co-operation here, and I think that's extremely effective and important.

I believe that offers some answers to the questions for the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi. Memorial University, indeed, its interests are protected. It is protected not only through a consultation process, but formally through a ministerial authority and a ministerial accountability that that remains intact. There is a two-step process whereby CNA, its own board of directors, has to take accountability and take

charge of the process of developing the applied degree, and then the second portion of that process is for a ministerial check off to ensure that that occurs.

The university and the college are already paired and co-operating extremely effectively and we're trying to grow that with an articulation agreement on one particular program, which is the business program. I'm sure that the Memorial University of Newfoundland will indeed want to expand that endeavour of co-operation in the future.

I want to thank all the speakers, including my critics, but as well the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port for offering their own perspectives. It is always extremely helpful. The Member who was an employee, both were educated and took advantage of some of those programs, they added their perspective.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, without further ado, we'll bring this debate to a close at this stage in the report. I want to thank all of the House for what appears to be a strong basis of consent to move this legislation forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The motion is that Bill 29, An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996, be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996. (Bill 29)

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

When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 29)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I moved, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29 and that 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 considering Bill 29, An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The College Act, 1996." (Bill 29)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 and 3.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 and 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 and 3 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act to Amend The College Act, 1996.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 29 carried without amendment?

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 29.

CHAIR: The motion is that I do now report Bill 29 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, 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 asked me to report Bill 29 carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 29, An Act To Amend

The College Act, 1996, carried without amendment.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Advanced Education, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 2 o'clock tomorrow, when I shall ensure the doors are wide open.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 2 p.m.