



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume XLVIII

SECOND SESSION

Number 2

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Tom Osborne, MHA

Wednesday

29 March 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Orders of the Day

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

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking leave of the House to permit the Chair of the Select Committee to present the committee's report.

MR. SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Select Committee appointed to draft a reply to the speech from His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, I am pleased to present the report of the Select Committee as follows:

To His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Frank F. Fagan:

May it please Your Honour, we, the Commons of Newfoundland and Labrador in legislative session assembled, beg to thank Your Honour for the Gracious Speech that Your Honour has addressed to this House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly great to stand today as we officially kick off the second session of the 48th General Assembly. I was pleased to have the time yesterday to be the mover of the Speech from the Throne. I guess yesterday of course, as most of us here in the House of Assembly are familiar, it is a formality and quite an honour to have our Lieutenant Governor bring the Speech from the Throne.

This is when we kick off our session as we begin a new year, and our second year in government. I believe there were a number of good things mentioned yesterday in the Speech from the Throne. I also, in my speech, alluded to a number of initiatives that we have brought forward. What was unfortunate in seeing some of the subsequent speakers yesterday, in particular the PC leader, the Member for Topsail – Paradise, had quite a few comments to make. He began by talking about what a Speech from the Throne is and what a Speech from the Throne is supposed to do.

He said it's a day for laying out priorities. It's an opportunity for us to share our strategies. It should be a grand vision. It should be charting a course of what we're supposed to do, and we should be giving hope and confidence to the people of the province. It's a time in this speech when we should be laying out specific initiatives for the coming year.

He said it's not about what Newfoundland and Labrador needs; it's what they need now. He said instead of a time when we need accountability, we hear blame. He went on to say, at a time when we need decisive action, we get waffling and wavering. He said, it's supposed to be about the way forward, and instead it's more about what's in the past and what's behind.

I really struggle with hearing some of that. I know the Member was here in the House as His Honour read his speech, and I understand that it was certainly quite lengthy, but there were a number of things that were mentioned in that

speech yesterday that kind of contradict exactly what the Member opposite was referring to.

He went on to say that we abandoned our people, and there was very little mention of the people of the province in the speech yesterday. I certainly beg to differ. He said there was so much missing from the speech. There was so much missing from the speech yesterday. But then only went on to specifically mention that we did not mention Mistaken Point.

Now, yesterday's Speech from the Throne was about a number of initiatives in *The Way Forward* that we, as a government, have laid out as a plan to get this province back on track. From all the things that you can suggest that would be missing, we somehow yesterday missed Mistaken Point. I do not see the relevance in that. I think the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation yesterday was here present. He had laid out in this House of Assembly, in the past, all the initiatives that we're working on in that regard, as did the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources. I don't know how that can be the one thing that was suddenly missing from the speech yesterday.

One of the things that were really quite shocking was the reference to us playing a bit of a blame game again, and there was a mention of blame. He went on further to suggest that when we took office, we were to be full aware of the state of the province's finances. He said they knew the state of the finances, and we knew, and the people of the province knew.

I feel like I'm sounding like a broken record because we've said this time and time again. I won't belabour it, but I really need to point it out. I honestly do. The Premier yesterday, in his reply to the Speech from the Throne, got up and specifically referenced that he had wrote the PC leader, then former premier of the province, in September 2015, seeking an update on the state of the province's finances. There was no response to the letter seeking an update to the state of the province's finances – no response.

So we, as an Opposition at the time, could only be led to believe what was laid out in front of us. What was laid out in front of us was a deficit

expected to be \$1.1 billion. That was the expected deficit when we took office.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much (inaudible)?

MR. FINN: It was an expected deficit of \$1.1 billion and when we took office, we find out it is \$2.2 billion.

I've said this in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have repeated this in the House of Assembly, the Premier repeated this yesterday, so I do not understand how the Member can stand on his feet and suggest to us and to the public of the province that we were all fully aware of the province's finances.

Now, with that aside – and I understand that folks don't need to continue to hear that they left us in financial dire straits and everything else, but I can't understand the rhetoric behind suggesting that everybody knew. It's clearly documented that there was no information to suggest we would have a \$2.2 billion deficit. Now, if this was \$25 million, so be it, maybe \$100 million, so be it, but we're talking about a significant difference of \$1.1 billion.

I ask the Member for Topsail – Paradise: What would you do with an extra billion dollars? What would you do with extra \$1 billion as a government to operate? What would you do with an extra billion dollars? It's ironic that the deficit we just paid this year, \$1 billion went to interest payments on our deficit. If we did not have to pay a billion dollars in interest on our deficit payments, imagine what we could achieve. Just imagine what we could achieve with an extra billion dollars.

Again, we're not talking about an extra \$20 here. To put this in context: Central Health, for example; \$130 million is roughly a third of their annual operating budget. We're operating a province with an \$8 billion budget, and we got to give \$1 billion of that to deficit, to interest payments; \$1 billion of that has to go there.

So again, to stand up yesterday and address the province and address the House of Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne suggesting that we knew full well the state of the province's finances, nothing could be further from the truth. We'll have to continue saying it.

What I do want to speak about is some of the things that we did mention. Again, the Member mentioned this is supposed to be about laying out a plan and this is supposed to be about the way forward. Yesterday, His Honour sat there, delivered the Speech from the Throne and he talked about our initiatives. They're saying that we didn't hear anything new.

We didn't need to wait for a Speech from the Throne to list the initiatives that we've been working on for the past year. Why would we wait for one particular day to announce that? We've been working on a number of initiatives over the past 15 months now, and most of which were announced yesterday. In my remarks yesterday, I was pleased to speak to the near \$28 million over the next five years that we'll be investing in a multi-year marine infrastructure plan as brought in by the Minister of Transportation and Works.

It was also referenced in our multi-year infrastructure plan that there's a multi-year plan for roads in this province, something that municipalities and the people of the province have been looking forward to for years. The former administration had all kinds of time to open up a multi-year infrastructure plan on roads.

The beautiful thing about the multi-year infrastructure plan on roads is what this is going to do it's going to allow our contractors and the various companies that partake in this type of procurement to prepare. It's going to allow them to prepare and plan properly when it comes to hiring practices. Each year you have contracting companies that say, okay, we're going to bid on this piece of work now, and I think we're going to take on another dozen employees to complete this job, but we don't know if we can keep you because we don't know what we're bidding on next. We have no idea what the government's plan is to do next.

The stability this will give to our contracting companies that partake in roadwork in this province is phenomenal, and they've applauded this. They've applauded this. Just like our municipalities have applauded this type of initiative as well.

With respect to creating jobs; again, there's no jobs plan they indicate, and we're going to see unemployment rates now higher than we ever seen before. I'd like to remind the Members opposite, that having been in power from 2003 to 2015 there were a number of economic indicators that pointed to employment rates in this province and where they would be at this time this year. The megaprojects are starting to unfold and we're seeing some people leave as they finish up their work there.

All these things were clearly documented during their tenure, Mr. Speaker. So to suggest that we somehow in 15 months just created an unemployment rate and we have no jobs plan. How about the jobs we're going to create with the construction of the Western Memorial Regional Hospital? That's the same hospital that I believe was announced six or seven times over a 12-year period. We still haven't seen any action. In Corner Brook they call it the greatest dog park there is, because it's just an open gravel lot. That's all it is. It's just a grand, big, open gravel lot, and you'll see people there walking their dogs.

So we have to come in now under a multi-year infrastructure plan, and that's one of our pieces. How about a long-term care facility on the West Coast as well, in Corner Brook? That's part of a multi-year infrastructure plan. So when you want to talk about creating jobs and providing stability, and providing a vision and being able to maintain employment, and be able to advise companies who are bidding on contracts on roads and on our marine infrastructure, these are the pieces we've laid out – nothing new in the Throne Speech.

How about agriculture, the legislation and the announcement by the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources to open up more agricultural areas? I mentioned that yesterday. This is something that the Members opposite support. It's something they said was in the Blue Book, but I guess they didn't get time to introduce it somewhere in a 12-year span. They didn't find the time to introduce an opportunity to open up agricultural lands.

How about the capital works funding that we laid out last year? We are able to increase some of our funding for that by leveraging funds from

the federal government. I can tell you employment in the Stephenville – Port au Port region this particular spring and summer as a direct result of municipal capital works funding is going to be great.

We have waterline extension projects going on in the Town of Stephenville, the Town of Port au Port East. Port au Port West-Felix Cove-Aguathuna will have waterline projects; the Town of Cape St. George, the Town of Lourdes. We're going to have more work with respect to infrastructure this spring and summer, our contractors will certainly be busy, I can tell you that, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to agriculture; I'm very proud to have Northern Harvest Sea Farms in the Town of Stephenville. Northern Harvest Sea Farms is, I believe – and you can correct if I'm wrong, minister – the only and first agriculture company in North America to receive a four star rating, and they're going to embark on a \$6 million expansion in the Town of Stephenville this summer. In doing so, they've stated they will do this and they have done this from their initial construction phase, they're going to use all local contractors to do this type of work. So employment will be created there as well.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that was talked about yesterday as well was the \$100 million in lost revenue as our government did not introduce the increase in HST in January. In fact, we waited until July. We lost out on an opportunity for \$100 million. I want to remind the Member, that \$100 million is one-tenth of what you falsely led everybody to believe would be a deficit – one-tenth, absolutely one-tenth.

The Member yesterday stated that they faced challenges as well, and, no doubt, there were challenges over their tenure in government and, no doubt, there are challenges that will be faced by every government. He specifically referenced the fact that they faced challenges in 2004 and they faced challenges again in 2009. He went on to say that in 2009 their government was one of the first governments to overcome what was known as the economic crisis that spread throughout North America and rippled throughout other parts of the world; one of the first governments to overcome that.

During their time of challenges, what we seen, and I stated this yesterday, was a government that put their hat on one industry. They put their hat on the most volatile commodity that the world has known. So during a time when they're stating they had faced challenges, and everything is wavering on the price of oil, somewhere in there, that administration found a way to think it would be logical to remove the 15 per cent tax on insurance premiums. We don't need that anymore, they thought. Let's forget about that. How about we decrease the HST down to 14 per cent seeing how we're doing so well. How about we go ahead and decrease that down to 13 per cent seeing we're doing so well.

In fact, while we're at it, why don't we decrease the income tax levels to the highest earners in the province? Let's do that in '07, and the next year say: my God, we're doing so well, let's decrease the income tax brackets again. Doing all this, and then only to get into 2009 where you're stating yourself you had a challenge, and during a time of challenge rather than prepare for the future and set aside any funds, we're just going to keep decreasing taxes and just letting it roll. And letting it roll to the point where you now have a transition in government and you have folks on this side of the Legislature that come in and being blindsided by \$1.1 billion. To that end perhaps, I believe one of the greatest pieces of legislation that was passed here this year was Bill 65, An Act to Amend the Financial Administration Act.

Yesterday, we heard again that the Liberals were supposed to be open and they were supposed to be accountable – and we're supposed to be accountable. One of the biggest and best accountability measures that we've put in place is ensuring the release of public accounts so that no administration, no matter what stripe or colour, Mr. Speaker, if they are to transition into government, if any future government is to come in, we now have in place legislation that will ensure everyone in the province will know what the state of the finances are.

So to be over there yesterday in recognizing the Speech from the Throne from His Honour, to suggest we're only blaming, we didn't live up to any promises, there's nothing new that we're doing, and that is what it is. It was really

difficult to sit here yesterday and listen to that, Mr. Speaker – extremely difficult to listen to that yesterday.

Some of these initiatives, again, as I mentioned, all the time in the world to implement. We went through the legislation – and I did this just the week before last, before the House recessed for constituency week. I went on to reference some of the pieces of legislation we brought in and I did point out all the pieces that they supported. All the pieces of legislation that they supported that we have brought in this year; did not see them not support that.

In true Opposition fashion, we continue to hear from the Members opposite that they are unhappy with the things that we've done and we don't have any new plan. Just like last year, Mr. Speaker, during budget debate, I have yet to hear any ideas from the Members opposite on a new plan.

I'm actually looking forward this afternoon to the private Member's motion brought in by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. For those looking forward to that private Member's motion this afternoon, it's around holding a summit for educational professionals in the province, to look at instructional resource teachers and allocations and how do we help inclusive education. I'm looking forward to that. It's an initiative brought in by an administration that had 12 years to do that. They had 12 years to do that too.

It's just a common theme that we see. Suddenly there are ideas that they're bringing in and they're saying why don't we do this, when they had all the opportunity in the world. The 64 pieces of legislation we passed last year, they had all the opportunity in the world to do them last year themselves – the year before.

They must have been too caught up with the boundaries commission and the change; they only had the House of Assembly open for five weeks. They were too caught up with the changes perhaps, I don't know. All the pieces of legislation they supported and thought it was great, where was the initiative to bring it in from the other side?

Mr. Speaker, I won't go on too much more. We're going to have a significant amount of time to speak to Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. Again, I'll take a moment to thank His Honour for the Speech from the Throne. It certainly is a great day and is a proud day to be here in this province and to have the distinct honour to be here in this Legislature when we bring in His Honour and we hear about the plans that the government is going to have moving forward and that our government has. There are a number of plans that we've laid out that the Members have clearly agreed with and they'll continue to play politics with that and suggest that it is something that they don't agree with.

I look forward to continuing the course of the debate, but with that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Well thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was waiting for somebody on the other side to take the opportunity to have a few comments on the Speech from the Throne, but I'm amazed that nobody stood up. I was sort of taken off guard.

I just wanted to have a few words on the Speech from the Throne yesterday. First of all, I want thank my colleague for the District of Stephenville – Port au Port and my colleague for Exploits for putting the motion forward and doing such a great job of introducing the debate on the Speech from the Throne.

I guess the response has been varied, but not surprising some of the responses that we've heard from the Opposition on the Speech from the Throne yesterday – which I thought was a very good document, a very good speech and certainly lays out our plan for the next few months to implement some good things around this province. But the only comments I get, I

hear from the other side and from the leader of the Third Party, for instance, is empty platitudes, meaningless targets. When I hear these things, I don't quite understand where they're coming from because what's happened – and I'm going to have a chance to elaborate on this. Last Friday, the Premier and the Minister of Transportation and Works released the five-year, multi-year plan for infrastructure investments. It's a *Way Forward* document.

In that document, there are some great initiatives, good objectives, timelines attached. So when I hear these things, empty platitudes and meaningless targets, I think it's just for the sake of opposing rather than being constructive. Because if we're going to get this province back on even keel, we need all of our parties working together and all the people in the House of Assembly, as the Premier said yesterday and he was hoping to achieve; but obviously, after the comments yesterday from both parties, he decided to take a different route. And rightly so, because his remarks yesterday were quite appropriate.

When I heard the Leader of the Official Opposition, and my colleague for Stephenville – Port au Port already referred to it this morning, talking about waffling and wavering and at a time when we need hope, we get uncertainty. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've experienced at least two, three challenging years in this province. With the drop in the oil prices and all the commodities, it's been challenging. It's been challenging for us on this side of the House.

I won't belabour the point, as my colleague for Stephenville – Port au Port has so eloquently demonstrated this morning, the state of this province and we took over the reins of government. We were led to believe that we were coming in with a \$1.1 billion deficit. We find that not only was it a \$1.1 billion deficit, but it was twice that. When you're talking about B as in billions, when the one becomes a two, I tell you, it's not like going from \$5 to \$10. You're talking a major, major change in the financial situation of this province, and that's what we had to face.

AN HON. MEMBER: It was game changer.

MR. LETTO: It was a game changer; absolutely, it was a game changer. To say that we knew all about this while we were in campaign mode, I think is just ludicrous.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to belabour that point. What I want to do and I think what we all should be doing in this House, on both sides, is looking at the good things, looking at the positive future that we have in this province. I think the plan that was laid out by the Premier and the Minister of Transportation and Works on Friday goes a long way.

First, we've often heard, for the past year, we have no plan. Yeah, the government has no plan. Well, I looked up the definition of a plan this morning on Google, just to make sure, just to ease my mind. I thought we had a plan, and I just wanted to make sure that our plan matched the definition of what a plan is. It's written on Google – and Google never lies; Google is always right. A plan is a written account of intended future course of action, aimed at achieving specific goals on objectives within a specific time frame.

Now, if this document doesn't fit that description, I'm at a loss. Because what this document does is exactly what a plan is, and this is a good plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: So for the Opposition to keep saying that we have no plan, they need to change the rhetoric because this is a plan and it's a good one.

I'm going to take a few minutes to go through a couple of things in the plan because what this is, it's a five-year plan that lays out the objectives of this government. It lays out the things that we are going to do in the next five years. It lays out a time frame, when it's going to be done. It gives it a momentary value that needs to be spent to achieve the plan. So for anybody to say we have no plan, it's just ludicrous.

For instance, under health care, we're going to spend \$23 million for repair and renovations projects in health facilities across the province; \$20 million for replacement and upgrading of the medical equipment at the health facilities

province wide; \$13.2 million to advance the replacement of the Western Memorial Regional Hospital; \$10 million to construct a new electrical substation to service the Health Sciences Centre and Memorial University; \$7.5 million to advance the replacement of the Waterford Hospital. And we've all just heard –

AN HON. MEMBER: It's a good plan (inaudible).

MR. LETTO: It's a good plan.

We just heard the report from the All-Party Committee on Mental Health that requires us as a government, and something that we've committed to, we're spending 5.7 per cent of our health care budget on mental health, which is well below the national average. We need to increase that to 9 per cent by 2022.

We as a government, we're committed – and the Minister of Health will be releasing another plan by the end of June that will outline and implement the recommendations of the all-party committee; 54 recommendations which are very much needed in this province. It's 54 recommendations that all parties in this House agreed to and needs to be done, and it's long, long overdue. Many people have suffered because of it, and none more than the District of Labrador West, I might add.

We can go on and on; K to 12 education. Now, I just had the Minister of Education in my district, the District of Labrador West, last week for two days where we visited all the schools in Labrador West. There are four of them, including the French school, École de français, the elementary school – or the primary school, I might add – the middle school and the high school and we met with all the principals. We met with many students. We met with many, many teachers, and I tell you – I accompanied the minister on these visits, and the conversations they had with the teachers in those schools was very frank, pointed, and they didn't hold back, and neither did the minister.

We recognize that there are some shortfalls in the system but, nevertheless, teachers, principals understand where we are as a government and they're willing to work with us to overcome those shortfalls. I might add, in the feedback that

I got after the minister left was very positive from the community, from the teachers, and the fact that he took the time out of his busy schedule in constituency week to come and visit Labrador West was very much appreciated.

So when we look at the expenditures in the K to 12 education – and Coley's Point is even there.

AN HON. MEMBER: Coley's Point.

MR. LETTO: Coley's Point Primary School is in this plan, and it will be done, Mr. Speaker, it will be done.

We look at several expenditures around our schools, including the school in – the Mobile High School, which is a topic of discussion these days, \$5.3 million to begin construction on the extension of that school. So we are dealing with the issues that we face in the education system, and post-secondary education is no different when we look at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic.

I want to put a plug in here for, again, the District of Labrador West, with our College of the North Atlantic. We are going through a study as we speak, to have the College of the North Atlantic Labrador West Campus designated as the mining centre of excellence. Well, that's natural. Where else would you put a mining centre of excellence if you don't put it in Lab West? That study will not only enhance the campus at Labrador West, it will also enhance campuses all around this province, because all the campuses will have a role to play in that designation. So, again, we're moving forward.

Municipal Infrastructure; we're seeing unprecedented expenditure in municipal infrastructure, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs can certainly demonstrate that better than I can; but, nevertheless, there are many, many dollars being spent on municipal infrastructure. Yes, we've adjusted the cost ratios that is true, to reflect the financial situation of the day, but we are smart enough.

We are smart enough and we're forward-thinking enough to know that water and waste water are priorities when it comes to municipal infrastructure. That's where the cost-sharing ratios have not changed because we know there

are many communities around this province who need that infrastructure installed, and we will be there to help communities get that done.

Transportation Infrastructure; now, I know that Transportation and Works, and we know this time of the year that there are many potholes, lots of pictures flying around of potholes and whatnot. It's that time of the year, and we do have our crews working on that.

The one I want to focus on, Mr. Speaker, is the Trans-Labrador Highway. I just want to read the section in this plan that refers to the Trans-Labrador Highway, because it is a major project for us in Labrador. It's a project that's well along, I must say, and I want to thank the previous administration for continuing the investment in this much needed highway.

The statement in this document that really pleases me is: The Department of Transportation and Works will continue to work with its federal counterparts to secure additional funding to complete Phase II and III of the Trans-Labrador Highway. To see \$55.7 million referenced in this document to continue the hard surfacing of the Trans-Labrador Highway is welcome news, and this year I know there are already contracts let to pave 160 kilometres from the Town of Red Bay to Charlottetown Junction. So things are well on the way there.

Justice and Public Safety; again, we recognize the need for that infrastructure around our province. When we saw last year the courthouses that were scheduled for closure but recognizing that this is a much needed infrastructure that we cannot afford to let go. We were prepared to leave them, and one of them of course was in Wabush. So I want to thank the minister and the department for recognizing the importance of having those facilities throughout our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a few minutes to go back to the Budget Speech itself. Labrador West is the district I represent and we're there for a reason. Labrador West exists because of the iron ore mines. I don't need to tell anybody where that commodity has gone in the last couple of years, but we are seeing some revival. Prices are going up. It's still very volatile. It depends on which morning you get

up, it could be up \$5, it could be down \$5; but \$5 a ton is a big move and it means a lot. What we're seeing because of the increased activity or the increased improvement in the commodity prices and in the markets, we are seeing new activity within the mining sector.

I just want to highlight a couple of things. By the way, despite the lower commodity prices last year – and this is referenced in the Throne Speech – mineral shipments are forecast to be \$2.9 billion in 2017. That's the highest it has ever been, and as we improve the markets you will see that number increase. So mining has always been and will continue to be a major contributor to the finances of this province. It's not only in Labrador West, although we have the iron ore mines. There's Voisey's Bay, there's the gold mines on the Baie Verte Peninsula, as my colleague for Springdale – Green Bay so proudly talks about, and he has every right to do so. There's a Canada Fluorspar mine down in St. Lawrence on the Burin Peninsula that's being constructed. So mining has a great future in this province, and again it will continue to be a major contributor to the finances of Newfoundland and Labrador.

IOC – I don't know how many people heard the president of IOC. He spoke at the Board of Trade on Monday here in St. John's. He was very positive – very positive – about the future of IOC and the future of the region, the future of the iron ore industry in general. Because of that, IOC has now decided, made the final decision, to move ahead with the development of Wabush 3 deposit.

The Wabush 3 deposit is crucial to the future viability and sustainability of IOC. What we see today, because of the development of that iron ore pit, we will see an extension of at least 12 years of life for the mine, and that's significant. Now, the iron deposits in Labrador West are certainly plentiful; nevertheless, to see development of those pits is crucial to the future, and it gives people confidence.

I've seen that confidence – we've had a couple of rough years in Labrador West. With the closure of Wabush mines and the downturn in the industry itself, it's been a rough couple of years. We are seeing the confidence grow and

hopefully, in the next year or so, we'll even see more of that.

Now, people will say, well – and they keep asking me: Will Wabush ever start again? I believe it will – I believe it will. As you know, I've mentioned publicly that Monday past was the deadline for any interested parties to have their proposals in to the monitor – the monitor is the CCAA person who's controlling the bankruptcy protection of Cliffs. They had until Monday night.

We anxiously await the report from the monitor to see if there's any viable proposal that's acceptable to the monitor that we can move forward with. We look forward to that, and certainly with bated breath we hope that there is something positive in that. Again, it's a wait-and-see game at this point, and I'm sure that we will see some positive activity in that region.

The Opposition clearly talks about we have no diversification plans. Well, Labrador West, I think, is a poster child of that, with the data centres that have been developed – and I've spoken about this in the House before as well. We have one up and running, we have one about to start, and we have a third one that's being planned. They are not big employment creators but they are big users, consumers of electricity, which is money to the coffers of this province, and it instills confidence again in the region.

It's a new industry for us. It's an industry in Labrador West because of our climatic conditions, and that's what you have to build on. This is what we need more of. We need regions in this province to build on their assets. If that's what it takes to move forward, then that's what we have to do. Labrador West is a great example of that, so I am very proud. I am very proud to represent the people of Labrador West and the fact that we are prepared to look at diversification and we're doing a real good job of it.

Mr. Speaker, again, I will close my comments as I started. We don't have time for the negativity. This is not a time to be negative about the future. This is a time to be positive. We heard things yesterday – and the headline in one of the papers this morning is: a way backward instead of forward. I mean, nothing can be further from the

truth, Mr. Speaker. We have a plan, despite what the Opposition may say. We do have a plan. It's all rhetoric. It's time for them to change the dial because we have a plan. We will implement our plan. We will report on our plan. We are accountable to our plan and we will complete our plan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's such a pleasure to follow my esteemed colleague, the Member for Labrador West, and all the initiatives that he talked about that's happening in Labrador around mining and diversification, and to have the opportunity to respond from the Speech from the Throne. I certainly, as a minister, believe in *The Way Forward*. I believe in the Premier and our team that we have in place here on this side of the House to really get this province back on track. We've presented a plan that's very clear, that has measurable targets and deliverables, which will grow and diversify the economy.

I want to point out, though, that when I listened to the Leader of the Opposition yesterday in his response, I was appalled. So I had to go back and I had to just look at the documentation of the Estimates. I go back and look at the instability that was created by the former PC administration. They had 3½ premiers and a merry-go-round of ministers. When I walked into the Department of Tourism, Mr. Speaker, there were five Tourism Ministers in just over one year.

If you look at where the total public sector debt was in 2013, while this whole transition of 3½ premiers under their administration, there was \$6.7 billion in total public sector debt. Now, that's an interesting number: \$6.7 billion. It's much more manageable than what we have today. So 2013, 2014, 2015 – at the end of their tenure, in just three years, they grew the total public sector debt to \$12.2 billion in 2015.

That's absolutely shameful. That's \$5.5 billion; that's almost double.

We had a Finance Minister, a PC Finance Minister, that got up and said that math is not his forte; it wasn't his best subject. Well, thankfully, we have a Finance Minister who understands math, understands targets and understands the importance of performance management and delivering on key targets to get us back to surplus. We have a seven-year plan to get back to surplus.

If you look at the 12 years of overspending that happened and the bad business deals by the previous administration with their Muskrat Falls Project that they were fixated on, that is now over budget, predicting that oil would be at \$100 a barrel for over 55 years, Mr. Speaker, they couldn't budget year over year.

My colleagues talked about it. When they campaigned, they said there'd be a \$1.1 billion deficit. It ended up being \$2.2 billion. Had we not changed course, it would have been \$2.7 billion. Right now, we're at a point, during the fall fiscal update, that we've gotten the deficit under control to \$1.6 billion. We're making great progress here.

Had the previous administration actually planned and put forward initiatives and contained their cost of spending, we would have been in much better shape as a province. I say to people if you look at where we were when we took office and you were running your household, it's like you had your credit cards maxed to the max, you pay a little bit but you take a lot of interest – as the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port said, there's a billion dollars in interest payments, more than education right now, and that's not good.

So if you're taking your credit cards, maxing them out, your line of credit is already overextended and you need to go buy a car now because you need transportation – how do you go do that? You have to raise more revenue. That was the position that we were placed in – very unfortunate position, but we had to look at increasing revenue. We're focused on getting the province back on track, growing revenue streams, but also containing cost.

This is why, in the Speech from the Throne, I'm so pleased to see a number of the initiatives that are talked about around industry and economy. I work with my team of colleagues, the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources and a number of others as we talk about how we create those jobs.

In the Speech from the Throne, it's clearly talked about that we're going to have a Cabinet committee on jobs; there will be a job lens. There are actual targets put in place to create 14,000 person-years in specific industries when it comes to aquaculture, when it comes to our agriculture sector. We've already advanced initiatives as a government that we're going to basically be able to double the available land that's currently in production for farmers or for people who want to get into farming and doing these types of initiatives. There's great opportunity.

The Speech from the Throne talked about a return to groundfish and a focus on transition. This is quite key, and we have a number of initiatives that the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources has undertaken under technology and modernization and working with our federal government colleagues to see that there was a \$325 million fisheries innovation fund where \$100 million is earmarked for Newfoundland and Labrador. Plus, we'll be able to play in the space for the \$30 million in marketing and the initiatives around marketing. There are lots of other initiatives that have been put forward by the federal government to invest in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our institutions like the Oceans Frontier Institute, that's going to create 162 jobs; yet my critic on the other side said that's a bad deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. Very, very unfortunate that he's opposed to job creation here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we've seen bad business deals from the other side, Madam Speaker.

I will say that we're very targeted on our initiatives when we look at tourism. When we look at how we grow tourism that we talk about product development; we talk about increasing air access. We look at the initiatives and the industries to grow those 18,000 jobs across the province, because a lot of those jobs are not only

here in St. John's, but they're all across Newfoundland and Labrador, and we're seeing a lot of synergies that are happening.

One of the things that we're pairing, as well, Madam Speaker, and you may be quite interested as the Member representing Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair, that one of our regional innovation systems pilot projects is going to be focused on Southern Labrador and the Great Northern Peninsula around looking at fisheries and tourism. We have a lot of synergies when it comes to both industries. When it comes to tourism on the Great Northern Peninsula and in Southern Labrador we have three UNESCOs – it's a great opportunity. We also have a UNESCO at Mistaken Point. We're certainly not forgetting them.

When we talk about the cluster and the capacity of tourism and what exists that all cultures basically collided on the Great Northern Peninsula of over 5,000 years of history, and into Labrador, with Point Amour, the burial mound that exists there, there's a lot to be capitalized on: Battle Harbour, the Vikings. I mean, they were really our first come-from-aways. We have so much to celebrate there.

Then also, we have the traditional fishing industry. We have St. Anthony Basin Resources Inc. We have a lot of fish processing operations. We have international shipping on the Great Northern Peninsula. We also have a lot of great infrastructure in Labrador when it comes to the fishery; when it comes to looking at the investment institutions, like the credit unions that exist; when we talk about the Labrador shrimp company that's there. Those are all positive things, and we look forward to using our academia with the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills, when we look at the College of the North Atlantic that exist and we talk about Academy Canada, and how we can work together to pull resources to create greater opportunities, greater economic opportunities.

We're not just stopping there for that pilot project. We're doing five pilot projects across this province. There will be a pilot project that's going to be focused in the Corner Brook area around forestry. We have Kruger that's operating a pulp and paper mill there. We also have a lot of agriculture research that's taking

place, and a lot of agricultural land in the Cormack and Pasadena and the Codroy Valley area.

The Member for St. George's – Humber is very particularly interested in looking at the agricultural opportunities. And we've seen growth. We've seen where things like canola, which is a 19 billion dollar industry – that was planted under our watch, Madam Speaker. That was an initiative that this government undertook.

The former administration didn't have the vision to look at all the diversity and all the opportunities that we have in agriculture, because they were just fixated on oil. Oil is not a bad thing. We want to see more exploration, more development and more activity. The Minister of Natural Resources has been working very strongly on that and seeing good things happen in the oil and gas sector, when you talk about the offshore development and things that are taking place.

So we're really looking at connecting from a supplier-development point of view as to how some of the businesses and the local benefits, and how we can grow that piece of pie. That's really important. It's all about having a good plan.

If you look at Gander, Gander and area has always had a lot of potential around the aerospace industry, looking at all the institutions that are there from the college, the flight training; you have the aviation museum; you have the airport. You have a lot of connectivity when it comes to supply and service businesses, and potential to look at aerospace, how we grow that, and how we build on our R & D capacity.

We saw where Provincial Aerospace Ltd. secured a major contract with the federal government and Bombardier. These are good things that are happening in our economy that we've seen in the last number of months that are going to create well-paying jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians here, Madam Speaker. It is not all doom and gloom; I can certainly tell you that. Although other people, people on the other side will certainly only speak to the negative.

Then, when you move forward to the Burin Peninsula, look at the potential for industrial development that exists on the Burin Peninsula. You take in Argentia and you look at the Clarenville, Arnold's Cove area, and you look at all the activity that's there. It's a great golden triangle that it has been referred to, and there is a lot of employment that's happening in those regions, a lot of great infrastructure. So we're going to work to capitalize on the technology aspects, how we can create synergies and how we can grow and create more jobs.

I was very pleased to stand in this House not that long ago to announce the loan that we had provided to Canada Fluorspar. That's going to create hundreds of jobs in the construction and the development phase. They're long term for St. Lawrence. Significant benefits to the economy. There's going to be shipping jobs as well out of Marystown. It's all about building capacity and growing.

Then we see with the Avalon Peninsula, when we look at ocean technology. So much potential with Holyrood and their Oceans Initiative that they have, when we talk about the Marine Institute, when we talk about the OceansAdvance and the cluster, and that the federal government now is investing in these cluster projects of upwards of \$950 million over five years. We're resetting the innovation agenda here. We've been consulting. We've been talking and we're implementing priorities and plans that are going to grow the economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Having targeted growth is quite key, and that's why the business innovation agenda will certainly help see more tech companies. We have some really successful businesses here in Newfoundland and Labrador that are securing international contracts. They're playing in that space of sensor technology, whether they're Solace Power in Mount Pearl North or whether they're Kraken Sonar that's playing in this multibillion dollar defence and ocean technology space where their technology is far superior to the big players that exist. We're doing great things here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

When we look at the arts and we look at the cultural community, we invest and we invest heavily into arts, more than the national average,

Madam Speaker. We're quite excited to see that in the film industry; in film last year, *Frontier* which is referred to in the Speech from the Throne. The film industry last year created 600 full-time equivalent jobs, had \$46 million in production value alone.

That's not counting the post-production that NIFCO, given their great operation and what they do, they have stellar equipment when it comes to attracting operations and people coming from outside the province to do post-production work because it's comparable to equipment that exists in Montreal. We have the best on the East Coast, Madam Speaker. We have a lot of talent. We have a great talent pool that exists. We've built up capacity and we want to see film continue to grow.

We've seen where our music industry has received accolades year over year. MusicNL, our industry association representing the musicians, we support them. We support their operations. We support the programs to help grow that talent pool, and they've been adding new members. It's quite exciting to hear and to talk about.

When we look at our museums and our art galleries, and seeing the tourism stats, seeing that the numbers are up significantly; they were up 34 per cent last year at museums alone. When you look The Rooms, our cultural facility, when you look at the numbers and the fact that we have a permanent – we have the largest World War I permanent exhibit in the country, and it's quite an honour to have that. That raised \$13 million in private sector, and a million dollars from the federal government to pull off that initiative. Quite exciting.

Come From Away; we're really excited to see that *Come From Away* came back to Gander, Newfoundland and Labrador, to celebrate the kindness, the generosity, the hospitality and the warmth of the people of the region during one of the world's most horrific events in recent memory. That performance, that musical has gone to Toronto, it's been in California, it's been in Seattle, it's been in Washington, D.C. and now it's on Broadway in New York.

Just last week I had the opportunity to be there in person, to talk to those key operators in travel

and trade. Some people who have not done business in Newfoundland and Labrador and people who are currently doing business that are coming back, whether it's the East Coast Trail and the pristine reason that they want to have that outdoor nature experience, and the East Coast Trail is a valuable asset.

We've seen people come for the East Coast Trail and invest \$500,000 in the Venture Capital Fund here in Newfoundland and Labrador, because they know that Newfoundland and Labrador is a good place to do business. We have competitive taxation when it comes to the small business taxes here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We've seen when we were down at *Come From Away*, that people are excited to want to come to regions of the province, whether it's the Twillingate – Lewisporte area, whether they want to go to Fogo Island Inn.

We see where businesses are looking to reach out and create those packages and those opportunities, and we're certainly there to support, Madam Speaker. We're there to support a number of initiatives, whether it's in our tourism marketing or whether it's in our product development plans, or whether it's working with our partners as to how we grow and reach our vision of \$1.6 billion by 2020. We're going to get there. We can get there.

We've been supporting a lot of initiatives when it comes to the tech sector, Madam Speaker, through research and development and activities and initiatives here in place. We want to work and create business incubators and accelerators, whether they're at our College of the North Atlantic or in community. There are a lot of great initiatives that are happening. The Speech from the Throne is clearly setting that direction.

Yesterday, I met with the Community Sector Council and we talked about social enterprise. We talked about the value of social enterprise to the community and the economy, whether it's Choices for Youth or Stella's Circle, the Hungry Heart Cafe.

We saw where MUN Enactus partnered with the social enterprise Choices for Youth for Project SucSeed, where you're linking up agriculture; you're linking up food security. You're looking at being able to provide food in the North when

it comes to Nunavut, when it comes to coastal communities, when it comes to isolated and rural areas. This is a great solution to a number of problems that exist with growing fresh and healthy product in a lot of rural isolated communities across the world.

So we're really proud of the initiatives of our young people and the opportunities and the solutions they see to be able to capitalize on that. Those are things we want to continue to support and develop, foster at a very young age. This is why I'm very pleased to see in the Speech from the Throne that there's support for early learning and childhood educators, and support through subsidies to help lower-income people ensure they have the ability to have their children at daycare to avail of those programs and supports.

It also then opens up a pool of labour as well, because we hear far too often that businesses, whether they are small business or medium business, that there's a mismatch of labour and sometimes it's the fact that people have barriers to employment. We have to remove those barriers. So as a government we're taking a very proactive approach to making sure that more people are able to enter the workforce.

We're focusing on immigration. What a great opportunity to bring more people here to this province to help combat our declining population. When we look at the potential of adding entrepreneurship, visas and the potential from an immigration point of view, that when people come and create business, let them grow, let them scale up. We're going to be focusing on business in Newfoundland and Labrador where there's high growth potential where we can create those long-term sustainable jobs.

We're not focusing on these boom-and-bust megaprojects and economies that were fixated in a solution by the previous administration because, if you look at that, how we got there in 2013, 2014, 2015, public sector debt, the total public sector debt – just listen, while the Leader of the Opposition was under the helm running this province \$6.7 billion all the way up to \$12.2 billion – \$5.5 billion in debt, basically doubling where we are now, maxing out the people's credit card, maxing out that line of credit and forcing very difficult decisions to be made.

We, as a government, all of us on this side of the House, and we ask the people on that side of the House too, to support *The Way Forward*, support the Speech from the Throne, support the budget that's coming down next week because we're going to grow the economy here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): The Speaker recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville.

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's an honour to rise in this hon. House again here today to deliver an Address in Reply to the Throne Speech. I'd be remiss if I didn't say a big welcome to a young friend of mine, Nick Hillier, who is in the House today taking in the debate. So hopefully, he sees some great debate here – hopefully, not one sided.

It's hard to believe that almost over a year has gone by since we last had a Throne Speech. I think that most of us on this side of the House, especially us rookie MHAs; it has been a year of tremendous growth for us. Both out in our districts and in this Legislature, we've had a unique experience of leading government in the transition.

We took over in 2015 when the PCs had been in power for 12 years – the government that left behind a sluggish, an inefficient and downright huge government. When we took over, we knew sweeping changes we wanted to make and we got right to making those changes. But changing direction on something that is lumbering and as huge as the government the PCs left behind takes time. Full steam ahead, full speed ahead on the reckless course that they set; it was a course that was led towards nothing but ballooning debt and financial ruin.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. B. DAVIS: Thank you.

You should put your jersey back on. You were quiet when you had the jersey on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. B. DAVIS: That's right; you speak next. I like listening to you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the Member to direct his comments to the Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. B. DAVIS: Sorry, Madam Speaker. I apologize to you.

The worse part of this was the PCs didn't recognize and do anything to prevent it. Instead, they were content to kick this problem to the province's future. When we got into government, we immediately started to fix things. But I would like to say changing direction takes time, and especially when it's a runaway speeding train of debt that they left us.

It's fair to say that we learned a number of lessons in the first 12 months as well. We took crucial steps toward getting Newfoundland and Labrador back on the right track. So when I think back to a year ago when we brought down the 2016 budget, I feel a sense of accomplishment as well as some disappointment. We are in a much better situation than we were 12 months ago, and we've made astounding progress. The decision we made to raise taxes and fees and reorganizing the delivery of service, we knew we're not going to be winning any popularity contests, but they needed to be done. We were willing and they were not.

But when we're facing the reality that if we did nothing, then we'd have to choose our own popularity first, we were guaranteeing our province would never find a way out of this hole. We did these actions knowing that we would suffer greatly in the court of public opinion, but we also did them knowing that if we did nothing, then we weren't going to fix this province at all. That was a year ago. It's been a hard year for many, and this fact is not lost on me or any of us on this side of the House, despite what Members opposite say.

Madam Speaker, we've asked Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to shoulder a considerable burden. We've asked them to sacrifice in the service of betterment of our home. We stand by these decisions now, as we did back then. But every one of us on this side of the House recognizes that there is a lot that the people have done for our province.

We also recognize the return for their sacrifice. We owe them nothing short of doing more due diligence and careful consideration, considered work, at all times, and in all sectors of our government. We owe them that action, immediate and decisive action. Standing here addressing the hon. House a year later, I can proudly attest to our track record of action on behalf of the province and its people.

In 2016, we passed 64 pieces of legislation in this House of Assembly, right here – 64 pieces in our first year. Just for comparison sake, in 2015, the PCs: just 15. Past practice will dictate future results. And if that's any indication, obviously the legislative agenda that we brought forward as this government is far-reaching in relation to what you the PC Party did before. But that's not the only thing. In the last five years of the PC administration, they passed an average of just 35 pieces of legislation.

It's true; I'd hang my head, too, considering how much we've accomplished in the first year, in very difficult times. For the most part, their legislative record spoke of an aimless government, with no particular objective in mind other than retaining favour of the voting public.

I find it hard to believe to still hear on the call-in shows and read on Twitter from the Members opposite to say we have no plan. My colleagues prior to me addressed the plan. It's there in black and white. You may not want to read it, but it's there, with measurable outcomes.

The former premier has a habit of rattling off alternative facts and avoiding responsibility for the fiscal situation that our province is in. Let us not forget that less than two years ago, the former premier stood up and told the entire province that we were \$1.1 billion in debt. Well, obviously, my colleague for Mount Pearl – Southlands said he was hoodwinked on Muskrat Falls. I would tend to agree the province was

hoodwinked on the \$1.1 billion deficit, because we know, on the accounting side of it, that that was far worse than that.

My colleague for Stephenville – Port au Port mentioned about the fact that if it was \$100 million, maybe \$200 million, maybe even \$300 million more, we could probably have dealt with it without having to do the far-reaching activities that we had to do on this side of the government, that none of us wanted to do; but, considering that it was an additional \$1.1 billion that was not told to the people of this province – shameful.

It's okay for the Members opposite to be like the ostrich party and bury their heads in the sand and not take responsibility for anything that they did. They stand in this House from time to time, when we bring in some nice pieces of legislation, or we bring in Suboxone or Naloxone, and stand up and say: I was going to do that. We started that. But we delivered it, that's the difference. Talk is cheap; action is where the rubber hits the road.

So in 12 years you have a lot of talk and a lot less action, in my mind. From my opinion, I think the rhetoric – as my colleague from Lab West said – should tend to stop and focus on the fact that, listen, you can take credit for some good things that you did. I'll agree there were some good infrastructure spends, there were some good schools that were built and that's all good things, but you have to also stand up for the things that are now coming back to roost, like Muskrat Falls. You have to stand up on what your record is, because that's your legacy project.

AN HON. MEMBER: A ferry without a wharf.

MR. B. DAVIS: Or a ferry without a wharf, yes.

We've talked about our plan a bit here this morning already. We have an ambitious legislative agenda to deliver on the empty promises made by the PCs in some cases, and we're going to deliver on that in spades.

One of the pieces of legislation that we brought in was Secure Withdrawal Management for Young Persons Act. A good piece of legislation, very well needed. We also talked about the creation of an Office of the Seniors' Advocate.

Even though it's a luxury, is what the PC Party thinks, we don't agree.

We think the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is great. We need that. Our aging population is occurring. We have the oldest population in this country, and we can't think of a better way to endorse that philosophy than putting an Office of the Seniors' Advocate in place to address those concerns and make sure we have that lens on legislation and things coming forward.

We also have presumptive cancer legislation for firefighters that came forward. We delivered on a signature piece of a commitment in one year, on many of these signature pieces. You had the honour of 12 years serving in this House talking about it, because if I remember correctly, presumptive cancer legislation was first talked about in 2003, and that was early in your mandate.

There was a lot of talk about delivery on it, a lot of firefighters consulted, and we delivered on it within one year. We talked about it in our campaign. We delivered on it, not only for career firefighters but for volunteers as well which risk their lives each and every day in our communities right across our province, from coast to coast to coast, and in Lab West.

So I have no doubt that in 2017 this hon. House will bear witness to delivering on another raft of broken PC promises, and they will continue to stand on their feet in this hon. House and claim that they were going to do it and take credit for it. We can let them do that, that's fine, but the people see through that, because it's all about delivering.

The Way Forward detailed our government's vision for sustainability and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's a roadmap for our province, the future for prosperity and opportunity and a high standard of living for everyone we hope. This plan is based on extensive consultations with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and took place as soon as we took office. It incorporates feedback and suggestions from people all across our province.

In the consultation process we developed a series of goals for the future of the province. *The Way Forward* lists concrete, measurable

commitments, many of which have been discussed already, our way of remaining accountable to the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are stepping away from the smoke and mirror approach of politics of the former administration. *The Way Forward* is working. Only this past week our Premier announced phase 2 of *The Way Forward*, focusing on growth in the private sector employment. Along with the announcement of specific phase 2, the Premier announced phase 1 completed; structural savings of about \$45 million. Is that enough? No. We have a lot more work to do, but it's a great start.

On top of already the many millions of dollars that our Minister of Finance and her team have already shaved off the deficit, the minister and her officials have realized these savings without compromising the delivery of services and statistical outputs, and we know that sitting in the Department of Health. I believe the new policy on zero-based budgeting is exactly the cure a government that has grown too large needs.

A sustainable and vibrant economy in Newfoundland and Labrador is possible, and I believe such an economy can support a strong and dynamic private sector. Our job as a government is to create the conditions that will help private enterprises succeed, and that's what phase 2 will do.

Phase 2 is projected to create 14,000 person-years of employment. It's an astonishing number.

AN HON. MEMBER: How much?

MR. B. DAVIS: Fourteen thousand years, a tremendous figure in and of itself. And yes, it is based on credible numbers and realistic targets. *The Way Forward* has a strong focus on accountability, and we're asking the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to keep us to our word. We are confident in our plan and we're full speed ahead on it.

We have asked a lot of the people but we are seeing results, and it won't be always like this. Even now we're seeing progress. Even now

we're seeing encouraging trends. When prosperity returns, and for sure it will, because of the resilience and strength of our people –

AN HON. MEMBER: Someday the sun will shine.

MR. B. DAVIS: That's right, when we are in the ideal financial position to make most of the opportunity we have.

I want to take a little bit of time and just talk about my district. I have a few minutes left, so I'd like to take a little bit of time and talk about my district.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. B. DAVIS: Well, I'll always stand in this House and be willing to stand and hopefully the people that are listening will hear what I say, and if they ever have questions, please reach out to me. Virginia Waters – Pleasantville is a beautiful district. I would say one of the most beautiful in our province.

MS. HALEY: Next to Burin – Grand Bank.

MR. B. DAVIS: Next to Burin – Grand Bank, I guess, yes; and scenic Gander, of course, and perfectly centered Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans.

So there are a lot of beautiful districts in our province, and hopefully we'll get an opportunity to go out there. I've seen many of them, but I'm very lucky to represent the district I have, one of the most diverse economically, as well as – nationalities as well in the entire province. It's culturally vibrant – enhance the quality of education in our schools. Vanier, Virginia Park Elementary and St. Paul's Junior High, each of these schools are examples of excellent work that our educators do to support and uplift our children.

It has been a joy for me to witness the development of the new school at Virginia Park, as well as putting it back on track. I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation and Works for putting it back on track. It was off the rails for a little while but I'm happy it's back on track there now and it looks like it's going to be ahead of schedule. It may not be below budget, but it's

definitely going to be ahead of schedule from where we thought. So I'm hoping we'll be cutting the ribbon on that soon enough, but I know the due diligence our minister has put in place to make sure this works, and we're very pleased to see that in the community.

I firmly believe this will be the anchor for the community now and into the future. It promises to be an excellent facility for the children of Virginia Park and the surrounding catchment area. I have the personal benefit of being a volunteer at the school and it's one of the highlights of my time in office. I love interacting with the children, staff and parents. They form a great cohesive community. I can't wait to see the community grow into their new school.

Madam Speaker, organizations such as: the 150 RCAF North Atlantic Wing, the Virginia Park Community Centre, Mary Queen of Peace scouting clubs, St. Mark's church and CLB unit, Cygnus Gymnastics, are many examples of incredible community outreach and volunteers within my community, and it's an honour to represent these groups.

These groups deserve to be supported in the great work they do by our government – and we have been supporting them. All the ones that I have mentioned have received support from government and we're very happy that we can do that. Government can never match the multiplier effect that volunteer hours and enthusiasm volunteers bring to their work. The passion that these volunteers have for their community translates into action and, in turn, great impact to the families in the district.

It has been an honour to serve on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. I have to applaud my committee colleagues, from all sides of the House. We've done a heck of a job of putting together and crafting a report and recommendations respecting the newly shared stories and struggles of individuals that we consulted with.

Thank you to each and every one of the people who chose to share their difficult stories. This report is for them. I believe we are on the verge of great changes in the way mental health services and addictions supports are

administered in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I think this report will point the way there.

Madam Speaker, I've also had the great pleasure of working with the Minister of Health during my time as his parliamentary secretary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: I've been consistently amazed by his level of compassion and dedication to his job –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. B. DAVIS: – and the file that he has a huge breadth of scope of knowledge on. I can't think of anyone more qualified to be running the province's complex health machinery than the man who has the job right now.

My time is getting short but, to wrap things up, I'd just like to say after the first fiscal year in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I'm confident that our government, because of the actions and the results that we've accomplished over this past year, we're in a good situation right now.

There's a long way to go, no doubt, but we're in a much better situation than we were when we took over, some 15 months ago. We have a plan that's backed up by credible figures and, even six months in, we're seeing those results from this plan. This is the government that will lead Newfoundland and Labrador back to a solid economic foundation, and I'm more confident now more than ever that that'll be the case.

We're not prepared to stick our head in the sand; we'll stand up for the things we've made, the decisions we've made. I would just ask my colleagues from the other side of the House to pull their heads up out of the sand and actually stand up for what they believe in as well, and fight for what they did. Make sure that everyone knows the issues that you've stood for, let them stand for themselves as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MADAM SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's a tough act to follow the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, but I'll give it the old college try. It's a privilege for me to stand here representing my constituents in the District of Mount Scio. There are only 40 of us here in the House of Assembly. Every time I get a chance to talk to students in schools, I often tell them that they're only 40 of us. In a population of about a half a million, we're the folks who have the privilege of having these seats for a four-year period. It's a real privilege to be here and to have this opportunity to give voice to concerns and issues that are raised with us as Members of the House of Assembly.

I've been visiting a lot of schools over the past year or so, basically since I became minister. I think one of the great things about being Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is that I get the opportunity to visit a lot of schools. I've visited a good many schools around the city since Christmas. I've visited schools in the Member for Cape St. Francis's district; in the district of the Member for Fogo Island – Cape Freels; the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans; the Minister of Transportation and Works; the Minister of Health and Community Services in Gander, I've been in his schools in his district; the District of Terra Nova; the District of Humber – Bay of Islands, and Corner Brook. And most recently last week, I visited all of the schools in Labrador City-Wabush.

There is no doubt that there are a lot of issues that we have to deal with in the education system. Some of them are new and some of them are long standing. It's good to talk to teachers, to talk to principals, talk to student assistants, school staff, students themselves, to get a better understanding of what the issues are in different areas, because they certainly vary a lot.

Yesterday, I was really inspired to hear the Premier respond to the Speech from the Throne that we heard yesterday. One of the things that he said really put the hook into me; it really

spoke to me. I've often said in the House of Assembly that my parents were small business people. My parents had a small convenience store. My mom was basically a shopkeeper. She worked there for about 35 years, she was on her feet, working in the store. I just look back at how hard she worked to provide employment, not only for herself and provide for our family but to provide employment in the community and also to pay into government coffers through a taxation that small business people have to pay.

I was thinking about how many people I have encountered through my work as a Member of the House of Assembly who are very much in the same position. Yesterday, the Premier spoke about how important it is for us to place a high value on that money that people pay in to the provincial Treasury, because, certainly, the people who make that money and pay it in, place a high value on it. And not just people like my mom, shopkeepers; people who are in all matter of small business.

The amount of time they spend on their feet, just to think about how much time they spend standing at a counter, on a job site, in their business, on a shop floor, the amount of time they spend on their feet and how hard they work to make those few dollars that they have to make to support their families, and how much time they spend working after hours, after the store closes, the business closes for the day, how much time they spend after hours working on the affairs of their business. Because a lot of small business people, they are dealing with HR issues, they are dealing with taxation issues, they are dealing with all sorts of issues, payroll and so on, that really is in invisible often to the person who is patronizing their business.

How much time they spend away from their family; how many vacations they miss – small business people oftentimes don't have the opportunity just to shut it down and go somewhere else, because they're often the primary person who is responsible. How many sacrifices those people make to make a few dollars to try to make a go for it; how much time that they spend away from their kids so they can support their children, support their families, and help build our communities.

I think that's really a big part of what the Premier was talking about yesterday. Those few bucks are precious to the people who are making them. We have to aspire to spend them in the most responsible manner possible and unfortunately, for a period of time – not to cast blame – that was not being done.

As the Lieutenant Governor, as he sat there yesterday where you're sitting, Madam Speaker, he in the speech pointed out that we did have that culture of spending as opposed to what small business people have to have, which is a culture of saving and valuing every penny. We owe them; we owe them that much that we have to take responsibility to treat those dollars as we would if they were our own.

One of our responsibilities now is to clean up that \$2.7 billion mess that was sitting there when the election in 2015 was over. We also owe folks in this province, as the Premier said yesterday; we have a responsibility to fix the Muskrat madness. We have to make sure that when Muskrat Falls goes operational that senior citizens in Newfoundland and Labrador are not burdened with power bills that are twice what they're paying today. Whether it's seniors, low-income folks, middle-income folks, community centres, arenas, halls, municipal facilities, folks cannot afford to pay double the price of power that we see today. So we have a great burden of responsibility today to fix that mess that is Muskrat Falls.

So many people told us at the time that we should not have been going down that road. That oil was not going to stay above \$100 a barrel for 35 years, or some sort of wickedly, fantastic vision that someone had. It was not going to be that way. Experts in energy production and electricity use told us that, academics told us that. We had the public utilities board questioning all of this. We had an independent panel that studied it and said there was no market for the electricity and on and on and on. There was so much caution.

I remember the Member for The Straits – White Bay North, he gave a really, really powerful speech over there on the other side of the House in the very sort of twilight hours about the danger of this, and it's quite memorable.

So we have that burden of responsibility. Yesterday the Premier spoke to that, and I think he spoke to the people of the province about how we need to find a way forward through all of this. It's a fog, but I'm from the Burin Peninsula, it's probably one of the places in the world that gets the most fog. We find our way through the fog. It's difficult sometimes to navigate, it's not always easy, it's not what we want, it's challenging. It doesn't make us feel happy sometimes but we find our way through the fog, because we have no other choice.

I'm optimistic. I'm not going to turn my back on the people of this province. I am not going to give up on people like my mom, on small business people, on people who work hard and trust in us to make sure that they have the public services they need, that they have the health care services they need, that their children get a decent education like art, like we all had an opportunity to get. I'm not giving up on them, we're not giving up on them, and the hon. Premier is not giving up on them. I think he spoke quite clearly about that yesterday. We are going to persevere. We are going to fix these problems, however large they are.

We have a plan. We had a report card on the initial part of that plan this week, and there's more to be done. We are going to work with all of our partners, everybody who wants to collaborate with government for the purposes of job creation, whether it's in aquaculture, agriculture, energy itself, mining, all sorts of areas, the fishery. We are going to work with those folks to do what we can to make sure that our children – and I have a small child in school myself – have better opportunities than we had ourselves. We have a responsibility to do that.

We have been doing quite a bit over the last year. There's no question, last year's budget was difficult but there was a lot of good things in last year's budget.

As I've said so many times before, in the 2015 provincial election all three political parties in this province who were running candidates promised to implement full-day kindergarten. Then after the election, first the PC Party and then the NDP said no, no full-day kindergarten for our kids. No full-day kindergarten. Again yesterday, we heard the Leader of the

Opposition, the former premier, once again speaking out against full-day kindergarten.

I've been in schools. I've been in almost three dozen, I would say, since the new year began. There's no doubt, there are growing pains with full-day kindergarten. There are growing pains with any new program that government implements. It doesn't matter what kind either. There are always going to be problems.

One of the key problems with full-day kindergarten, as I've been able to ascertain from directly speaking to full-day kindergarten teachers all across the province, one of the primary problems is they didn't get curriculum materials on time. Well, guess what? There are grade one teachers and grade two teachers and grade three teachers, and I could go on, there are teachers at every grade level who didn't get curriculum materials on time. Guess which year that happened, this year? No, Madam Speaker, every single year that's an issue.

That's an issue when you have over 270 French and English schools with over 66,000 students in a province with a vast geography as ours that you're going to have that problem. That's a legitimate concern. We are addressing them, but that's probably the most significant issue outside of supervision.

Some teachers have told me, it is true, that you have more students in school for a longer period of time than you're going to have more supervisory responsibility, no question. That is part of it. That would happen if we had enrolment fluctuations; that would happen if we had reorganizations of schools as we've often had. That is a fact. There is no question about it, but that does not negate all of the positive things that educators who are worth their salt know about this program.

Every province in Canada had the wisdom to implement full-day kindergarten before we did. Now the PC Party and the NDP party want us to stay mired in the past, for our children not to have the same opportunities as children in the rest of Canada, then that's their business. We have moved on. We have full-day kindergarten, and right now there are over 4,600 children in the province who are getting a better start in life because of full-day kindergarten.

Yesterday, the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island was up on his feet talking about inclusive education. Sure one of the primary benefits, according to all of the literature you can read on full-day kindergarten, is that children who have special needs, exceptionalities of one or another that need to be addressed, get earlier diagnosis if they're in school earlier in a full-day program. Sure there are jurisdictions in this country that have full-day kindergarten for four year olds. They call it junior kindergarten, but the PC Party and the NDP party want us to be stuck in 1960s. Well, that's not good enough for children in this province. That is not sufficient.

Another thing we did last year in the budget is we added additional resources for inclusion. We added 27 new inclusive instructional resource teachers, IRTs, who work with kids with special needs. We added additional resources for student assistant time. We did that last year in the budget, more teachers and more student assistants. Now, that's a fact. Now you can say something contrary if you want, but those are the alternative facts that one of the Members was talking about a little while ago. It doesn't have to be true, you can say it but that's not the fact. The fact is last year we added substantial new resources for inclusion in our schools.

Another thing we did last year, because we had a school board election. Now, for years the PC Party denied the people of the province their right to elect their trustees for their school district. And for whatever reason, I have no idea – and they talk about political patronage here every day – they decided they were in a better position to choose the trustees. So they picked the party faithful by and large, there are some exceptions, but by and large they picked the people they wanted to be trustees for the new school district and they just put them there.

They told the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, we know better than you. We're going to pick the trustees for you instead of doing what every other jurisdiction does, which allow people to elect their own trustees. We had the school board election. Now we have two school boards that are democratically elected. Now, it wasn't perfect, but what is. There are a few growing pains along the way. We live, we learn.

The next time there's a school board election I'm sure there'll be issues, but there will also be improvements. To be honest, there was such a lengthy period of time between having a school board election and having the one last fall, that no wonder we had issues because it was that long ago that we actually had school board elections.

Another thing that was done, when we were in Opposition, I remember this very one day, I had a conversation with the Premier about what we should do to address some of the fundamental issues that are problematic in the school system. We had a conversation and we decided to do something. He decided to do something that has not happened in more than a decade in this province. We'll say it's probably an opportunity that only comes once in a generation when it comes to the House of Assembly. He formed a Premier's task force on improving educational outcomes and gave it a broad mandate to look at some of those issues in our schools.

This week, the task force finished their consultations. So January, February, March, for three months the Premier's task force on improving educational outcomes has been going across the province talking to, I would dare say, thousands of people. Hundreds and hundreds have shown up to public meetings. There have been submissions from a host of different groups in education.

There were lots of teachers who completed the online survey from what I understand, and they will be providing a report to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in June or July, hopefully June, but sometime in the summer. We will then operationalize those recommendations of the task force in an education action plan. Those changes that are needed in the school system will be implemented for September 2018.

I have had a good number of conversations with the task force members. I've told them to sort of think big. Think about fundamental change. Try to address those issues that are most problematic in the school system.

A few weeks back the Premier and the Minister of Transportation Works announced a five-year

infrastructure plan which included the replacement of a school in Coley's Point –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: – which the previous administration failed to do over more than a dozen years in office. It's a facility that's 60-plus years old. Well overdue for replacement, and we are going to get that work done –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: – because the people in that area deserve it.

The member for the area, the Member for Harbour Grace – Port de Grave has been constant in her advocacy for the replacement of the Coley's Point school and certainly it's something that is a high priority for government. We will get it done.

There's a lot more I could say, obviously, but I'll leave it at that. I look forward to more opportunities to discuss the budget once we see it on the floor.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's a great pleasure to rise to reply to the Speech from the Throne given by Lieutenant Governor yesterday. It's interesting to have a little bit of ceremony in the House once in a while, a little bit of colour, the dress uniforms of the various services who accompany His Honour.

With the indulgence of the House, I would like to take a few moments to talk a little bit about my own district. As minister, usually my time in the House is taken up with departmental activities, but I think it would be only sensible to emphasize some of the things from the Throne Speech and also some of the activities in my own district over the last little while.

It is actually 80 years ago this year that construction began on what was then the Newfoundland Airport, and it's interesting how threads come together. One of my colleagues not that long ago, retired from James Paton in Gander. He moved to Gander from Botwood where his father was responsible for operations of the seaplane base there.

For those of you are interested in history, that was the transatlantic stopping point for flights at that time. Mr. Blackie Sr. moved to Gander where his lad grew up seeing lots of pale blue uniforms from the RAF and the RCAF because not long after Captain Frazer landed his Fox Moth in Gander in 1938, the political situation in Europe deteriorated and war was declared.

Peter Blackie grew up there and eventually went and did pre-med in Memorial, as it then was, Memorial College I think, and went to Dal to do medicine. He was the first of many people actually who left Gander to get an education and then returned where he served his community, and continues to serve his community with distinction. He was actually recognized by the Canadian Forces a year ago with the Queen's Medal, the highest commendation a civilian can gain from the military for having provided nearly 50 years of continuous service to Canadian Forces at the base in Gander. He had a ceremony, a more civilian ceremony as it were, involving the base and one of three search and rescue who he is still the flight surgeon for all these years later.

His career path really mirrors, in large part, the trajectory of Gander. He was heavily involved with aviation. It became the pivotal point for the North Atlantic ferry command and later became the stop for early transatlantic jets. Indeed, having an interest in aviation, it was one of the few places in Canada of which I was aware before I immigrated. I'd heard of Gander as a teenager, where I really didn't know and couldn't have told you where Ottawa or St. John's was.

Interestingly enough, his children, one whom became a pediatrician, but there other is Rob Blackie who was alluded to by the Minister of Culture who was one of the active producers of *Frontier* series, went into film. It seems to be a tradition in that generation in Gander because

Brad Peyton, another of his contemporaries, was active with *San Andreas* and his mom, again, worked in health care.

So there is this mix in Gander of aviation, tradition and a more forward-looking generation involved in cultural activities. The reference in the Throne Speech was really to build on Gander's deep roots, indeed it's *raison d'être*, which was aviation, and speaks about aerospace and defence as a centre for innovation for the province moving away from traditional businesses and traditional industry to develop and diversify our economy. It is certainly something that we've learned from the mistakes of previous generations. We need to move away from single business lines, be it wood, cod, mining or oil, which has led us down a certain path of expectation which was never realized.

The aerospace industry in Gander has likewise waxed and waned; it is recovering now on a sustainable footing. It's one of the airports in the country which is posting small but regular surpluses, and has a very active board and a business plan going forward. It still has the lowest number of down days due to weather of any Atlantic Canadian airport; has the longest runway in Atlantic Canada – even longer than Stephenville, for my colleague over the way, from a technical perspective.

So it has a secure foundation in aviation. The Chamber of Commerce and local business and the Airport Authority are very active in promoting that, and I think were delighted, certainly from the feedback I've received from the chamber, to see that announcement in the Throne Speech about a centre for innovation for aerospace in Gander.

It goes without saying that the publicity from *Come From Away* has drawn renewed attention to not just Gander, but the surrounding communities within my own district and neighbouring Districts of Lewisporte – Twillingate, for example, where the hospitality of those folk on that very difficult day, some years ago, has finally found a new way of being recognized through the arts and through entertainment.

It speaks well to the possibilities for Gander in the future as a destination of itself, and not

merely just as an airport, as a portal to other places. There are all sorts of possibilities there now building on the success of the entertainment piece, and I know my colleague from Tourism and Culture is active in trying to pursue that, and I certainly will be going back to the hospitality industry locally to see what we can do in advance of this year's tourist season.

So rather than just being simply a portal to get into the province, I see huge possibilities for Gander as a destination in and of itself, including the surrounding areas. The fishing on the Gander River, the activities in the woods around Gambo and Benton, there are enormous possibilities there.

So again, it's not an opportunity I get very often as a Minister of the Crown to stand and talk about my own district, but they are the people who put me here, and I think I do them a disservice not to recognize that fact as often and as vigorously as I can.

It was interesting, however, to move into the realm of the government portfolio. My colleague behind me, my very able parliamentary secretary, without whose assistance this last 16 months would not have been as straightforward as it could have been, I certainly appreciate his wise counsel and active help, to reciprocate his very kind comments from earlier on.

He mentioned 64 pieces of legislation, and I think what struck me with the initiatives I've brought to the House, both in terms of legislation and policy changes, is the immediate almost jack-in-the-box response from Members opposite who pop up and said, well, I thought of that; we were going to do that.

If you pick, for example, the patient safety legislation, that sat in the Department of Health for three years, and it ran against an obstacle, which was an obstacle of principle, an obstacle of practical implementation. They ran out of energy; they ran out of interest; they parked it.

The same thing happened with the MCP insurance act, which is one the earliest bills I had the privilege to introduce into the House. They ran into some obstacles; they parked it; they put it on one side and ran out of interest and energy. It never got anywhere. There were other

pieces of legislation where they ran into tangles, and I'm thinking now the secure management piece of legislation. They ran into concerns, perfectly valid and ethical, but they couldn't be bothered finding the energy to work their way round them. But yes, they thought of them.

Well, in the last year, the last 16 months or less, we have taken those pieces of legislation, we have actively sought out solutions to the problems that they abandoned, we fixed the legislation, brought it before the House and received enthusiastic, if not unanimous, support for all of them.

So I would contrast the thinking with the doing. Really, I think it's very, very unfortunate that someone feels so bound to try and claim credit for things that really and honestly they can't claim credit for. Essentially, as I say, they stalled because they ran out of energy and effort over the last three years. I think this is the hallmark of a tired regime who resort to idleness when the challenges become too great.

Yesterday, in the first of the Address in Reply around the motion to craft a response to His Honour, the Premier got up and used a phrase, which I hadn't heard before, which was: Facts tell and stories sell. I had actually heard it in a different way, that narrative beats numbers any day, but that's kind of a more scientific jargon.

What we've seen, I think, over the last little while is a concerted effort by the Members opposite to craft an alternate reality, to craft a story that really isn't based in any fact or reality that you can appreciate objectively. What they've tried to do is to do this, to downplay their inability to deliver, but also to distract attention from another phenomenon I mentioned in the previous session of the House, which is the fact that somehow none of where we are today has anything to do with anything they did or didn't do in the last 12 years.

It's this huge disassociation. It's as though, for the *Star Trek* fans, this crowd beamed in on the 1st of December to a situation of which they were totally ignorant and had no part. I would suggest they may have been totally ignorant, given the policy direction that we inherited, because none of it could have been based on any thought or planning.

To come in and suggest, somewhat disingenuously, that we would have a deficit of \$800 million or \$1.1 billion and then having omitted to provide any updates when asked, certainly not before an election campaign, when you actually inspect the books, you find that deficit is north of \$2.7 billion. Somehow none of this had anything to do with them; none of this had anything to do with any of their policies or the lack thereof for the last few years. Given, again, that they had \$25 billion in oil revenue, a time of peak oil, peak oil price, and 12 years in which to craft something. The only thing that I can assume is they were lazy. They're not stupid people, they never have been. No one could ever accuse them of that, and I certainly wouldn't, but really, they were thoughtless. They did not think ahead beyond a certain point.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture, I think referenced part of the problem. They had this revolving door of ministers. They had three-and-a-half premiers in a very short space of time, and there was no direction and no leadership. I think their answer was to spend money they didn't have and kick the fiscal can down the road for the likes of my grandson, for example. I think really that whole tenor of discussion yesterday is intellectually offensive, if not actually physically so.

The facts of the case are *The Way Forward* is a very clear document with a very clear plan, but the thing it has which has been singularly lacking in terms of the previous 12 years is this is a plan that is actually: a) being implemented; and, b) its progress is being monitored and reported on at regular intervals.

Only this week, we had the first of those reports earlier than anticipated because those deadlines, those targets had by and large all been met before the May 9 deadline; with the exception I think of four or five, which would be met by the May 9 deadline. I think it is a testament to the organization and the commitment of this side of the House to produce actions rather than ideas that will sit there and disappear, evaporate at the first challenge. We've worked our way through these things.

Under *The Way Forward* you have seen the issue of the public sector employees begin to be addressed by putting in place appropriate

governance, and we started by example. We started by putting our own House in order. We have between the flatter, leaner approach for core government and the reorganization put in place a much leaner organizational framework for government. It will have two benefits. One is it makes government more efficient and more effective, and the second thing is it deals with inefficiencies which have cost us money. We've hemorrhaged money over the last 12 years.

Our problem as alluded to by – stated clearly in actual fact, not alluded to – by the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port is not one of revenue. We have the highest per capita revenue of any jurisdiction in Canada and have had for some time. What we also have, however, is a disproportionately higher per capita spending compared with any other jurisdiction in Canada. In my own department, the telling figures, \$7,130, that's what we spend per Newfoundlander and Labradorian per year on health care. The Canadian average as a comparator is \$5,998, yet we do not see any value for that extra money.

Our outcomes are no different. Well, that's wrong. I misspeak, Mr. Speaker. Our outcomes are different than the rest of Canada. Our outcomes are worse. We have an unhealthy population with multiple, chronic disease and a far higher incidence of multiple chronic diseases than any other jurisdiction. Our outcomes are actually worse for that investment; yet, after 12 years there was no attempt to deal with any of that in any meaningful way.

When you come up with a good idea and implement it: oh, yes, we thought about it, we thought about it. Well, you may have thought about it but you didn't get off your bums and do anything about it. It didn't happen, and in the last 14 months, 16 months it has happened. So really and honestly, again it is very difficult to sit here quietly and listen to the jack-in-the-boxes on the other side pop up and claim credit for every good idea whilst at the same time dissociating themselves from all the bad ideas that they actually did unfortunately implement.

If they had been as vigorous with their bad ideas as they were with the good ideas they want to claim credit for, we'd probably not be in the mess we're in at the moment; but, unfortunately,

they were selective in what they ignored. As a result of that, we last year were left with some very difficult decisions. At the end of the day we were in a hole, fiscally, and the lenders were simply saying, you need a plan because if you don't have one you're not going to get any money. We got a plan. We implemented it and we were told off for doing it.

We had difficult choices and we accepted that. We said and nobody applauded after our budget last year because we knew the impact it would have to have on the folk of this province, but there was no reasonable, practical alternative. We got the money, we got favourable interest rates, but even with those favourable interest rates, we are spending just shy of \$1 billion every year to keep the lights on.

The level of debt we are carrying, going forward, is such that if we were in Venezuela, where they have the same, they'd turn the lights off for 12 hours a day. Puerto Rico tried to declare bankruptcy with a smaller per capital deficit than we do. We have managed to avoid that, only by making difficult decisions.

The revenue levers were pulled. This time now we have to start dealing with our other major problem, which is the highest per capital expenditure of any jurisdiction in Canada. That is our challenge and that is something we won't think about. We will think about it, consult and deal with it.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I'm going take my seat.

Thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, Bill 2, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Deputy Government House Leader that she shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act, Bill 2, and that the said bill 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.’

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The House Of Assembly Accountability, Integrity And Administration Act. (Bill 2)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 2 has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 2 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act, Bill 4, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. the Deputy Government House Leader that she shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act, Bill 4, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Intergovernmental Affairs Act. (Bill 4)

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 4 has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 4 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MS. COADY: Recess the House, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is to recess the House until this afternoon.

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Osborne): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker’s gallery today, we have Nicholas Hillier who is job shadowing the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: For Members' statements today, we have the Members for the Districts of Lewisporte – Twillingate, Fogo Island – Cape Freels, Conception Bay East – Bell Island, Placentia West – Bellevue, Virginia Waters and Topsail – Paradise.

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte – Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. D. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the hon. House to recognize Prime Berth Twillingate Fishery & Heritage Centre, on Twillingate Island. A personal dream of owner David Boyd, with the support of his wife Christine, Prime Berth, a private museum, was built from the care and hard work of Mr. Boyd.

The interpretative fishing centre offers a large collection of fishery artifacts, hand-build exhibits, a reconstructed whale skeleton, historic photo gallery and personal writings that share the history of the Newfoundland inshore fishery.

One aspect that truly sets Prime Berth apart from other museums is their authentic fishery experiences. Visitors can join Captain Dave on the water and try their hand at cod and squid jigging, mackerel hauling and lobster trap baiting. Afterwards, they can watch a demonstration on how to clean a cod fish in the cod splitting show and, later, be entertained by local folk songs.

Prime Berth has recently received three major awards including: Top 6 Museums in Canada by TripAdvisor; 2016 Manning Awards for Excellence in the Presentation of Historic Places; and 2016 Sustainable Tourism Award by Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating David and Christine Boyd on their achievements and wish them much success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud to rise and highlight the valuable volunteer work from the people of my district. On Saturday past, I attended the 37th annual firemen's ball and awards night at Centreville-Wareham-Trinity and Indian Bay.

Over 300 people came out to show their support. Several awards were given out for five to 35 years of service, but two things stood out over all the rest. Firefighter Ted Green received an award for 35 years of service, plus a local garage received added attention. Parson, CH & Sons Ltd received a standing ovation for their commitment to the fire department. Co-owner Robert Parsons, who is also the fire chief, his brother Deon, assistant chief, has everyone who works with them signed up for the fire department.

It was noted that they have left people stranded on the hoist, while they all ran out the door to respond to an emergency.

The community applauded their dedication. Although these people were highlighted, they were not able to overshadow the strong commitment by all community volunteers

I ask everyone to join me in thanking these volunteers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to recognize a special event that took place in my district this past weekend. I speak of the Legionnaire's appreciation day organized and financed by Tourism Bell Island to show appreciation to all

Legionnaires but particularly those connected to Bell Island.

The event included greetings from dignitaries, special presentations and entertainment, which included high school students in World War II uniforms, dancing with their partners to the music and dance styles of the era. There were a number of other entertainers but what stole the show was to have the singing Legionnaires, who are nationally recognized, travel to island and perform. I have to note some of these members are World War II veterans.

It was a pleasure to have Command President Frank Sullivan, along with Portugal Cove-St. Philip's Legion President Len Collins in attendance.

A special moment for me when was I learned that over 30 descendants of World War I war hero, Spaniard's Bay native and life-long Bell Island miner Corporal Matthew Brazil who is a recipient of the Distinguished Conduct Medal, royal military medal and the Croix de guerre, France's highest honour to be bestowed on any military individual, had travelled to Bell Island from all over the province to celebrate.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all to join me in showing their appreciation for all Legionnaires.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, with great remorse and regret, I stand before this hon. House today to pay tribute to and celebrate the life of a friend to all, Paul Bolt.

On March 14, we learned the sad news of Paul's untimely passing, at the young age of 46. Most would know Paul as a tireless advocate for rural Newfoundland and Labrador, as the mayor of Grand le Pierre for many years, and a man who did not mind stepping up to the plate to serve, whether it be on council or other organizations geared towards community development and growth such as the Fortune Bay East Development Association.

He was especially proud of the local Burin Peninsula Brighter Futures chapter in Grand le Pierre where children flourished and thrived, which he helped to secure for the area where he often brought me to visit.

Mr. Speaker, Buddha taught us: "Even death is not to be feared by one who has lived wisely." Paul Bolt lived wisely. He was a kind, gentle and compassionate man that has been lost.

I extend my sincere condolences to his family. We have lost a leader to many, and a friend to all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I rise in this hon. House today to highlight some of the fantastic achievements earned by St. Paul's Junior High students.

The school sent two teams to the Junior High Provincial Math League competition and one team earned first place. Congratulations to Ranjeevan Illango, Chunhao Hann, Tristan Paronavitana and Safwaan Shams. The other team composed of Brynn Furlong, Mahiba Khan, Avani Adluri and Kathleen Curran also did an amazing job scoring three out of four in the final relay round – a feat which few others teams accomplished.

Who Wants to Save a Life? is a fast-paced provincial game which heightens awareness of occupational health and safety, sponsored by WorkplaceNL. St. Paul's won gold, as well as a \$5,000 prize and a set of iPads.

Finally, Jake Billard, a grade seven student, represented the province in the Atlantic Diving Competition held in Halifax. Jake competed against youth up to the age of 17 years of age. He competed in six events and won six golds. As a result, he hopes to represent the province at the Canada Games in Winnipeg, Manitoba and will also compete in the Speedo Junior Development Nationals held in Victoria, BC.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating these incredible students.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Duke of Edinburgh awards is a self-development program available to young people aged 14 to 24. The purpose of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award is to encourage young people to set goals and challenges, work towards achieving them and then be recognized at the end for sustaining the commitment they have made.

There is no competition between participants; the only people with whom they compete are themselves. Self-motivation is fundamental to the program. The criteria for gaining an award are based on each participant's individual improvement and potential at the starting point of the award. The award program has three levels: bronze, silver and gold, each requiring an increasing level of commitment and effort.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize 10 students from Holy Spirit High School in Conception Bay South who recently received their bronze level. On December 20, the Member for Conception Bay South and I presented the awards to: Reegyn Crickard, Hannah Daley, Jack Bistrow, Hillary Oldford, Erica Bennett, Samantha Hallett, Nicole Hunt, Caitlyn Coles, Megan Coles, and Erin Burt.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these students on their recent achievement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to share the optimism and confidence about mining prospects in Newfoundland and Labrador, as demonstrated by the many people I met earlier this month at PDAC – the annual Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada's Mining Convention and Trade Show.

Mining is one of our leading industries and is a major contributor to our economy. With more than 7,000 people employed and mineral shipments forecast to reach \$2.9 billion in 2017, Newfoundland and Labrador is currently ranked 16th on the Fraser Institute's 2016 International Mining Survey as one of the most attractive jurisdictions worldwide for investment attractiveness.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Our diversified minerals industry provides a wide variety of commodities to the world market. This is because in Newfoundland and Labrador we have armed ourselves with public geoscience, nimble regulation and support for prospectors and junior mining companies through the Mineral Incentive Program all in order to create the greatest opportunity for exploration and development. As committed in *The Way Forward* vision, we will build on these efforts to increase activity in the mining sector by engaging in targeted promotion and core digitization, which will support broader sharing of the province's core sample information to companies worldwide.

In tandem with this year's PDAC conference, the provincial government has released the most recent collection of reports from the Geological Survey which collects, interprets and disseminates knowledge and geoscience data with a goal of enhancing the province's geoscience knowledge base. The data is used mainly by the mineral-resource industry to inform and enhance exploration and investment efforts. The most recent collection of reports can be found on government's website, as well as Natural Resources.

Mr. Speaker, with over 900 exhibitors and 22,000 attendees from 125 countries, PDAC offered Newfoundland and Labrador companies the opportunity to make valuable connections.

We shared the breadth and depth of our local expertise and demonstrated to the world that our mining industry and its people are skilled, experienced and ready to do business – a goal, I am happy to report; we made very clear to industry at this year's PDAC conference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, our province's mining industry is a major contributor to our economy. It creates jobs of over 7,000 residents, and its exports help to stimulate our economy each year. It's encouraging that mineral shipments are forecasted to reach \$2.9 billion this year, and that our industry was ranked 16th worldwide last year by the Fraser Institute. I encourage the government to continue the programs of the mining industry and to continue the many programs and investments which our previous government put in place to support the industry.

Mining activity is driven by national and international investment. The minister's statement unfortunately does not make reference to creating an environment in which those in the international community choose to invest in mining right here in this province. I will stress to her the need for government to create that environment for continued growth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. It's good to see government working hard to promote the province's mining industry. However, valuable as the industry is, it

is based on a non-renewable resource. So I ask the minister, what is the government's plan towards promoting a more sustainable mining industry and its plan to ensure communities and workers are protected when a mine does come to an end, so that we do not have a repeat of what has happened to the retired miners of Wabush.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I would like to rise today to celebrate our recent launch of The Way Forward on Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador, the province's five-year plan for increasing immigrant attraction and retention.

It was my pleasure to launch this plan at Verafin, an industry-leading software provider proudly based in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Verafin's team includes talent from different parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well, different parts of the world, including individuals who have received permanent residency through the Provincial Nominee Program. This made it a very fitting location to launch an action plan based on collaboration, engagement and true partnership.

Immigrants, Mr. Speaker, enrich our culture. They bring valued skills, and they contribute to the economic growth throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, including rural and remote areas of our province. In fact, immigrants to the province live in 78 different communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. This action plan is the province's roadmap to increase immigration by 50 per cent, welcoming approximately 1,700 newcomers annually by the year 2022.

Reaching this target requires working more closely with our key partners, and these include employers and communities, service providers, our post-secondary institutions like Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the College of the North Atlantic, and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play in making our province a destination of choice for newcomers. Together, we can build an even more economically, socially and culturally vibrant province and far more inclusive in the process.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement, and I thank his officials for a very thorough and professional briefing.

In 2015, the previous administration had released a 10-year population growth strategy which placed heavy focus on growing our province's population base and welcoming new residents from all over the world.

At that time, Newfoundland and Labrador, as was with many other provinces, faced various challenges, but despite that fact, our province remained an attractive destination mainly because of those who lived here and those who wanted to move here felt a sense of hope and optimism about Newfoundland and Labrador.

Fast forward two years under the Liberal government, and that sense of optimism is gone. Last year, the Liberal government brought down a budget which attacked the working class, smothered the economy and essentially caused a mass exodus of young working families. Their own document stated that their decisions will see massive unemployment and outmigration, and despite these facts, the Liberals still claim that there has never been a better time to move to our province.

I will conclude my response with a note sent to me on Saturday, Mr. Speaker, and I quote: I'm reading the comments released by the Liberals, as me and my family sit in the U-Haul moving away from the province I call home. They just don't get it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I too thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about a plan, but he has presented nothing which shows how he arrived at the number of 1,700 immigrants annually. What actions does he plan to take to ensure government achieves that target? All we have is the minister saying publicly he has calculated by extrapolation that 1,700 will be the number of people immigrating to the province every year up to 2022. I ask the minister, what kind of a plan is that?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: If he fully endorses the federal Liberal's plan to legalize marijuana?

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

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

I'm certainly happy to stand here and speak to this very important topic – one that I actually had a conversation with yesterday with MP Bill Blair, who's the parliamentary secretary to the federal Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

As we all know, the federal government has announced this plan. We know that legislation will be unveiled very soon, and the word is that this will be something that will happen hopefully in 2018. As a province, we will continue to move forward to ensure that it's done very safely here in this province. We understand that there are a number of federal aspects to it; there are a number of provincial aspects to it, such as

distribution, taxation. Again, we are fully concerned with the safety side of this; but, this is something that will happen, and we'll do what we can to make sure that this province is ready as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I appreciate the update from the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, but I'd like to know where the Premier stands on this.

So I'll ask the Premier if the prime minister has your full support in the legalization of marijuana.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Again, happy to stand here and speak to this because we know it is going to happen here in this province. It's something that's going to require the co-operation of both the feds and the provinces to happen. There have been concerns raised throughout the provinces because this is a wide-ranging shift in our culture.

Here in this province, we have a working group that is happening and features people from the Department of Health, Service NL, the Department of Finance and the Department of Justice. We've been speaking with our police. We'll continue to work forward to make sure this happens here in this province and is done safely. Again, it's something we look forward to moving forward and having happen, as the feds roll it out.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Again, I thank the hon. minister for his response today. From your response, Minister, am I to understand that the Premier and his Cabinet and your government fully support the federals move to legalize marijuana?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the reference to rural has been taken out of the Department of Business. As well, in the over 10,000-word Throne Speech yesterday, rural Newfoundland and Labrador was only referenced a couple of times in the speech.

So I ask the Premier: What does this say about the government's commitment or plan for rural Newfoundland and Labrador? Will rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador be targeted in next week's budget?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, rural Newfoundland and all parts of Newfoundland and Labrador were highlighted in the Speech from the Throne yesterday, just as much as it has been highlighted in everything that this government has done. We have taken considerable actions – unlike the PC administration, formerly – to advance rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

A prime example would be Crown lands and agriculture and the work that we're doing with our forestry industry, Mr. Speaker. Many examples in the Speech from the Throne and in *The Way Forward* document, Mr. Speaker, working with areas in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I made it quite clear yesterday that we would find new jobs in old industries. I talked at length with that. It's a commitment that we've made to rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but just not rural Newfoundland and Labrador, Newfoundland and Labrador, in every single community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess that wasn't important enough to put in the Throne Speech.

I'll ask the Premier: Based on the Speech from the Throne yesterday, can students expect that the tuition freeze at Memorial University may be in jeopardy?

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

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Member will be aware; it was clearly outlined within my own mandate letter to work with Memorial University of Newfoundland and with the College of the North Atlantic to ensure a tuition freeze for our students. And, in fact, our government now has provided an incredible, a record amount of funds to be able to facilitate a tuition freeze.

The budget will be the budget. I'm sure the hon. Members, just as I do, look forward to receiving it on the floor of the House, in due time. The budget will provide that information, which, I guess, will allow a discussion about that. But I can anticipate that that which we said, will continue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. DAVIS: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly good news for students, knowing that the tuition freeze will continue at Memorial University, and I thank the minister for clarifying that.

In yesterday's Throne Speech, there no mention of Newfoundland and Labrador's new, very proud, jewel in the crown of Newfoundland and Labrador tourism, and that's the UNESCO designation at Mistaken Point – very important for Newfoundland and Labrador. Even though there was a long list of celebrations, very important celebrations that were listed in the Throne Speech, Mistaken Point was left out that speech.

I ask the Premier if people should be concerned – there have been concerns raised – that this may be an indication of not being ready for visitors coming to Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically for this UNESCO site at Mistaken Point?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are very proud with the designation of Mistaken Point. It is indeed a jewel when it comes to Newfoundland Labrador. Like we have with all the many areas that we would have to promote tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are working with all the areas, including Mistaken Point. Mr. Speaker, we will be ready for what should be a great tourism season.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Tourists will be coming to Newfoundland and Labrador in historic levels, Mr. Speaker. We are working with our Atlantic Canada provinces, putting in joint strategies that we can actually promote Atlantic Canada.

Within all of that, Mr. Speaker, there is a spot for Newfoundland and Labrador – every single one – every single one – of the great areas that can lead to a tourism experience, including Mistaken Point.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: CBC has reported that seniors continue to live at the former Riverside Country Manor, months after Eastern Health pulled the

home's licence. Inspection reports identified numerous issues and concerns for the seniors' health and safety.

I ask the minister responsible for Housing: What are you doing to ensure that these seniors are being taken care of?

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

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

The facility in question was licensed as a personal care home by Eastern Health. After concerns were raised, Eastern Health withdrew that licence. They worked with each of the residents to offer them alternative accommodation. There are four people living there, of their own choice and free will, as a boarding house, which is not regulated by the Department of Health and, therefore, is now outside of my jurisdiction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you, Minister, and that's precisely why I was asking the minister responsible for Housing and Seniors and affordable housing for seniors, who is also the MHA for these seniors in question.

So what are you doing, as MHA, and as minister responsible for affordable housing for seniors to ensure the health and safety of your constituents is being looked after?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, we, as a government, and I, as a minister, care deeply about the safety and the appropriate housing of all individuals and families in our districts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Individuals have a right to choice, Mr. Speaker. However, if any individual in this hon. House or anybody in Newfoundland and Labrador feels that an adult is in need of protection, we do have the *Adult Protection Act*. I encourage everyone to contact the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: You have allowed the seniors' home, which wasn't fit to meet the standards to maintain its licence, to operate as a boarding house.

I ask the minister responsible for your constituents, do you support this?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, I remind the Member about the *Adult Protection Act*. If the Member feels that there are individuals that are in need of adult protection, please contact the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: The home's licence was revoked in July. What actions have you taken to monitor the number of seniors currently residing at the home?

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

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Mr. Speaker, individuals in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador have a right to choice. I remind the Member we do have the *Adult Protection Act*.

Thank you.

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

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

Numbers released by DFO this week show that the Northern cod stocks have grown. MP Nick Whalen said yesterday that now is not the time to increase quotas, but the FFAW is calling on small quotas increase.

I ask the minister: What is your position?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, our position as a province is that when you look at science numbers yesterday of 7 per cent and 30 per cent last year, you look at a 40 per cent increase in the biomass over two years. We supported the FFAW last year in their request to increase the harvest from approximately 6,000 to 10,000 tons and we would certainly support our harvesters this year again in a modest increase in the allowable catch.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I want to thank the minister for his answer. The first time I heard one from you.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh.

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, this same Liberal MP stated yesterday –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, this same member, Liberal MP yesterday stated that the

crab and shrimp harvesters, which he called fishermen, were wealthy people and had lots of money in recent years. So they should be able to cope with reduction in quotas.

Do you stand by his opinion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to stand by a Member of Parliament's opinion, but what I'm going to tell you and tell this hon. House is that over the past number of years a lot of our shellfish harvesters have done really well.

I come from a district, Mr. Speaker, where I have harvesters – two a family, I think, of a man and wife, actually, who have about 13,000 pounds of crab to catch every year, and if you use \$3 as a number, you have a family with an income of \$39,000; a gross income of \$39,000. So, Mr. Speaker, this government will support our harvesters in this province and realize that within these challenging times we're going to be here for our harvesters and processors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Yes, Minister, and I have the same thing in my district too with harvesters that are not millionaires, or as the MP called them yesterday, compared them to doctors and lawyers.

The MP also stated yesterday that he wanted to see our fishery return back to what it was in the '60s and '70s and '80s.

I know he's very ill-advised on what he was talking about, but how do you stand on that position?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. the Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the cod fishery that we left in 1992, 25 years ago this July, when we return to a fishery, hopefully in the not-too-distant future, there are going to be many challenges. Mr. Speaker, the fishery that we left 25 years ago is not the fishery we're going to face today, and the hon. Member opposite and I have often talked about this. We're going to face challenges in marketing; we're going to face challenges in how we prepare that product for market; so no, Mr. Speaker.

When you look at some of the things we've done with the federal government, we realize that marketing and harvesting technologies are going to very important. Our Seafood Innovation and Transition Program which was in our *2016 Budget*, we put \$2 million into harvesting and processing techniques that will help advance the quality of our products.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources has had more than a week to clarify about a speculation that Come By Chance Refinery may be for sale.

I ask the minister: Is Come By Chance for sale?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have had an opportunity to speak with the owners of Come By Chance. They have indicated to me that they have not – there is nothing immediately involved in making sure that it is on the market. They are not entertaining offers at this point in time, but they are a private company, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure at some point they may consider that, but at this point in time they've advised me they are not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister clarified, can she clarify the fact that she has had discussions with the owners and, in fact, was the discussion about any environmental liability that was part of the original agreement when the refinery was last sold?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have had multiple conversations with the owners of Newfoundland and Labrador refinery. It's a very important contributor to our local economy and a very important employer. We speak with them on a regular basis, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the environmental liability, that is an ongoing process. I know that the officials have been working toward that. That is continuing and more efforts are toward that end, and I know that that's a continuing process, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the minister said that Come By Chance Refinery has improved operations and have a good strategy for the future. This is in stark contrast to what we've heard from some employees who are concerned about safety at the facility.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that recent layoffs have not affected North Atlantic emergency response capability to protect workers at the site?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

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

As I promised the House some days ago, I did want to speak with officials as to what's been going on. I'm pleased to report to the House that just by way of example – it is a very complicated site, as my colleague indicated – but just for an example as to what's been going on. Our office of Service NL actually has two units: Occupational Health and Safety, and Engineering and Inspection Services. In 2016, they carried out some 21 safety inspections and issued 35 directives, and in the Engineering and Inspection Services they carried out some 237 scheduled inspections, 121 demand inspections, seven complaints and 26 directives.

The point of my commentary, Mr. Speaker, is to indicate that there's a very comprehensive review of safety on the site, and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on March 16, when I asked about safety reports and inspections, the minister said that I'll report back on what we can release.

Why hasn't the minister released all occupational health and safety reports and inspections for the facility?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Typically, Mr. Speaker, inspection reports are not released; however, the directives are made public. We post them on the site at the work location, and I understand there's an ATIPP request right now. So these documents are going to be distributed from our department very shortly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, central to a safe environment is the employees' right to know. Despite this, workers at Come By Chance Refinery have asked for copies of the occupational health and safety inspections. To date, they have not received them.

Is the minister complying with the law?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Is the minister complying with the law – now that's an interesting question.

What I might say to the hon. Member is that I look forward to if the union representatives or others are looking to have a review of these inspection reports, I would look forward to arranging that.

I should note to the Member, and to this House, that on those inspection reports are personal information in terms of who's responsible for what. So we tend not to release that type of information, but I look forward to sitting down and sharing with the Member or anyone else who's inquiring.

I also wanted to say that we have plans onsite for our various aspects, and we ensure that should the company want to make any changes to those plans, they need to go through my department to ensure that they remain complaint.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that complaints have been made by workers at the site to the government's occupational health and safety division.

Can the minister confirm that all those complaints have indeed been investigated?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: According to my records that I read out just a few minutes ago, Mr. Speaker, we received some seven complaints last year. They were all investigated and, as I said, there were some directives that were issued. So we're continuing to respond as we receive incidents described by a worker or others on the site.

So, thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, work refusals in the workplace are designated by individuals who, under the legislation, have a right to refuse work because of safety hazards or things they believe are unsafe. My understanding is there have been eight work refusals at Come By Chance recently.

Can the minister confirm that this has occurred, and have they been investigated?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: I'll be very honest with the Member; I'm not aware of these refusals. I will confer with staff and report back.

I can say, though, that our department actually has an office located inside this facility. We are there almost on a daily basis, so there's due attention to what's going on. Despite the changes in human resources at the facility, we have been watching very closely occupational health and safety, we are watching, and we will continue to watch and make sure that the workers are very safe at that site.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister did indicate despite the layoffs at the facility; I want to go there in regard to the occupational health and safety plan had to be rewritten based on the reduction in the workforce.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm for the workers on the site that with this reduction in workforce and a rewritten plan, is the facility in compliance with all standards?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, changes to the plan are to be submitted to our department. We will be reviewing them, if that is the case, and ensuring compliance. So the answer is yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today, the Liberal government continued its piecemeal announcements of layoffs and cuts – this time, targeting the health care system.

I ask the Premier: Will this be the final cut to the province's health care system, or are there more cuts and layoffs coming next week?

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

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

The plan, *The Way Forward*, clearly laid out over a period from August right through to February of this year an approach to a Flatter, Leaner Management through core government. That was implemented, discussed in the House and questioned by Members opposite. It was also part of *The Way Forward* that this would ultimately roll out to agencies, boards and commissions.

As of this morning, the regional health authorities have implemented Flatter, Leaner Management across the health authorities. This will allow streamlining and improvement of governance. It will not affect front-line services and it will better align the governance structures to allow the health authorities to meet their mandate.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, *The Way Forward* that we keep hearing about is not a plan. This government is hoping that it's a way out, not a way forward.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: What type of management positions specifically were targeted in this latest round of cuts?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Well, I would have to take issue with the preamble to the question, Mr. Speaker. It's not only a plan; it's an action plan –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. HAGGIE: – not an inaction strategy, of which we've seen multiple over the last three years.

The implementation of Flatter, Leaner Management through the RHAs has been left entirely in the mandate of the RHAs. These are operational, affect executive and senior management positions and have been done in the context of each individual RHA's needs and requirements.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. KENT: Mr. Speaker, there was little detail in this morning's announcement and, as a result,

it's hard to know what impact there will be on the quality of service and on patient safety.

So I ask the minister: Are you confident that service delivery and patient safety will not be impacted in any way by removing these 93 positions from our health care system?

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

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

I can do no better. Bloated government, that's kind of on us. The Member opposite, the short answer –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: Table it.

MR. HAGGIE: We could table that, Mr. Speaker, if you'd prefer.

The short answer to the question is that these are operational decisions within the mandate of the regional health authority and I trust their good judgement and their method in which these decisions have been made.

Out of deference to the employees concerned, as a conscientious employer, these folk, it's a difficult day, they should hear the news from their RHA and their line managers, not through the media and not through the Member opposite.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Once again, I remind Members the only person I wish to hear from is the person identified to speak. I also remind Members that the use of props in the House is not permitted.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KENT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nine-three people lost their jobs today; 93 people's families were affected; 93 families were affected and the minister wants to get on with those kinds of theatrics and antics in the House of Assembly. It's shameful and embarrassing, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Can he give us details on the 13 non-management positions that were eliminated today?

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

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

Two threads, for clarity: These are operational decisions made by the regional health authorities in the light of their own particular context; once again, details of the how folk will be impacted in these difficult times will take some time to work its way through the system.

There are various options open to some of these folk and until they have decided on how they want to exercise those options, I am not going to reveal personal details and prejudice the process in the House simply to satisfy the Member's question at this stage. That information will be available in the fullness of time, but these folk need to hear this from the line managers and from the RHAs first. It's not courteous and it's not a proper way of doing it, to announce this in public.

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.

Today government announced the loss of 93 jobs; 21 per cent of management positions in the province's regional health authorities as part of its flatter, may I say, meaner management policy. Managers are directly involved in oversight and ensuring safe quality health services.

I ask the Premier: Has any thought been given to how this action affects long-term planning, or are the layoffs only to save money?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Again, for clarity, Flatter, Leaner is an approach that we have taken through government, clearly outlining the way forward, with the intent of rolling it through the agencies, boards and commissions. Regional health authorities choose to implement that this morning and began the process at 8 o'clock today. How that is rolled out is based on the context and needs of the individual regional health authorities. It is senior management. It is a governance issue, not a front-line issue.

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 point out to the minister that Flatter, Leaner Management is a slogan, not a comprehensive strategy.

I ask the Premier: Does government even have a long-term strategy for the health care system in this province?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The short answer to that question, Mr. Speaker, is yes.

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

MS. MICHAEL: Well, I ask the minister to stand up and give it to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to explain, in detail, what that strategy is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: I try and rise to challenges, Mr. Speaker, but to describe a plan to transform the delivery of health care in this province in 45 seconds will do neither justice to the plan nor the Member's ability to understand it. The bottom line is –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. HAGGIE: – that we cannot continue to spend money on health care and not get any return of any significance on that money. We spend \$7,130 for every man, woman and child in this province on health care. The national average is \$5,998. For that difference, we do not see any significant gain in outcomes. In actual fact, we have some of the poorest indicators. We cannot simply do what we've always done and expect a different result.

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.

We heard again this week about the personal care home that was finally closed after a year of complaints, inspections and orders.

I ask the Minister of Health and Community Services: Will these layoffs impact the ability of health authorities to oversee monitoring policies to ensure that vulnerable people who require care are protected?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, the issue with that home was identified by routine inspection and by comment from residents and others expressing concerns. After due diligence, an attempt to remedy those complaints and those issues, it was felt wisest to remove the licence for them to operate as a personal care home. That was done.

As part of that process, Eastern Health went to these folk and their families and offered them alternative accommodation. Four individuals and their families chose – chose, Mr. Speaker, to stay where they are. Unless they are in need of adult protection, those are decisions I cannot arbitrate. The individuals have to have the right to self-determine where they live.

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 ask the minister: Is that going to continue with all of these cuts? So I may go further.

I now ask him: Can he tell us if he has done an analysis of what the impact of the cuts will be on the delivery of services in this province?

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

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

The decisions as to the shape and nature of the changes that have been brought about today have been determined by the regional health authorities themselves. They were given clear direction from me that this was to have no impact on front-line services. This is about aligning governance and management to produce a streamlined, nimble and more effective decision-making program to make health care in those institutions and across those RHAs better than it is now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Time for Question Period has expired.

The time for Question Period has expired.

Before we move forward with the remainder of the agenda, I would like to recognize Mayor Stone of Red Bay who in in the gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the *Energy Corporation Act* and the *Hydro Corporation Act*, it's my pleasure to table the 2016 Business and Financial Report for Nalcor Energy, as well as the 2016 Consolidated Financial Statements of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In accordance with the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, it is my pleasure to table the 2017-19 Activity Reports for the following category three entities: Appeals Board of Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board, Fish Processing Licensing Board and the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

As Minister of Finance, I want to stand today to table the 2017-19 Activity Plans for the

following government entities: the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan Committee and the Pension Investment Committee, and I also would like to table pre-commitments for the House as well.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution.

Be It Resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS on December 7, 2016, the Management Commission of the House of Assembly approved Recommendation 27 of the 2016 Management Commission Review Committee respecting a taxable allowance in lieu of mileage in Corner Brook and the capital region; and

WHEREAS on March 15, 2017, the Management Commission approved an amendment to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules needed to implement the said taxable allowance in lieu of mileage; and

WHEREAS on December 7, 2016, the Management Commission of the House of Assembly approved Recommendation 21 of the 2016 Management Commission Review Committee respecting a lump sum taxable allowance for accommodations; and

WHEREAS on March 15, 2017, the Management Commission approved an amendment to the Members' Resources and Allowances Rules needed to implement the said taxable allowance respecting accommodations; and

WHEREAS subsection 20(7) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* states: “A change shall not be made to the level of amounts of allowances and resources provided to members except in accordance with a rule and, notwithstanding section 64, that rule shall not be effective unless first laid before the House of Assembly and a resolution adopting it has been passed.”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House of Assembly adopt amendments to the Members’ Resources and Allowances Rules approved by the Management Commission of the House of Assembly on March 15, 2017 as follows: Section 38 of the Members’ Resources and Allowances Rules is amended by adding immediately after subsection (2) of the following: “(2.1) Notwithstanding paragraph (2)(a), a member who represents the district of Corner Brook or a district in the capital region may elect to receive the sum of \$200 per month for an entire fiscal year in lieu of receiving the cost of transportation referred to in that paragraph, provided that (a) the election must be made before April 1 of the fiscal year to which the election applies; and (b) the \$200 per month shall be a taxable benefit to the member.”

And the Members’ Resources and Allowances Rules are amended by adding immediately after section 40, the following: “Taxable Accommodation Allowance: Capital Region 40.1(1) Notwithstanding paragraphs 31(1)(b), (32)(2)(b), 33(b), 35(b), 36(2)(b) and 37(b), not fewer than 30 days before the commencement of a fiscal year, a member entitled to accommodation costs in the capital region may elect to receive a lump sum amount for temporary or private accommodation in the capital region in lieu of receiving the accommodation costs referred to in those paragraphs.

“(2) An election made by a member under subsection (1) is (a) for the fiscal year immediately following that election; and (b) a taxable benefit of that member.

“(3) A lump sum received under this section shall be an amount that is calculated by multiplying the number of sitting days for the fiscal year as stated in the parliamentary calendar by the average daily cost of all member

accommodation under the paragraphs referred to in subsection (1) for the previous fiscal year.

“(4) If a member who is elected to receive a lump sum amount under this section leaves office before the end of the fiscal year to which the lump sum applies, the balance of the amount of that sum shall be repaid to the House of Assembly on a pro rata basis.”

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 Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’m certainly glad today to present this petition to the House.

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 government plans to cut the number of supervisors in Transportation and Works depots; and

WHEREAS this will lead to a decrease in the monitoring and upkeep of road conditions; and

WHEREAS the cuts to Trepassey depot would negatively impact the quality and safety of the roads in the Trepassey area;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to take necessary actions to ensure that supervisory staff and equipment remain in the Trepassey depot so staff are able to monitor road conditions, dispatch crews and equipment, as needed.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that's come up over the past number of weeks. This petition here has approximately 300 to 400 names from the region, from Portugal Cove South to Trepassey, which is very fundamental in regard to the equipment, the supervisory position and oversight being there to, first and foremost, be able to identify road conditions and to be able to dispatch equipment to make sure that the highway is in a safe condition for the residents.

On either side, I think there's been speculation that some will be moved to St. Joseph's, which is a far distance away. As well, on the other side, if you go towards Renew's and that area, you have Trepassey barrens. The weather conditions on both sides certainly can be very stormy; you have high winds. So it's certainly important that that equipment and, as well, the supervisory capacity stay in Trepassey area.

Now, I have spoken to the minister, the Minister of Transportation and Works. Some time ago he indicated to me that the depot was not going to close. That's good, but we're still waiting for clarity from the communities. I recognize I sent that off to the minister and I'm waiting to hear back on what actually is going to happen with the supervision and the actual equipment. It's fine to have the depot there in the wintertime but if that's not staffed or don't have the equipment there and it's got to come from other regions of the area, the Southern Avalon, that's not conducive or appropriate to a level of care that's required. Whether it's normal resident traffic, whether it's for employment or, even more importantly, necessary in an emergency situations where we get an ambulance, or a fire department, or someone needs to respond and respond outside of that region, which is extremely important.

So these are issues that I've brought to the House today. As I said, there are almost 400 signatures here from those in that region, from the municipalities, from the local service district, urging government and the minister to take a look at this, and to ensure that the winter service that is there now is kept whole and ensure that the quality and level of service for the people in that region are maintained. We certainly urge the

government and urge the minister to act on this and act quickly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

MR. SPEAKER: It being Private Members' Day, I call upon the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island to present his private Members' motion.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to present the private Member's resolution for today. I'll re-read it to the House:

BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to convene a public summit in 2017 to discuss the challenges of inclusive education and constructive solutions with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Faculty of Education of Memorial University, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, specialist educators, classroom/subject teachers, instructional resource teachers, student assistants, guidance counsellors, educational psychologists, program specialists for student support services, school administrators, parents, students, advocacy groups for persons with disabilities, other special interest groups, experts on inclusive education practices, legislators representing all parties in the House of Assembly and members of the general public."

It's seconded by –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's seconded by my hon. colleague, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune.

It's an honour to be able to stand here and present this, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to be able to say it's something that I was the architect of. I may have been the person who helped generate the writing of this particular bill today or this particular resolution, but this came from the hundreds, and I do say, Mr. Speaker, the hundreds of people who are engaged in education, but particularly in inclusive education and come from every sector. Every important part of how inclusive education is to be offered, the challenges around it, the positive outcomes as part of it, the perspective of making it fully inclusive for everybody, and a way of moving it forward and making it holistic for everybody, and improving the outcomes for education.

I was fortunate enough, when I became the critic 15 months ago of education, to take it on as a challenge. Even though I had worked as a civil servant for nearly 30 years and worked in the Department of Education for a period of time, I wasn't specifically connected to inclusive education. While some of the things I had done had a direct bearing on that, I didn't get a full understanding until I started to meet with administrators, meet with professional organizations, meet with parents, meet with teachers, get to see the full picture of what inclusive education is all about.

Everybody agrees with it. Everybody agrees it's a positive thing for our system. The problem becomes, how do we make it truly inclusive? How do we ensure that it meets the needs of not only those students but of all the students in our school system? How does it ensure that it's not an added stressor to administrators and to teachers, and to parents, and to all those involved and the social agencies that support this?

So, Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I was thinking about – before we presented the resolution to be tabled today. I have a little calendar pad, and every day I look at what the quote is of the day to try to get a perspective on what things are. It was ironic, because this one made a lot of sense to me. It read: the more you know, the more you know you don't know and the more you know that you don't know, the easier it is to get to know.

I thought that was a perspective particularly around me on inclusive education, but I think a lot of people who don't directly deal with it. If you work within the system, you understand the challenges. You understand what needs to be done, but no doubt you understand the inspiration behind it and how it can be very effective.

As I went through what it is I say, and for people who don't know, the process today is I'll get to speak twice as the mover of this private Member's resolution. I'll get to speak for 15 minutes at the beginning and I'll generally outline what we're proposing here. Then Members from all sides and all parties will get a chance to speak to it, and I'm hoping everybody will be supportive and they'll understand what our intent is here.

Basically, in a general nutshell, our intent is to find as many people out there who have a vested interest and a stake. I think every Newfoundlander and Labradorian has a vested interest in making inclusive education work and be holistic and be what it was meant to be, an opportunity to ensure everybody, every student reaches their potential, and all the supporting cast have a part to play in that.

When I was thinking about what to do and researching some information over the last number of weeks, I happened to pull out a presentation that was presented earlier to another group that I'll talk about in a little while. When I read it I said, you can tell, these are the people who understand what inclusive education is about. These are the people who understand the benefits, and these are the people who understand the challenges. It very articulately to me, sums up exactly the intent of this resolution, and then it adds to the intent of how we have that open dialogue.

I'll just read, and it says: Inclusive education should be considered as a philosophy for guiding everything in education. It should consider the diversity of every learner and help guide decision making regarding educational policies, development of staff, allocation of resources, curriculum development, learning materials, instructional methodology and physical environment. As such, it should inform our decision making in all these areas.

Mr. Speaker, that was the opening note in the NLTA submission to the Premier's Task Force on Education. As I read through their whole submission, this to me summed up exactly what inclusive education is all about. These are the key factors; these are the key components that we're asking through a summit of all the key players, which includes and would be one of the key people or key organizations to help lead us, the NLTA.

We're asking the department to take the lead on this. I have all respect for the Minister of Education as an educator, as an individual who has been through the education system and understands it, to have a perspective on being able to offer this, being able to give the key stakeholders the opportunity to be engaged. Because the benefit of having all the ultimate stakeholders here, and particularly those who come from different diverse backgrounds, and they may not all be aware of the other challenges or the other potential partnerships that could be developed until they get in that room and understand the assets that each of them bring.

That's what we're asking here. We've seen the positive influence that the all-party committee had on mental health. We saw where that came from. We're not at a point now where we're asking for an all-party committee on inclusive education at this point, because we feel – and the research we've done and the stakeholders we've talked to – that there's enough supportive talent and enough supportive energy, but particularly experience, enough supportive experience there by those involved to be able to come up with constructive solutions and be able to set out a time frame in which inclusive education meets its goal.

As I outlined at the beginning, it's the ultimate goal that we give every student in this province the opportunity to reach their potential, and that's what it's all about. That's what our education system was founded on, that we do that.

We've ran into some challenges as part of this whole process. As we implemented a new program, it was an understanding of what are the resources necessary; how does section A fit with section B and section B fit with section C and vice versa. So we haven't had that full inclusive

discussion. This is not about pointing blame or it's not about saying somebody needs to rectify something they didn't do; it's about moving forward.

The government talks about moving forward, and we support that, and this is another opportunity for us to do it but do it the right way. The best way to move forward is if we bring in those that have that expertise, have that commitment and have that understanding of what it is we're going to tackle here. What we're tackling is inclusive education.

So as I talk to the minister – and there's no doubt, we've had opportunities where we've gone back and forth and we've challenged each other on inclusive education programs and supportive services, but we have an opportunity to come together.

The Minister of Justice did a great thing yesterday on having a summit on justice. I think it's a great opportunity. He brought in key stakeholders to find out what are our challenges. Again, what are the positive things we're doing? Because you don't want to change something for the sake of changing. If there are positive things happening, let's continue them. Let's support those.

If there are things that are causing trouble or hindering us being able to move the objective forward, in this case inclusive education, well then let's move that out of the way. If there are supports we need, if it's human supports, if it structural assets we need, if it's a new approach to certain things, if it's just an understanding of getting everybody in line with the best way of meeting our goals, that's what dialogue brings. Nobody will ever argue that dialogue isn't the best thing – you can actually have a disagreement and still solve a problem.

So what we're asking here, we're asking everybody in this House to support the private Member's resolution. We know it will be a fair bit of work for the Minister of Education's staff to take on. But I know there are very competent people over there. I know the partners that I've spoken to who I've just outlined – and no doubt there are other ones out there that we haven't noted in our resolution, who'd be more than willing to work with the department's officials

to try to make this happen and to do it in such a way that every stakeholder is given an opportunity.

It could be through the use of technology that we engage rural areas that we can't get at, at this point. It could be better uses of information distribution. It could be using the one asset – the greatest asset we have in our education system are the schools themselves and the people who are in there, how we get that information.

So we're not pigeonholing it by saying here's the process that we're proposing, because we know there's going to be a diverse session of views on how this can be done. I'd like to be able to learn from what the Minister of Justice did on the summit and the processes there, and maybe the Minister of Education's staff could look at that.

We have full faith in the Premier's task force on education. As I mentioned one time in the House here, I've worked with some of those people and I know them to be very diligent, very professional, and very knowledgeable about education and very committed to the education focus in this province. So there's no doubt that information will come.

A task force is a little bit more encompassing in the sense that the time frames are a little bit different and their recommendations. What we're asking for here is a stakeholder summit and that could, obviously, still help drive some of the recommendations that the task force themselves do.

I know the task force held 10 consultations and know they were in normally urban areas. Because of the geographic here, we know there are some challenges. I know the time frames, it was mid-winter. From the people I've talked to, some of the agencies, they didn't get an opportunity, they weren't aware of it and we know all those challenges. That's not a blame to anybody; it's a reality of the province we live in. It wouldn't make any difference if it was the Premier's task force on education to something else we were doing. The information, the time frames to get out to everybody and the ability for them to be able to have feedback sometimes becomes challenging.

I'm glad to say the last week, because of my connection with some organizations – and I encouraged them to get the message out to their respective individuals or partnering agencies to respond back to the task force, particularly about inclusive education. As the task force will attest to, I suspect they got 40 to 45 either letters or actual presentations, written presentations, sent to them from people who outlined concerns around inclusive education. Included in that, I know were some administrators and some educators.

I was glad to do that because it was privilege for me to have them cc me on it so I could get the read. When I talk about not knowing things, what a way to get to know things when you admit you don't know a lot about it because your mind is open to exactly what's happening.

In this case, sometimes it was heart wrenching to feel the frustration of a parent, of a kid, but just as much so of a teacher, of an administrator in the school, not being able to deal with actually moving inclusive education to the level they wanted to, knowing that there are challenges there, and having little control over what they could do with it because of limited resources. It could be a space issue. It could be a training issue that was necessary. It could be a counselling issue that was necessary.

Again, it's been said to me by a number of groups and individuals, including the NLTA, that sometimes it's about how we change. It's not always about putting more resources. We know that's an important part, and I'll talk to that in my second part about some of the information that's come back to us about what's needed, but the first stages is to have the dialogue about what can be done. Groups like the NLTA and the school council association, they deal with it on a day-to-day basis. Quick things, quick recommendations they could make, little tweaking to what we do and a new approach to it, a way we distribute information can be positive ways of first addressing some of the challenge we have.

There's no doubt there's a multitude. We'll have to find the ones we can tick off and move very quickly, because immediately they can be responded to. Then there are bigger ones that we have to look at how we partner in other ways,

how we support them through human supports, through structural supports, to particular types of new innovative training.

The other thing that I noticed as we were doing a jurisdictional scan, this is not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador. It's unfortunate that other jurisdictions, even more affluent ones with less geographic challenges and population density issues face these challenges also, but there are some jurisdictions that have changed their approach on it.

There are some that have resourced it in a different manner that it didn't become a burden from a financial point of view, from the taxpayers' money. It became an investment in not only the education system but in good productive citizens, because everything that's done at the primary and secondary level has an impact on our post-secondary. What happens at our post-secondary has an impact on the job market, and the impact on the job market has an impact on those productive citizens who pay taxes so we have money to be able to support the services that people expect.

The process here starts from early childhood development right into our school system and beyond that. What we need to do is find the common ground, and the common ground is having a summit where we all sit down, we have that discussion, we note exactly what we have, what we don't have, what are the challenges, where it is we are, where it is we want to go and how we find the best ways to get there.

So we're going to have a good open dialogue. I'm looking forward to the responses from the Third Party and, particularly, the government party also around how they feel this would be a positive thing. If they have any suggestions, we're more than open to take those.

Mr. Speaker, I do look forward to the response from all in this House and I do look forward to the last 15 minutes being able to conclude.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville – Port au Port.

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

It's certainly great to take my place today and speak to the private Member's motion that's brought in by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island.

Just to state for the record, I'll give a quick preamble, if you will, of the motion as he has read it into the record. Essentially, today we're talking about education and early childhood development.

The motion reads: "BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to convene a public summit in 2017 to discuss the challenges of inclusive education" It goes on to list a number of organizations, groups and individuals that the Opposition feels should be invited to such a summit.

I'm very pleased to stand here and speak to education today. In fact, I think across the 40 Members in the Legislature, I'm as close as you can get to a recent high school graduate, with exception for the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue and, of course, the Minister of Tourism in front of me, just a few years my junior.

Every time we talk about education in the Legislature, I certainly enjoy getting up and speaking to it. I spoke to a couple of pieces of legislation we brought in last year, brought in by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour with respect to the *Schools Act* and the *Student Services Financial Assistance Act*, and as well as legislation brought in by the Minister of Education as well around the school board election process.

Both my parents were educators, Mr. Speaker. They devoted their life to education in the post-secondary system. My father served on the school board on the West Coast of Newfoundland for a number of years.

The school system seen many challenges and changes over the years, and I can speak from direct experience. When I was in the school system we had the denominational system, and when I approached grade 10 in 1999 we seen the transition to the non-denominational school

system. With that change, there were certainly a number of things that happened in the school system at the time. Of course, as years go on and generations change, our millennials grow up and we move into newer kids coming up through the school system, obviously a number of changes.

One thing I was very proud of in my time in school to have the opportunity, I sat as a student body representative. I actually sat on the school council with administrators and school board officials as a student representative. So it's certainly something that is near and dear to my heart. I spent the last number of years volunteering in the school system as well.

In fact, when it comes to inclusive education and we look at a safe environment, the current principal for Stephenville High, Mr. Vern Lewis, a good friend of mine, when I was graduating high school he was a brand new teacher in the system. One of the first things he did in his first year as a school teacher was bring in a committee called the safe and orderly environment committee, and that was in 2001. What he set about to achieve was essentially what we're talking about here today.

Inclusive education; what is inclusive education? Certainly, we're talking about the right of all students to attend a school with their peers and to receive appropriate and quality programming. We're talking about a welcoming school culture where all members of the school feel they belong. We're talking about an atmosphere which respects values and participation of all members of the school community. The move towards inclusive education involves a refocusing of the way individuals perceive the learning environment. We have to have inclusive education because if we value some people more than others, that would be completely unethical, Mr. Speaker.

So when we talk about inclusive education – in fact, the inclusive education system began under the PC administration. It was rolled out in 2009. At the time, there were 30 schools that were going to embark as the pilot project for inclusive education. There was a phase and approach adopted and there was somewhere between about 27 to 42 new schools joining each year right up until this current June, Mr. Speaker.

The intention was that from 2009 rolling right up to this current school year, representatives from all the public schools would receive training in inclusive education practices. Right now, we have over 260 schools involved in inclusive education. I guess what's interesting to note and what we heard from administrators then – and some of this was from recommendations from the report on Pathways and the ISSP commission – is that there was very little consultation done at the time when we looked at inclusive education. There was very little consultation done with front-line administrators and also some of the recommendations from the reports that were commissioned back then have still not been implemented.

Just for the record, again it was brought in under the former administration. When I say that, I kind of hesitate for a second. I'm just thinking here it was brought in in 2009. We have three members that represent the PCs opposite that have been sitting there since 2007. The year right now is 2017. So we have three members over there now that have been there for 10 years and we're talking about hosting a summit on education. I can't say they've all been over there since the PC administration of 2003, but we have Members there that have been there 10 years.

The critic for Education, the Member for Conception Bay – Bell Island, has brought this in today. I understand he's had the ability to sit in Legislature for some seven years. So I find it quite interesting that this is coming in today, when we had all that time under the former administration to get there.

Under the former administration, Mr. Speaker, there were some budget cuts with respect to education. They've been referenced here in this House; 2013 seen a significant number of cuts. In 2013, we had a 142 positions removed from education – 142 positions were removed from the education system. These were made in areas such as administration, learning, resources support and district-based numeracy supports. Some of these reductions were to do specifically for meeting needs of children, with exceptionalities and who required inclusive education.

The measures resulted in about 142 fewer positions, and then there was a further 18 positions that were reduced as a result of declined enrolment. In addition in that year, I might add, in the same budget, the community and schools program, which I'm pleased to say that was my understanding – and if someone in the Legislature wants to correct me if I'm wrong – was actually developed in the Stephenville region. The community and schools program was an initiative to essentially bring communities back to the school system. So what it would do is it would provide opportunities for after school-based learning activities. It was founded by the Community Education Network, which I had the great opportunity to spend eight years working with prior to being elected here in this House of Assembly.

The Community Education Network was an initiative founded specifically due to high school dropout rates in the early '90s. The community and schools program, while it started on the West Coast of Newfoundland, sometimes successes are better kept secrets, because what happened, it tried to balloon and roll out across the province in the various other schools, and other schools caught wind of this great program and they wanted it. Well, as a result of the budget cuts in 2013, that program went by the wayside.

I'd like to just read – I'm going to go back to the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. I'll get right back on topic; he did mention post-secondary education. I do note that in my 15 minutes here I'll get back to that. This was from the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island in 2013.

Direct quote: “Mr. Speaker, I have to note when you look at putting a Budget in place and running a government, you have to be fiscally responsible. That is one thing we definitely are ... Do we want to run further deficits? Do we want to borrow? Do we want to jeopardize our bond rating where we are paying interest out to international companies that could be better used for health care, for education, and for helping people who have specific needs?”

I'll give you some of the context; I'll come back to the direct quote: “You have to make sure by the next election, whatever Administration is in

there, that they inherit something that is workable.”

I kind of hear myself echo. I spoke this morning with respect to the Speech from the Throne and we spoke specifically and I referenced specifically about working with what we had left. What we had left when we inherited office, as we all know, was a \$2.2 billion deficit for last year alone. At a time when the PC administration had more in 2013, they had more than we ever would have had, they did less and there were cuts to education.

Leaving on that note, I'm going to talk about some of the things we have done and some of the things we're doing right now. The Premier's task force on education, as alluded to by the Member, certainly is a great initiative and he said that it's a great initiative. This was a commitment that was met and that was kept by our government.

One of the things noted in Phase 2 of *The Way Forward* are despite the past 10 years of increasing education costs in the K-12 and the post-secondary system, we've seen increases in the last 10 years of spending to the tune of \$425 million. That's an increase of 48 per cent over 10 years, but, despite that, many of our indicators and educational outcomes are still well below the national average. So we're in a position now where we cannot continue to fund the status quo and we have to look at doing things differently.

There are some other initiatives – and I'll get to them in a moment – with respect to the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, which I was very proud to have served as a member. With respect to the task force, I was very pleased to have met the task force. The task force actually came out to my hometown of Stephenville and met with administrators at Stephenville High. I took in the evening community session and I further had an opportunity to meet with the Premier's task force on education when they met with the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and we saw them here just last week at the release of that report.

Dr. Alice Collins, Dr. Marian Fushell, Dr. David Philpott and Dr. Margaret Wakeham – phenomenal individuals, very educated; they

brought a wealth of experience in their backgrounds as educators. When they came to Stephenville High, one of the comments made to me by the administrator was: We finally have someone come out to listen to us. They said it's been years and years since anyone actually came out to hear our concerns.

I had teachers come up to me in the grocery store and I had students who partook in the sessions on the Premier's task force on education and they were just over the moon that they had the opportunity to voice their concerns where it mattered. When we talk about some of the things that we're doing, we are certainly keeping that commitment with the Premier's task force on education.

I also want to point out that we saw increases for student assistants over the last number of years and, as part of the increase, we had \$500,000, half a million dollars, that was provided to student assistants in last year's budget. In *Budget 2016* there were 27 teaching units that were scheduled to come out of the system. Due to declining enrolment, these 27 positions were due to come out of the system. Instead of doing that, Mr. Speaker, we directed them to be used to support inclusion in the school system. These are 27 positions that we were going to phase out due to declining enrolment across the province and we filtered them right back in. We saw the need there.

As a result, there were no reductions in the allocation in last year's budget of educational psychologists, speech language pathologists, itinerant teachers for autism, itinerants for safe and caring schools and inclusive education, teachers of students with English as a second language, itinerant teachers for the deaf and hard of hearing and blind and visually impaired – no cuts in budget 2016-2017.

I'm going to wrap up with the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. There are a number of recommendations in there that I'll direct the Member opposite to have a look at. These are things that most reports sometimes, people and critics and whether it's the public or Members opposite or even folks here in the House, you'll point to the report and you'll say well, that's just recommendations;

there's no meat to that. How is that going to come into effect?

The All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions report has some accountability measures in place, the likes of which I've never seen in former reports by the former administration. In addition, we're ensuring the Minister of Health and Community Services must report publicly on the implementation of the reports and recommendations. We're also giving the mandate to the Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council to issue oversight for that report.

In that report, there are a number of recommendations. And recommendations in the mental health report were in no particular order. Recommendation 3: "Create regional interdisciplinary teams, reporting to the regional health authorities, to provide timely mental health and addictions assessment and treatment for students in schools" specific to the education system.

There's another recommendation on the Premier's task force, certainly giving them the mandate to look at the resources in the school system. Eliminate the stigma and discrimination in the school system by providing contact-based education programs. We're talking about people with experience sharing stories in the school system.

When we talk about post-secondary education, and the Member opposite mentioned post-secondary education, one of the recommendations in the all-party mental health committee report: "Increase the number of physicians and nurse practitioners involved in addictions medicines by: Encouraging Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine to create a Clinical Program Director of Addictions Medicine within the Discipline of Family Practice" So we're looking at encouraging our post-secondary education at MUN and the Faculty of Medicine there to look at mental health and addictions. We all know that if it stems at that level, it will certainly trickle down.

There's also a recommendation, Mr. Speaker, with respect to specialized training for school-based psychologists, teachers, counsellors and social workers who work specifically with the

LGBTQ2S community – specific training in there as well.

So there are a number of initiatives we've laid out. They are specifically referenced *The Way Forward*; even further so in the All-Party Committee on Mental Health in their list of recommendations there. It is a great honour to speak to education, I'd love to see the debate unfold and I certainly look forward to hearing from the Minister of Education for the afternoon as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. PERRY: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure what to think of what I just heard, but I'm detecting there possibly isn't going to be support for this motion from Members opposite. That remains to be seen, of course, but that would certainly be very disappointing, because as a veteran of this House of Assembly with 10 years' experience and quite proud to still be here and to have represented my constituents such that I am still here, Mr. Speaker, and represented the wishes they wanted here in the House.

MR. K. PARSONS: And represented them well.

MS. PERRY: And represented them well. Well, thank you kindly, to my hon. colleague.

I will say we have to always be vigilant of issues that are of current concern. I don't know where the Member opposite was over the course of the last few weeks when we have seen a number of concerns raised across this entire province by our educators, by our parents and by our children regarding inclusive education. The issue is very current and very much needs attention, Mr. Speaker. We, as Members opposite, will ensure that we hold government accountable to the issues of the day.

It is important to speak on a resolution that addresses an issue –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MS. PERRY: – that tens of thousands of people across this province are talking about. Teachers, parents, students, they're all talking about it. They're sometimes concerned that the right people aren't listening, and after what I just heard for 10 minutes I share their concern.

How high does this rank as an issue of concern for our government? How high does it rank as an issue of concern for all of us living here in this province, Mr. Speaker? I'm trying to think of a matter of public policy that is more important than the effective education of our children and, boy, it's hard. It's hard to figure that there's anything more important.

Many issues are very important, all issues we face certainly are important, but if you were going to say something's more important – well, look at health care. Could it be health care? Well, this is what I'll say to that. The people of our society who rely most heavily on health care are seniors, people who have retired, and to finance that care you need a healthy economy driven by a well-educated workforce. A strong health care system requires a strong education system to support it.

What other areas of public policy could trump education in importance? Poverty reduction? Well, the best means of escaping poverty is a strong education. That's why we go out of our way to ensure that children raised in families with limited means are not hindered in any way from getting a solid education. You can say, well, what about natural resources development and stimulating economic growth? Could they be more important than education? Well, to that I would say no, because your economy is not strong if a large segment of your population lacks the educational foundation to participate. Your economy will not be as productive or as competitive as it needs to be. That's why countries around the world are investing so strongly in education, to change their economic circumstances and the quality of life for their people for the better.

If you find an economy that is on the rise from poverty to success, you will discover that their

strategy began with investments in education. Even the critical public policy areas of justice and public safety hinge on education because so many of those who end up committing crimes and reoffending are missing the element of a strong educational foundation.

I believe, therefore, it can reasonably be argued that no area of public policy is more important than education because education is the foundation for everything else. But, because it's so broad, the topic of educational outcomes is challenging to talk about. There's so much to be said. You can't just talk about everything in a broad way at a tree-top level; you also have to dive into the branches and focus on certain particular areas that need attention.

The province's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes is something we support. Improving educational outcomes is the mandate of every single administration. Every government has an obligation to focus on doing better. We, as a government, certainly did, as did those before us and those who will follow you.

We laid out similar goals in our most recent Blue Book. We said we will continue our efforts to make Newfoundland and Labrador a national leader in education in terms of curriculum, access, outcomes and support. We will continue to focus on improved performance in math, science, computing, technology and language arts. We will identify best practices nationally and globally and enable teachers to bring those advances to our own classrooms.

We will deliver more guidance and counselling resources to students. We will collaborate with teachers, professional associations, business groups and labour unions, post-secondary educators and others in the development of modern, accurate, career planning curriculum and resources. We will continue to invest in state-of-art schools, classrooms, laboratories, and technological resources in distance education in rural and remote communities and in new curriculum, new technologies, skilled trades programming and more.

It's a continual process of finding ways to do better, collaboratively. You don't just stop, Mr. Speaker, because you tried it once. You continue to work at improving to make it better. Every

government has to engage in it, even if others have addressed it because if you're not continually advancing, you're losing grounds to jurisdictions that are moving forward.

We have great expectations for the recommendations of the task force, because the educators running it are very good at what they do. But we have noticed that during the process, there are so many educational issues on the table that some areas that need particular focus are competing for attention. When the focus is on academic performance, academic standards and testing, academic curriculum, teacher training, technological resources and the long, long list of other issues impacting outcomes, some issues may be out of the spotlight.

My hon. colleague for Bell Island has brought this motion to the floor today because one of those issues is inclusive education. You can hardly find a more sensitive topic. Some people only whisper about it in public but, privately, many people have a great deal to say. For years, students who pose challenges for educators for one reason or another were segregated.

Segregation severely impacted the lives of many people in profound ways. Many with tremendous potential were denied the opportunity to fulfill it and left socially unfulfilled as well. Segregation diminishes all of us. It denies us the full contributions of many of our fellow citizens. It leads to unhealthy attitudes about who is better and who is worth less than others.

We need to promote empathy and interaction by building bridges, not walls. But not every bridge is well constructed. To use an analogy, in September 2006, the De la Concorde overpass in Laval, Quebec collapsed, killing five people and seriously injuring another six. The reason: Poor construction not designed to handle the load.

When the pressure became too great, it simply gave out, and the consequences were tragic. That bridge is a fitting analogy for the way bridges to inclusion are being built in our schools. If any bridge cannot handle the load, it will fail and the results will be tragic.

Our Education Minister has studied with and worked beside some of the best educators in

Canada and he certainly ought to know where the stresses are in education and where the needs are in this province, Mr. Speaker. It is better to gather people and get them speaking openly about change, if you want real change to happen. Shutting down any avenue of discourse is going to suppress the drive for change. Clearly our education system, which I would argue is the most important area of public policy, is in need of change.

The problem with the bridge of inclusive education, the way it is now, is that it's a bridge built largely on the teachers' backs. It's not enough to combine classes, add minimal resources and tell teachers to simply deal with it; yet, in many cases that has happened. You do not build bridges of empathy among students when they start blaming their disruptive peers for their own failure to learn and excel at school. If anything, this will drive resentment rather than empathy and harmony among peers. If some students in the classroom have special needs, then all the resources needed to attend to those needs must be provided so that no students are compromised, not them and not their peers.

Teachers have been long celebrated as superheroes, delivering stellar education in the classroom with limited resources by dipping into their own pockets. Mr. Speaker, I marvel, I continue to see that today. I have family and friends who are educators. My father, actually, was a principal of a school for over 35 years. He used to buy things from his own pocket for school, and I still see my friends today using their own money to buy resources for the classroom and it baffles me.

Teachers can't solve all the challenges by dipping into their own pockets. It's impossible. All the challenges won't be solved that way. When the teacher cannot focus on teaching, when students cannot focus on learning, then a few extra dollars from a teacher's pocket aren't going to solve the problem. What's needed is a creative way of achieving goals that are sometimes incompatible, the goals of integrating students instead of segregating them, and of ensuring that all students have the benefit of school environments that are conducive to learning and excelling. Some people have been afraid to raise the issue because they do not want to be labelled as politically incorrect, or

insensitive or challenging integration, but I do applaud people for being concerned about the feelings of others.

If there are real problems that are impacting learning – and there are – then we can't ignore them for fear of offending someone. When we deal with them we have to do so respectfully and empathetically, but we do need to deal with them. That starts with focusing on this major issue and talking about it.

What better way to do that than at a public summit dedicated to the issue of inclusion, where all the problems, all the potential solutions, all the reasons and counter reasons, and novel approaches are considered openly. Our work will complement the work of the task force. The education of our children is too important to all of us to let major problems go unresolved while children suffer.

I look forward to a unanimous vote of support for this resolution, because I would be totally baffled for any kind of a justification not to have a summit, Mr. Speaker, on this very important issue affecting our future, our children of today who are the leaders of tomorrow. So let's not lose the opportunity that a summit of this nature and the conversations and solutions it can bring. Let's put the education of our young people first where it belongs. Let's not vote along party lines today, let's vote in support of a summit for inclusive education for our children and improve the future for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure for me to rise again. It feels like I only – it's not very often I get two opportunities to stand and speak in the House in any one day, especially with our new sort of rules governing sessions and so on. So I'm really happy to have an opportunity to speak again and I won't go back to a lot of the things I had to say earlier

today because we did sort of talk a little bit about education and inclusive education this morning.

As I said this morning, I've really had a great opportunity to visit a lot of schools. I visited about three dozen since the New Year. I have to say, every time I go to a school and I speak to an administrator, I speak to a teacher, speak to other school staff, the issue of inclusion inevitably comes up. There's a certain amount of irony in what's being proposed here and especially who's proposing this here in the House of Assembly today, because in the 12 years that the previous administration was in office there was never any mention of such a summit.

In fact, in 2007 there was an ISSP & Pathways Commission struck by the previous administration. When I sat in Opposition as the Education critic, I repeatedly stood on my feet and raised the issue that the report of the ISSP & Pathways Commission was – well, a lot of it was never ever acted upon by the previous administration. Their practice was to produce reports, put it on the shelf and see how much dust it could collect.

The ISSP & Pathways Commission recommended public disclosure of assessment and wait-list information; guidelines for ethical assessment practices; procedures to address the needs of all at-risk students; an appeals process for families; meeting the needs of exceptionally able learners, gifted learners; expanding the role of student assistants into teacher assistant roles like they have in lots of other jurisdictions in Canada – it works quite well; introducing the idea of special education department heads in schools; and on and on and on.

The answer: Instead of acting on their own commission report, in 2009 the previous administration forged ahead with the inclusive education model we have now, after consulting with themselves – because they certainly didn't consult with educators about sort of how much sense it would have made to go down the road that they did. So they basically forced this new inclusive education model that was not recommended by the Pathways and ISSP commission. They forced this onto the system without consulting with educators, without

consulting with experts, did not provide the resources that were needed, and so we end up in the situation that we're in now.

And again, not an issue raised by the Pathways and ISSP commission, just something that they came up with and forced onto the system. I have a quote here – because there was a revolving door right here of Ministers of Education over the last term they were in office. We repeatedly asked them about the inclusive education model and all we got up until 2015 were just excuses – excuses, excuses, excuses.

One day I asked the then Minister of Education about this whole business, all the problems that we have with inclusive education in our schools, and he says, "Mr. Speaker, we are as good as and better than many provinces in this country."

They spent their time justifying that model in the dying days of their final term of office, making excuse after excuse after excuse. Now they want to have a summit. Well, the Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes was put in place last fall. They did consultations in January and February and March. In fact, the final consultations, as I understand it, took place just earlier this week. That's three months of consultations.

On top of that, the NLTA had its own panel that went across the province prior to that, exhaustively consulting with people. The public were invited to participate in the process of consultation with the task force. Inclusive education was a key element in the mandate that they were given by government. They have folks on that task force whose specific area of expertise is inclusive education and instruction – the needs of students with special needs.

There were consultations with just teachers and the task force. There were consultations with students. There were public consultations in a number of communities. The Member said something – I made a note of it here – to the effect of there were people who could not participate because they were in rural areas, and this task force only went to urban areas. What he said is absolutely contrary to what has happened and just ended recently.

For one, there were three surveys online that people could complete for teachers, for students, for parents. That was there up until the 20th of March. People were able to submit online submissions, to email them or whatever. Online submissions were actually provided by the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation for teachers and students and parents in rural communities, allowing everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador to participate, if they wanted to.

I understand people have jobs, lives, kids, mortgages, responsibilities, work. Occasionally, things happen and the people don't find out about it until after the fact. If the Member knows any of those people, I'm sure the task force would be happy to hear from them. We can still accept submissions from people if there is some reason why, some extenuating circumstance why they couldn't participate.

There were stakeholder groups. There were representatives of the NLTA at a number of the different public sessions. Again, teachers were consulted with, specifically, in sessions. Both school boards were consulted, the staff, the trustees of both school boards – I know that the task force met with the trustees.

Memorial University of Newfoundland, the Faculty of Education, they were consulted with; College of the North Atlantic; the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils; the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate; the Child and Youth Advocate; Choices for Youth; Thrive; the Association for New Canadians. They invited participation from indigenous groups in the province. As I understand it, Nunatsiavut, NunatuKavut, the Qalipu Band on the West Coast, all of those groups had an opportunity to provide feedback and on and on and on.

The Member wants – now he wants a summit on top of that. We just had three months' worth of summits. Now he wants to go back again consulting, and I'm not sure what – it's not clear, because it wasn't really clear what the Member had to say. He said that he proposed this because he heard somebody else propose it, more or less.

I can tell you from just going into the schools that I went into in Lab West last week – last week I had the privilege of going to Lab City and Wabush and going to all four schools in that area, and I can assure you now that the teachers I spoke to there don't want to wait for a summit for these issues to be addressed. They have been waiting since this model was foisted onto the education system in 2009 with consultation with nobody other than themselves. They have been waiting for action since then.

I'll tell you another thing. I have not run into a parent who has said to me: oh, let's have more talk. Let's have more talk now because we haven't had enough.

I'll draw Members' attention because the task force on improving educational outcomes met with the all-party committee on improving mental health and addictions and they made a number of recommendations that sort of intersect. If you look at the report, in the early pages of the report of the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, they say, and I quote: "Although the perspectives shared with us were often unique, the common message we heard was that having the conversation is not enough. Action is needed now in order to better meet the needs of the people in the province." Action! People don't want more talk, people want action. This all-party committee wants action.

We can sit around here and cast blame all we want, but in the end we have to clean up the variety of messes that we have inherited. Prior to the last election, the Premier said if he was to form government in 2015 we would have a task force on improving educational outcomes. The chair of the task force, a former Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Alice Collins, has said this is a once-in-a-decade opportunity.

The task force was specifically mandated to look at the issue of inclusive education and what has gone wrong, because we heard in Opposition continually that it was not working for a vast number of parents, teachers and students. We heard that a lot. I would be a liar, Mr. Speaker, if I stood here and said I think everything is working properly and as it should. I am not going to say that because it is not.

There are immense challenges with inclusive education in our schools. I have seen it. I won't describe it. I have seen it first-hand in a variety of schools. It's not on the Avalon, it's not in Central, it's not on the West Coast, it's not on the East Coast, it's not in Labrador, we have problems throughout the system.

Had the previous administration implemented, stayed true to the recommendations of the ISSP & Pathways Commission, I would not be standing here today. We would not have the problems today that have initiated this discussion because the previous administration did not hold true to that.

Just, for example, one suggestion, expanding the role of student assistants to something broader like teacher assistants. In the UK they call them teacher's aides. In other provinces they call them educational assistants. That's something that could have had serious impact to the good on the system. It stayed on the shelf. They didn't want to act on it.

Now we have a task force with experts who have had comprehensive, three months' worth of consultations with parents, with teachers, with students all across the province and now the Member wants, sometime in 2017, to have more summits and more consultation. The time for talk is over. Our kids cannot wait for more talk.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. KIRBY: We will get the report. If teachers wanted to participate in this, they have had an opportunity. If parents wanted to participate in this, they have an opportunity. There are a lot of folks out there who have a lot to say about this.

We will have the report in a few months – a short time, I hope. We will have an inter-jurisdictional review. It will summarize what is not working here. It will make recommendations about what we need to do to fix the issues we have in our schools. Then the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will operationalize those recommendations in the form of an education action plan, and for September 2018 we will make the changes that need to be changed.

Now, that's not news to anyone because we have been saying from day one that this is what we would do. We are going to do it. The time for talk is finished. The crowd across the way can continue to talk all they want. Our kids are relying on us to act, and act we will, Mr. Speaker.

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 am glad to stand this afternoon and get an opportunity to speak to the main issue that is the focus of the private Member's resolution today. It's not the public summit, I would suggest. I think the main issue is the issue of the challenges of inclusive education.

The minister made reference to the task force. One of the things that became quite obvious as the task force on educational outcomes did its work, and that was one of the most major issues in our educational system right now is the issue of the fact that our inclusive education model is not working.

We all agree with inclusive education; we all want inclusive education. We want all children to be able to perform to their maximum; therefore, we want classrooms that are going to work, instructional areas that are going to work so that all children can meet their maximum. That's what inclusive education is all about.

I remember as I was preparing, I did present to the task force. I remember as I was preparing for that I did reading of some of the presentations that had already been made to the task force and I read some other reports, et cetera, with regard to inclusive education. There was one person; a teacher who pointed out that there needs to be a plan for every child in the classroom. Not one or two children, not children that are exceptional in different ways, because exceptionalities can be children who have difficulty when it comes to learning; an exceptionality can also be a child who is a genius. These are all exceptionalities.

The position of one of the presentations that I read was that as an educator this teacher believed that you have to have a plan for every child. Then on a regular basis that plan, which parents are also involved in, has to be checked out, has to be looked at. Is it progressing the way it should, et cetera?

What we're talking about when we're talking about inclusive education is something that is comprehensive and it's something that requires all kinds of resources in order to make it work. This has been the major problem with our system here in Newfoundland and Labrador, is that from day one the adequate resources have not been put in.

Now, do we need a summit to sit down and talk about that? That's not what I would see the summit doing. Because of all the work that has been done over the past 10 or so years, because of all the reports that have been done, because of the work that was done by the NLTA last year, because of the task force, I think what a summit could do by bringing together all the various groups that are referred to in the private Member's resolution, what a summit could do would be really give the impetus to putting a plan in place.

You're going to get recommendations from the task force. We have recommendations from several reports, as have been referred to by the minister, but what we need now, and I absolutely agree, is action and we need a plan. Now, the government that we have right now – and I'm not sure they're much different from the other one to be quite honest, even though I'm supporting my colleague's resolution here.

The government is proving itself not to be very good at plans, at making plans. We had a so-called plan presented to us last Friday when we were briefed, an immigration policy, a plan, a strategy. I can't find any action in it. I cannot find any action.

Today, we had the Minister of Health and Community Services stand and talk about the plan they have for a health care system. When I asked, well, give us the details. There was no plan; there was no action. So what a summit could do could be very effective in making sure

that a plan is put in place to deal with the issue of inclusive education.

One of the reasons I presented to the task force was because of so many phone calls that I continually get from parents with regard to how their children's needs aren't being met. I have had phone calls from parents whose children are exceptionally bright. I've had phone calls and other communications from parents whose children are on the autism spectrum. I particularly get contacted by people who have children who are either deaf or have some form of hearing loss, if not total.

These contacts are ongoing all the time. They point out how we are not dealing well with inclusive education. One of the things that got pointed out in the hearing that I attended of the task force was the way in which inclusive education was not helping either the children who may have difficulties with learning, or who may have exceptionalities, physical or otherwise, nor the children who didn't have anything that stands out, that it wasn't working for anybody.

We have teachers who are stressed out, we have a system that doesn't have the resources that it needs, so we do need a plan – we absolutely do. But I want to point out how bad it is and how this government is doing planning, which is planning in silos. For example, we can't talk about services being delivered in education without referring to the budget – it's impossible. But one would think, looking at some of the examples I have, that the Minister of Finance doesn't speak to the other ministers about the impact of the budget that she brings forward.

I'm going to use a really concrete example – an example of the letter I got yesterday actually, Tuesday, March 28. It's from a parent and she has told me I can use the information. She wants to be sure that if she were identified, to say how wonderful the work of the child's teacher is, how wonderful the work of the itinerant teacher is and how wonderful the principal is, but the restraints that they're working under.

Her daughter is seven years old; she's in grade two. She has bilateral, severe, profound sloping hearing loss and relies on an FM system in the classroom. This hearing loss can progress. After

another recent progression in her hearing loss, the Janeway recommended a change in hearing aids in order to hopefully improve and optimize her access to speech sounds which she was missing.

These aids were changed in December '16, but things have not been working well for her and it's mainly because she hasn't had a reliable FM system since December. Now, she's in school, she's in class – this is three months ago. So since December, she has not had a reliable FM system.

She's been tested by an audiologist and the recommendation was made on March 9 and it was made by the Janeway that a new FM system be ordered for her daughter. Now, here's the crunch – and I mean, this is something that I can't believe I'm standing in our province in the year of 2017 having to say this. She needs this FM system to be able to hear clearly. She's missing all kinds of instruction in the classroom and they've been told that the FM system cannot be ordered until after April 1 because there's no money in the budget for that child's FM system. This is unbelievable. That is what this parent has been told. That's what this family has been told.

I just can't believe it. I just cannot believe it. She said it's almost April now and it will soon be ordered, but it will have been more than three weeks since the recommendation and it's going to take weeks before it arrives. This is what's happening in our province, Mr. Speaker.

So a summit which brings everybody into the same room and to say how do we put a plan in place based on what the task force has heard – I have no doubt that the task force is as upset as I am about this. But there are things going on that aren't coming out in different places. A summit would cause it to come out.

Another example has to do with the new protocol that I'm told is in place, put in place by the school district, the English school district and the new protocol, a protocol for dealing with a child who becomes exceptionally aggressive and hard to deal with. The protocol now is that the teacher, principal, whatever, the school, call 911. Now, we know what you get when you call 911, and what they're going to get is not an ambulance coming because they're not equipped

to deal with a child who is being violent. What they are going to get is police, RNC. I've had it reported to me that last week a school in my own district, a boy in grade five, it was the RNC that came.

This is unbelievable, but this stuff is not being heard, and that's what a summit would do. Put everybody in the room together, leaders in all of the areas that are being talked about here, and really plan how this stuff can end. What the government has to deal with – the first case I talked about – is a budgetary issue.

So we have a major problem. If we're not going to be able to increase the resources going in to our educational system, then we're not going to have a safe, inclusive education system. I mean, that's the bottom line. We didn't need the task force to tell us that. I think many of us knew that. I've been hearing it ever since the inclusive education model came in: the inadequate number of itinerant teachers; inadequate number of teaching assistants; teachers being overloaded; one teacher having to be responsible for three children who have special needs and the complications of that. If one of those children has to leave the classroom and that teacher, the assistant, goes with that child, then the main teacher in the classroom is left with the two children with special needs, plus everybody else.

So what's going on is not acceptable. I think the summit can cause an action to be put in place. I think a summit is a good thing to happen. A summit that has the Cabinet in that room, that has the minister in that room. A summit that has the Opposition Members in that room. A summit where we're really faced together, okay, what is it that's absolutely needed? And a summit that has the Minister of Finance in the room. Because whether the Minister of Finance likes it or lumps it, this cannot happen – we cannot make the model of inclusive education work without more resources and more resources means more money. That's the bottom line.

So I will be supporting this resolution. It sounds like the Minister of Education isn't going to be – although he didn't say, so we'll have to wait until he stands and we find out what he's doing, until he votes and finds out what he's doing. But I think it would be good for the government not

just to take the task force report on their own, but take the task force report and put it in the context of the kind of summit that's outlined here.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly an honour to rise today in this hon. House to address the resolution put forth by the Member for Conception Bay East – Bell Island. Before I begin discussing education, I wanted to make a special mention of Kaetlyn Osmond who is now in second place in world stage figure skating. She did a great short program this morning, which I hope Members took the opportunity to view, and she'll be doing the long program. We wish her all the best. We wish her all the best.

I also want to say a special Happy Birthday to the mother of the Member for Burin – Grand Bank, who I am told is celebrating her 74th birthday today. So certainly, I'll get those two things out of the way, Madam Speaker.

It's certainly an honour now to address the resolution at hand. I have great respect, Madam Speaker, for the teachers or our province, as I'm sure all Members here do. I recently had the opportunity to visit a number of schools in my district. In fact, I visited one in the Member's district as well, Beachy Cove. I had a fantastic trip to Beachy Cove. I read to the French immersion kindergarten class for the Francophonie Day and it was wonderful. They have a lot of great things going on there at Beachy Cove and, indeed, in many of my own schools.

I recently had the opportunity to visit Holy Family in Chapel Arm where the Masons held an event promoting peace and tolerance and love and friendship for one another, Madam Speaker.

I also had the opportunity during Education Week to visit the grade one French immersion class of Sacred Heart Academy in Marystown; a

great school, my alma mater, Madam Speaker. It was wonderful to be there to read to that class as part of Education Week. I also had the opportunity to visit a number of other schools, including Swift Current Academy recently to deliver some mental health funding from the Department of Health and Community Services.

Madam Speaker, I preference my comments with those remarks to say that we all have such a profound respect for teachers and the work they do and the challenging circumstances under which they work. There is no doubt that there are challenges in our school system. I think we see that.

The Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development was on the Burin Peninsula last year and met with a number of parents and school councils and teachers while he was there. I have to say the visit was very well-received because there's nothing more important, Madam Speaker, than listening, and listening to the concerns that are out there which is why I would be so inclined to support the resolution at hand if it weren't already taking place through the Premier's task force on education.

Just to give some background to Members, re the Premier's task force on education, it was appointed on November 8 of last year. It was launched by the Minister of Education at the Premier's direction through his mandate letter.

I'd also like to point out, we hear the Leader of the Official Opposition often getting up talking about lack of a plan and a wish book, pixie dust and a lack of commitment to the promises that were made, but I would remind all hon. Members that in the minister's mandate letter it set out a direction to form the Premier's Task Force on improving Educational Outcomes, and that's been delivered, Madam Speaker. That has been delivered and is in motion right now in this province. They have criss-crossed the province. They have been through my district. They've been through many other districts, and they're hearing from parents, they're hearing from teachers, they're hearing from students in fact.

As someone who didn't come out of the school system all that long ago, I value the fact that they're going and sitting down with students to hear their concerns and perspectives as well,

Madam Speaker, because that's tremendously important as well. This is a commitment made and a commitment delivered.

Also, another commitment made and commitment delivered was within one year of the minister's appointment to have school board elections. Which is something the former administration failed to do for years and years and years, to have unelected trustees running the affairs of the school board here in the province. So I will certainly commend the minister and this government for ensuring –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MADAM SPEAKER (Dempster): Order, please!

MR. BROWNE: – that these commitments that were made, Madam Speaker, have been delivered and acted upon.

Back to the Premier's Task Force on improving Educational Outcomes, because it's important, Madam Speaker, that all Members understand the mandate that it has. It's looking at a variety of areas of concern in education, ranging from early learning to math, to reading and literacy, to inclusive education – that is part of its mandate – student mental health and wellness.

As the minister has indicated, they sat down and spent time with the All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which released its report just last week, which I fully support. They're also looking at multicultural education, indigenous education, co-op education, teacher education and professional development for teachers. That's certainly a tall task in any stretch, Madam Speaker, to look at all those issues, but I have all faith that under the chairperson, Dr. Collins, they will do an exemplary job.

It was said earlier as well that the chair of that committee, who is a respected educator in her own right, has said this is a once in a decade opportunity, Madam Speaker. I think it really goes back to our fundamental philosophy on what education means and what education is for the people and the children of our province.

I was reading a quote earlier, Madam Speaker. "Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our Nation." That was a Kennedy quote, Madam Speaker, and I think it holds true to Newfoundland and Labrador as well.

I would refer Members back to the Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom, which I had the opportunity to read through. It's certainly a report that was delivered to then Minister of Education, Judy Foote, in 2000. That really, through my review of the literature on this subject, Madam Speaker, was one of the last comprehensive looks at the entire education system.

We've seen in the past there have been royal commissions, there have been ministerial panels and now we have the Premier's Task Force on improving Educational Outcomes which is so important. It is something that then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, committed to prior to the last election and has come through on. Because in this ministerial panel on the delivery of education in the classroom you find a comprehensive look at education and the philosophy behind which we use to develop a curriculum and the programs and services that we offer in our schools.

I believe it's well overdue, Madam Speaker, to have the type of dialogue we're having in this province surrounding teachers, the role that teachers play, the challenges they face, and certainly, indeed how we can improve those outcomes. Because, Madam Speaker, we all know there was significant increases in terms of the funding provided to the education system in this province over the reign of the Progressive Conservatives but the outcomes did not alter to meet the increased percentage.

I'll read a quote here from *The Way Forward*, the plan with which we're going to bring forward economic growth and sustainability to the province. The plan that the Opposition denies exists. I read this quote, Madam Speaker. "High levels of expenditures in recent years did not budge many of our most important outcomes in health and education. Despite, over the past

ten years, increasing health care spending by \$1.1 billion and K-12 and post-secondary education spending by \$425 million, an increase of 61 per cent and 48 per cent respectively,” – Madam Speaker, 48 per cent in the education system – “many of our indicators remain well below the national average.”

That’s not a reflection on teachers, that’s not a reflection on students, that’s not a reflection on our schools because I have every faith that the teachers of this province can deliver the finest education that one can receive in the world, Madam Speaker, but they must be provided with the tools to do so. That is really why it’s important to have the Premier’s Task Force on improving Educational Outcomes canvass the province, discuss with those who are the important stakeholders.

I would note that they have had engaging sessions with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association, the school districts, both the staff and the elected people, Memorial University, College of the North Atlantic, the Federation of School Councils, the Office of the Child Advocate, Choices for Youth, Thrive, the Association for New Canadians and, of course, there have been a number of indigenous participants as well.

Those are just some of the people that the task force has gone out to solicit feedback from. Of course, this has been such an open process, Madam Speaker, anyone has been able to go out and provide feedback, either through the interactive website or in person, or through email or by phone. I know in February, they were in Marystown and they heard from a number of different groups. They heard from the Federation of School Councils that were there at that meeting. There was a local action group, the Stand Against Drugs Committee that we are all so very familiar with here. There were parents. There were teachers. There were former teachers as well. My two parents are both former teachers, so of course I truly believe in the power of education and I see what our teachers can do.

The point that I am making in all of this, Madam Speaker, is that I would support this motion fully if it wasn’t really something that was already in motion. As the minister has said, the

people of this province have heard enough talk. They want action. I’ve heard that day in and day out. The Members opposite, I am sure, have heard it day in and day out, but they seem to have become accustomed just to throwing meetings and parties and summits. They had their health care summit that cost well over \$100,000 to have. I’m not sure what came out of it, and now they want another summit after we’re already spending public resources on a Premier’s Task Force for Improving Educational Outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, I’m at a loss – I’m truly at a loss as to why they want another summit, following a very comprehensive process through the Premier’s task force on education. This is a commitment that was made during the election. It’s a commitment that was put into the mandate letter of the minister and it’s been acted on. The Premier has acted on this. The minister has acted on this.

Indeed, the school board elections – I have to raise it again, Mr. Speaker, because they were left without any elected school board trustees for years and years and years and it didn’t seem to be a priority at all, and this government acted and this government delivered.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will say it again. I have the greatest of respect for teachers. I understand the challenges that they face. It is indeed challenging. We, as a government, are committed to working through those challenges and issues to ensure that they have the right tools to provide, as I’ve said earlier, what I believe can and should and must be the best education for the children of our province to position ourselves as global leaders into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to get up and speak on this issue. It’s a very important issue, as we’ve heard various Members speak about today, and it affects each and every district

within the province and all schools. It's an issue that's not going anywhere. It's one that we need to address. I commend my colleague for Conception Bay East – Bell Island for bringing this motion forward today. I think it's a great idea, and it's one that is my pleasure to speak to.

Mr. Speaker, when reviewing the resolution before, the first part is simple; “BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly urge the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to convene a public summit in 2017 to discuss the challenges of inclusive education and constructive solutions”

The second part lists those who ought to be included in such a summit. It's intended to be a comprehensive list. I just want to list those – after listening to some speakers opposite speak about it and the Premier's task force, I think this list is worth repeating: the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the Faculty of Education of Memorial University, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils, specialist educators, classroom/subject teachers, instructional resource teachers, student assistants, guidance counsellors, educational psychologists, program specialists for student support services, school administrators, parents, students, advocacy groups for persons with disabilities, other special interest groups, experts on inclusive education practices, legislators representing all parties in the House of Assembly and members of the general public.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I have the utmost respect for the Premier's task force on educational outcomes. I have no problem with that. The list of groups I just read that time, I think that's a very comprehensive group of people, two days, one day, whatever it means, to have a summit to bring that group of people together to discuss an issue of such importance, I think it's very worthy and it's one that should be given some serious consideration, in conjunction with the Premier's task force – which like I said, we have no issue with that as well. This is dealing with one specific issue with all those people in one room; it makes a lot of sense.

The point is that everyone needs to be part of this conversation, and that's how we come to

agreements about solutions. Some will talk about what is affordable – and that's fair. But we shouldn't get so boxed in by old ways of thinking that we're unwilling to try innovative solutions and novel approaches. In the end, the new approach may not be unaffordable at all, when we weigh the costs against the benefits. Let us not forget that there are other costs besides the one in the budget documents. There are human costs of failing our students. There are also economic costs of failing to give a generation of our young people the best education we possibly can. If the system is failing our students, the entire province will bear that cost down the road.

We will slip in terms of productivity, competitiveness, employability, poverty and self-reliance, and those are economic costs that have fiscal consequences. If you nickel and dime your way to a cheap but ineffective educational system, you may be nickeling and diming your way to ruin.

A government has to focus on the future and invest in education in ways that ensure we are positioned to lead nationally and globally on every scale. If our education vision is not as broad as that, then we will be left behind because other jurisdictions are already there.

All students are different; they have different needs, different strengths, and different ways of learning, different ways of excelling. In one school that was challenged by poor performance, teachers introduced a period of intense physical activity during each day to break up the pace. They found that the students were able to better focus on learning after working out. That's an innovative solution based on evidence. It doesn't really cost much but benefits can be measurable. Perhaps there are innovative approaches to inclusive education that we will enhance the feeling of togetherness, while also allowing students with different needs to pursue their education in different ways.

But this cannot all be on the back of a teacher. If we have experts at the summit table along advocates for persons with disabilities, alongside teachers, alongside students, alongside administrators who manage to finances, we can hear all sides. Everyone can talk about inclusion, how to achieve it, make it work, this issue can

get the attention it merits and maybe it can also get some solutions sooner rather than later. It's a huge issue.

When we talk about inclusion, let's not forget that we are talking about young people with their whole lives before them. ADD, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down's Syndrome, visual impairment, hearing impairment, dyslexia, different IQs, different levels of education advancement, these are labels we've put on people. These labels are not intended to diminish the value of any human being. A label is only part of who the person happens to be. Sometimes a label describes differences among students that can be addressed with relative ease and a bit of creativity to the benefit of everyone.

But other labels represent real challenges for educators. I don't think we are going to resolve those challenges until we figure out the purpose of schooling in the 21st century. We need to figure out what we are trying to achieve.

Ideally, a school will help to draw out each and every student's innate potential, motivate them, help them feel good about themselves, help to see the value of their relationships with their peers and build a stronger, more cohesive and tolerant society.

But those idealistic goals are no help to a classroom teacher who is trying to figure out how to deliver a lesson in a classroom without the resources and supports to deal with the particular challenges facing that class. When intensively disruptive students are compromising education in the classroom, everyone is harmed. It is irresponsible inclusion.

When the curriculum is too challenging for some students to grasp or not challenging enough to motivate others to engage, then students can suffer. The differences between them may actually become more apparent and more of an issue. If this becomes the basis for resentment, then how would this promote harmony and acceptance among students, despite the differences? It might just draw them apart.

Imagine a teacher trying to develop and deliver a lesson plan for that class. The class I refer to is a recent news story about a classroom in another province where students in a grade eight class

range from pre-primary level to a grade nine level. So you can only image what that teacher was dealing with.

Perhaps there are solutions. Perhaps others have found approaches that work. We need to find out, and a summit is the way to focus in on the challenge and the experiences and perspective of others.

At one school in Florida – each secondary school in the country has an administrator and secretary specifically assigned to exceptional student education. Some larger schools have their own ESE counsellors; some exceptional student education teachers work with parents, the district office, teachers and students. At another US school, you would enter a classroom with several adults present, but the classroom would appear ordinary otherwise. There would be a learning centre, group work – everyone would be engaged in learning.

An educator listed some of the challenges facing teachers with respect to inclusion. For example, the teachers lack of experience in an inclusion setting; lack of experience dealing with severe and profound disabilities; including all students in all activities; educating students with less severe disabilities; dealing with the death of a student with severe illness; the shortage of teacher aids; how to teach compassion to students who are not familiar with exceptional students; dealing with parents of typically developing students; individualized lesson plans; coordinating therapies.

Promoting inclusion must be accompanied by strategies for effectively addressing all of those issues. Whatever we do, we have to remember that each and every child is a precious life and we have to be sensitive to that. We cannot hurt one child in order to help another child. We have to find an approach that benefits every child.

Teachers need space where they can talk about this openly, frankly and constructively. Without that forum, many are afraid to speak up, thinking they will be labeled intolerant or mean-spirited, where they are the very opposite of that. They don't want to talk negatively about the particular children they teach, but they would like to compare notes with other teachers and talk in

general terms about the challenges they share and approaches that might work.

Some teachers' hearts are breaking because they see learning opportunities slipping through their fingers every day as their classes deal with challenges that they don't know how to face. That's not what they expected when they trained to become teachers. The problem is not getting easier. Classes are larger, as government raises caps.

The resources to help teachers cope are deficient. It's a constant fight when it ought to be a priority for government to address. It may be inconvenient and embarrassing for government to have people hear of so many grievances that may not be easily solved. Perhaps the minister is afraid things will descend in anger and acrimony directed his way. But how can you justify shutting down a debate on addressing a major educational challenge when the problem is real, and it's not getting the attention it deserves? How would that be responsible? Let's have a summit and let's hear what people have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to get a couple of minutes now to speak on this motion. I certainly want to thank the Members of the Official Opposition for giving me the opportunity because it's not an automatic thing for me. I don't always get to speak on Private Members' Day.

First of all, I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, right off the bat that I do support the motion as brought forward by the Official Opposition. It's interesting because in the Throne Speech yesterday, I was listening to the Premier and he was going to start off by saying we should – I don't remember the exact words, but it was about something to the effect that we should be putting partisan politics aside in these tough times and working together. Now, that eventually turned into a big rant against the

Official Opposition. I can understand that he felt provoked and so on. I'm not going to deny that. But he did say that at the beginning, for that one brief moment.

Here we are presented with an opportunity today to do just that: to put politics aside and to work together on something which is a very important issue, an issue that is affecting children and families all throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, in all of our districts. It seems – and I guess we will wait to see how the vote goes, but it sounds like our government is not going to support it. I don't know why they wouldn't want to support it. I really don't know why they wouldn't want to support a motion that says that we are going to bring the stakeholders together now to take action.

I was very glad, by the way, I heard the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development – I believe is the title – say we were going to take action. People are sick of talk and we want action. I agree with him. Lord knows, I've spoken to many, many people – I'm sure we all have – who are sick to death of talking about these issues around inclusion. Teachers are sick to death of talking about it, administrators are, parents are and all the stakeholders are. We all know that it comes down to resources; that's the biggest issue here. We didn't need to do any kind of a task force, or summit or anything to know that it comes down to resources. Ultimately, that's what it comes down to.

I got to say that I did find it very disappointing when I listened to some of the Members opposite, and instead of talking to the issue – and not all; I will say some did speak to the issue, to some degree. But instead of talking about the issue at hand, all we heard was well, you guys were in government, you didn't do it. You had 12 years, 10 years, 12 years, whatever.

I would just say, Mr. Speaker, that if we had to take that attitude, if every government, over the years, took that attitude nothing would change, no matter what. The government would change and would say you didn't make that change so, therefore, we're not going to do it. You never changed that legislation, so we're not going to do it. You never funded these projects, so we're not going to do it. I mean if that's the attitude to simply say because you didn't do it, it's okay for

us to say we're not going to do it – it doesn't make sense to me. We have to talk about today.

If you talk to people out there in the community, they are not interested in what happened last week, last month, last year. We all know there were issues with the previous administration and the administration before that, and the administration before because nobody is perfect. There's lots of blame to go around on all sides, in all parties over the years, but we all know that, and everybody knows that.

But people want to talk about what you are going to do today. From here forward, what are you going to do? That's what people want to know. Here's an opportunity for us to forget about the past and to move forward, from today forward, on a very important issue that affects people in all of our districts, and there seems to be no will to go down that road.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. LANE: There seems to be no will to go down that road. It's very, very unfortunate that the Members opposite don't want to go down that road of working together, collectively, to support what should be an issue which is near and dear to all of our hearts.

I know if you talk to people, constituents, you hear so many times the issues around inclusion. Whether it be the children that need services that are not receiving adequate services; whether it be children that need services but because they're sort of on the borderline, if you will, so to speak, they're falling between the cracks, they're getting no services at all; and you also hear the frustration from parents around children who don't need services but they feel that their child is not getting the attention they deserve because the teacher's time is tied up with the children who do need services because there are not enough supports in place. These are very serious issues.

I support the task force. The Premier had a task force on education – great, good thing; I supported it. I think everybody supported it. I think everyone who has spoken said they've supported it. This is not looking at the broader

issue of education; this is looking at the more specific issue around inclusion in the classroom, to bring people together – and if the minister was going to take action, which is great, again, I'll say I'm glad to hear it. So I certainly hope next week when the budget comes out that we're going to see action taken.

Now, I heard the minister talk about 2018, they're going to take the report and the recommendations and that's going to go to some committee, and that's going to go to someone else and they're going to do all these things in 2018. I suggest it will probably be 2019, election year, would be more likely when it would happen.

Anyway, the fact of the matter is that action needs to be taken now. In the absence of that action being taken now, then we at least need to work together to put a plan in place so that action would be taken as soon as possible. That's what I believe is being asked for here and I will be supporting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to get to speak again to the private Member's resolution regarding an inclusive education summit. I want to acknowledge the Members who spoke. The Member for Stephenville – Port au Port, I might note it was disappointing that he was more centred on putting blame on something that didn't happen in a program, the Community Education Network, a very valued program, I had the privilege of working with, that unfortunately didn't continue to receive funding. I don't think it receives funding today either. It did a very important job on the West Coast and the Southwest Coast, particularly around engaging education and youth at risk, those processes and sponsoring the Community Youth Network.

I am a bit disappointed that he didn't focus more on the task at hand. The task at hand here was

how we better identify issues around inclusive education, and acknowledging that this has to be a collective process and a collective effort by all to make this work. So that was a bit disappointing that he didn't take the opportunity to talk about what solutions they would have.

I want to acknowledge my colleague, the Member for Fortune Bay – Cape La Hune, who very articulately talked about how we use the process to ensure that everybody has a good quality of education and ensure that geographically our education process is accessible, and that the outcomes should be on equal par, that people in a rural community would still have access to education like in an urban community.

I want to acknowledge the Minister of Education, and again, another note of disappointment about pointing fingers and pointing blame. I would have thought, as the Minister of Education – and I threw out the olive branch at the beginning; myself and him may not have the greatest working relationship in the House of Assembly, but I threw out the olive branch that I had respect for him as an educator and respect for him as an Education critic when he was here. He had all the solutions, it was all going to happen, it was all going to be part and parcel of the minute he became part of a government, they were going to change everything. I was disappointed that he doesn't acknowledge – I don't think he really acknowledges the fact there's an opportunity.

I have no qualms of acknowledging there's a lot of good work been done by a lot of great committees and task forces. The NLTA have done more work on every aspect of education, including inclusive education. I don't know where he's been for three Monday nights when CBC and dozens of teachers from those who've been in the classroom for three years and those who've been in there for 30 years, and counsellors, and everybody else relevant to it talked about the impact inclusive education is having, and particularly the need for somebody to address it, and have not done anything to make that work. So that was a bit disappointing that he didn't take the opportunity to talk about what the vision would be, from their perspective, on making things work.

It's more than disappointing there, particularly as the Minister of Education, but particularly as an educator who also was the critic for a number of years, seemed to have all the solutions and, no doubt, the solutions he threw out, at the end of the day, made sense. I saw it over there for the last couple of years and noted that some of these made sense. And there's no doubt we had dialogue and some of them we actually implemented.

Maybe we could have done more. Fine enough, if you want to do that, fair enough; but if nothing else, if you wanted to take the opportunity to have the summit, participate in the summit, if you wanted to point blame at us that's fair enough – this is not what this is about. This resolution was never about pointing blame at anybody. It was about addressing an issue that parents, educators, agencies that represent educators, agencies that represent students that have challenges, the general public – everybody felt we needed to have that.

So I've got one Member who's big around having dialogue; I've got the minister who says dialogue is a waste of time. And that's great; I agree with him, it's a waste of time to do it, if he already has the solutions in hand. So part of me, the back part, the good old optimist is saying, in this budget he must have hundreds of millions of dollars allocated. He must have been able to convince his colleagues not to cut 219 teaching positions like last year, but indeed to put so much money into the education system that we will legitimately address the challenges we have with inclusive education.

I'm going on that premise, because the fact that he's so adamantly against this can only mean that he has a solution. Because on one hand he stands that inclusive education is very important. We need to address it; we need to resource it. So I'm assuming he's having all kinds of dialogues with the NLTA about what he's going to announce next week, and I actually look forward next Thursday of sitting here. The old cliché is eating crow; I have no problems doing that if he has the solutions to inclusive education. I look forward to that.

I also want to acknowledge the Member for St. John's East – Quidi Vidi who, herself, has a vast experience in the education system and who

supports this, because she sees this as the impetus for having another open discussion. She acknowledges the fact of taking off some of these reports, dusting them off, because maybe – don't forget, generational things change; new leaders come into being; new leaders within the education system; parents come from a different perspective; things change in our society. Maybe some of those reports are extremely still relevant, and maybe we don't have to reinvent the wheel.

I'm glad she outlined that, that maybe we look at recommendation 22 to 27 in a particular report that would still be relevant and we take that and say, now this is part of something that we want to put as the approach that we'll use to solving these issues. Included in that would be the Premier's task force. I would think the task force members would love to hear from a summit what people think from every genre of the education system, and not just from a piece of paper that was sent in not really clearly understanding exactly what they meant by that.

I received, I say, 70 or 80 in the last week, and some of them are very clear what their challenges are. Some, I'm not quite sure, because even the parents sometimes are not quite sure what resources they have available and what they don't. So it would have been a great opportunity to be able to do that without much confusion.

The Member for Placentia West – Bellevue, while he still wasn't totally supportive, he was the most supportive of the group over there. And I think he got it a little bit better than the rest of them; he understood what this was about. I think he may have watched – and I'm hoping he did – the series on CBC when teachers outlined and counsellors outlined the challenges.

And it was heart-wrenching to see teachers basically cry because they want to give so much, they want to be able to show the success for every student, but know there are challenges around the process we're using, the lack of resources, the lack of communication between the department, even some of the issues around how you develop the curriculum, those types of things. So it was a bit disappointing that that wasn't one of the focuses.

If you didn't believe the merits that we had, why we're proposing it were morally just, I would hope and think you couldn't disagree with what dozens of teachers had told you and told you, point blank, and had nothing to gain other than they want to better move the education system forward.

If you have a dispute with agencies that represent them, that's fine; that's the negotiation process. But when the grassroots individuals who are part of the organization and deliver the services tell you there's a problem and have they have challenges and they give you solutions and you don't listen and you don't think it's important and you don't think there's a process that should be used to engage that information and then make your decisions, then I have a problem with that and it's very disappointing.

My colleague, the Member for Conception Bay South, who outlined the need to give an inclusive process, have a dialogue, talk about constructive solutions, which was a great – it's comical because I hear the Minister of Justice, rightfully so, had a summit on justice – needed; we have some challenges. It's been identified by those who work in that field, but the people who work in the field of education, particularly around inclusive education, the merits of what they say, apparently doesn't mean anything to my colleagues on that side. It's not as important.

Listen, everything we do in our society is important. Every line process, every line service we offer is important and we have a right to expect people to listen, particularly the government to listen and take our advice. They don't necessarily have to frame it exactly the way that we put it there – and I say we, I mean the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. But they have to take it into account and hopefully that will craft exactly what their policies are, what their philosophies are and where they invest their money into resources.

So it was good to see my colleague outline those processes. It was disappointing to see, on the other side, that that wasn't being taken seriously and it wasn't as important to them.

Also the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands and I give credit where he noted – and I opened up with this is not about pointing blame and it is

not about being partisan, and he wanted to emphasize that. We do things in this House at times that are not based on party lines because they're the right things to do. They benefit the people that we serve. We want to make society a little bit better. We want to show for those people who work for society, our civil servants, people who provide our services if it's in education, if it's in snow clearing, if it's in health care, whatever sector it is, we want to be able to all agree we need to find a better way to let them do their jobs, not put hindrance and blocks up against it but support them.

Sometimes it's moral support, sometimes it's philosophical support, sometimes it's actually constructive, financial support and that's what we were talking here. This wasn't all somebody write a blank cheque. This was about bringing everybody together who would talk about the resource we have here, can probably still be used over here, without it costing any more. Or the resource we have here needs to go there and we need to put some supports with that. The dialogue around that would have only been a benefit to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

He also talked about every genre of the school system feels, in some way, shape or form, affected by inclusive education. The kids who are succeeding are still feeling, at times, that they are not getting the attention they need, and teachers feel that. Teachers feel that they have to emphasize over here because they don't have the resources, and some of it is physical resources, not just human resource but the space. I know the last couple of years there has been a push on to build as many schools as possible because they were needed and there were various reasons. If you're offering new programs and services, you have to have the physical space to be able to offer those.

Some of the challenges that some of the students face within inclusive education dictate you need to have particular rooms or particular settings that are conducive to being able to address that issue or conducive to a proper learning process. So these are the things that we had talked about. We had encouraged the government – and I understand they're facing fiscal restraints, but even the fiscal restraints you have to prioritize what it is you stand for. I would have thought

standing for education, health care and providing services would have been your primary objective. If you have to drop something else, if you have to drop a million dollars for consultants, do that so that we have programs for inclusive education. You have the ability to make those decisions. It baffles me that you're not prioritizing what's happening.

I know the Members back there have got to be feeling the same things that we are feeling here from their constituents. They got to see the same things when they go in the schools. No doubt, when you go into a school, you're going to see the best of the best because our school system is doing a great job. Don't get me wrong; it's doing a super job. But there are challenges. They've been identified by everybody.

So it's one to do a great job and a super job, but let's do a super, super job. Do you know how we do that? Let's fill the gap that we have that's been identified. Inclusive education, right now, is the biggest challenge facing our education system because it's taking away from all the other programs and services that teachers, administrators – even the people who design the curriculum have to concentrate around. They don't have the resources to be able to deal with that particular issue and still deal with the mainstream curriculum system. So there has to be a dialogue.

The best way to do that – sometimes it's not always about throwing money at it; sometimes it's about the money you already have, how to use it. Sometimes it's going to be about the resources that you use. No doubt, we identified it. We identified it in the previous administration that there were more resources needed. Nobody ever argued that, and that process was started. There were resources every year put into it. They were trying to be moved around; they were trying to dialogue with the powers that were involved who could give the best advice – the NLTA, a number of other agencies.

We were trying to find that out. We never succeeded in finishing the job. We agree, not a problem – it was ongoing. It's a living entity. So what we're saying as part of a living entity, why don't we continue that, continue to have the dialogue, continue to find better ways to do it?

We've had people come and ask us for this dialogue, and what we were proposing, an opportunity – the issue here becomes – and I know we're politicians, and maybe the politicians on that side were afraid they were going to get beat up. They don't have to get beat up. Somebody had mentioned that in 2009, we implemented this program. Was it fully resourced at the time? Of course it wasn't. We know that.

So if they wanted to take a potshot at us, they can do that, get that out of the way, let's deal with the issue at hand. The issue at hand is simple: How do we better serve the people in our education system? How do we support those who provide education? How do we ensure that the students get the quality of education that they're entitled to and that the outcomes are at the level of the expectations of those students? There's a standard expectation. That expectation is: every kid has the ability to reach their potential. To do that, you've got to have proper resources. To have proper resources, you got to know exactly what they are.

Well, we already know. We've heard it. The NLTA – I've read the report. I've given a good outline of some of the resources they need. No doubt, they also would endorse an open dialogue with other stakeholders, because there is always room for developing extra partnerships. There's always room for prioritizing where the resource particularly should go. There are always ways of also looking at our priorities from a long-term thing. What are our time frames for achieving certain goals?

The other important thing is educating the parents about exactly what can be delivered, and on a timely basis, and what the expectations are. Not all parents are going to agree with it. Some are going to be frustrated and think more needs to be done at a quicker pace. But the best people to be able to tell you that are the educators, with input from parents and other stakeholders.

So, Mr. Speaker, on that note, I will take my seat and ask that we vote on what I think would be a great opportunity for us to move our education system forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

MR. SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

Division

MR. SPEAKER: Are the Whips ready? Yes?

Ms. Michael, we're ready.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the ayes: nine; the nays: 25.

MR. SPEAKER: I declare the motion defeated.

This House now stands adjourned until 1:30, tomorrow afternoon.